

The State

A Criminal Organization

Tome 1 : Theories & Types

Edited by

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Theories & Types

Contents

Introduction	7
MAX STIRNER <i>The State</i> (1844)	9
FRÉDÉRIC BASTIAT <i>The State</i> (1848)	13
PIERRE-JOSEPH PROUDHON <i>The State. Its Nature, Object, and Destiny</i> (1849)	28
MIKHAIL BAKUNIN <i>On the "Popular" State</i> (1873)	49
ARTHUR ARNOULD <i>Sovereignty of the State, or Sovereignty of the People</i> (1877)	56
FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE <i>The State as the Coldest Monster</i> (1883)	62
PAUL LEROY-BEAULIEU <i>The Modern State</i> (1890)	66
PYOTR KROPOTKIN <i>The State. Its Historic Role</i> (1897)	77
ADOLPH WAGNER <i>The Expansion of the State Activities</i> (1901)	105
CLARENCE S. DARROW <i>The Nature of the State</i> (1902)	119

WARLAAM TCHERKESOFF <i>The State and Social Economy</i> (1902)	122
LEV TOLSTOY <i>The State</i> (1905)	129
GEORG JELLINEK <i>Theories of the State</i> (1911)	135
MAX WEBER <i>State, Parties and Politics</i> (1919)	157
RANDOLPH BOURNE <i>The Development of the American State</i> (1919)	177
CLARENCE LEE SWARTZ <i>The State</i> (1927)	181
FRANZ OPPENHEIMER <i>The State</i> (1929)	189
WALTER LIPPMANN <i>The Absolute State</i> (1929)	198
ORTEGA Y GASSET <i>The Greatest Danger, the State</i> (1930)	203
ERICH MÜHSAM <i>The Capitalist State</i> (1932)	213
ALBERT JAY NOCK <i>Our Enemy, the State</i> (1935)	222
RUDOLF ROCKER <i>The State</i> (1937)	240

EMMANUEL MOUNIER <i>The history of the States, the history of people's martyrdom</i> (1937)	244
LUIGI STURZO <i>The Totalitarian State</i> (1938)	252
BERTRAND DE JOUVENEL <i>On State Power</i> (1945)	272
JACQUES MARITAIN <i>Man and the State</i> (1951)	277
MURRAY ROTHBARD <i>The Anatomy of the State</i> (1965)	283
JEAN- FRANÇOIS REVEL <i>The Modern State as a Totalitarian Entity</i> (1976)	303
EUGÈNE ENRIQUEZ <i>Power and the Modern State</i> (1983)	309
BUTLER SHAFFER <i>The Insanity of the State</i> (2003)	324
MICHAEL S. ROZEFF <i>Reflections on the State</i> (2005)	331
GIAN PIERO DE BELLIS <i>What is the State?</i> (2011)	339
Appendix	343
KARL MARX & FRIEDRICH ENGELS <i>Against the State</i> (1844-1891)	345
LUDWIG VON MISES <i>About the State</i> (1919-1962)	389

Introduction

This is Tome One of an anthology about the State.

In this first volume a series of selected short texts are presented to give an historical vision of the State, concentrating especially on State theories and types.

To clarify things from the start, the position of the editor of this anthology is very critical towards the territorial sovereign State.

What is here advocated is the development of non-territorialist voluntary communities, set up by individuals according to their aspirations and decisions, for providing goods and services and facilitating all possible social intercourses through all sorts of experimentations.

Some people could continue calling these voluntary non-territorialist communities with the name “State.” However, and this is the most important and decisive point of difference, no one can impose his/her chosen State on other people living on the same territory.

In the past, problems of religious affiliation have been resolved in this manner (religious tolerance) despite the fact that some considered the coexistence, on the same territory, of different churches and religious beliefs something impossible and impracticable.

This proposed solution, deriving from what we might call political tolerance, will be considered by future generations perfectly viable and sensible, especially considering the fact that the States are becoming even more intrusive and invasive of personal liberties.

As remarked by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in one of his works:

To be GOVERNED is to be watched, inspected, spied upon, directed, law-driven, numbered, regulated, enrolled, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, checked, estimated, valued, censured, commanded, by creatures who have neither the right nor the wisdom nor the virtue to do so.

To be GOVERNED is to be at every operation, at every transaction noted, registered, counted, taxed, stamped, measured, numbered, assessed, licensed, authorized, admonished, prevented, forbidden, reformed, corrected, punished.

It is, under pretext of public utility, and in the name of the general interest, to be placed under contribution, drilled, fleeced, exploited, monopolized, extorted from, squeezed, hoaxed, robbed; then, at the slightest resistance, the first word of complaint, to be repressed, fined, vilified, harassed, hunted down, abused, clubbed, disarmed, bound, choked, imprisoned, judged, condemned, shot, deported, sacrificed, sold, betrayed; and to crown all, mocked, ridiculed, derided, outraged, dishonoured.

That is government; that is its justice; that is its morality.

(Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Idée Générale de la Révolution au Dix-Neuvième Siècle, Epilogue*, 1851)

Max Stirner

The State (1844)

This is a very powerful critique of that entity called *State*. For Stirner, there is no freedom under any State. The objective of the State is to manufacture people with similar identities so that they become obedient servants of the State machine.

Source: Max Stirner, *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 1844 [English translations: *The Ego and His Own* - *The Unique and Its Property*].

What is called the State is a fabric and plexus of dependency and attachment, a *belonging together*, a holding together, in which those who are placed together fit themselves to each other, in short, depend on each other: it is the *order* of this *dependency*. Suppose the king, whose power extends to all, down to the level of the executioner, were to disappear; still all those in whom the sense of order was awake would maintain order against the disorder of bestiality. If disorder had prevailed, the State would have survived.

But is this idea of love, to fit ourselves to each other, to cling to each other, and to depend on each other, really capable of winning us over? According to this, the State would be love realised, the being for each other and living all for each other. Is not self-will lost through this sense of order? Would be people satisfied if order is maintained by force, i.e. by ensuring that no one 'steps on' another, and thus that the *herd* is intelligently organised or ordered? Everything is in 'perfect order,' and this perfect order is called – the State!

Our societies and States *are* without our *making* them, united without our uniting them. They are pre-destined and exist or have their own independent standing and are indissolubly established against us, the single individuals. The world struggle of today is, as they say, directed against the 'established.' However, this is usually misunderstood as if only what exists now is to be exchanged for another system of power to be established.

But war might rather be declared against the establishment itself, that is, against the *State*, not against a particular State, nor just the current situation of the State. One does not aim for another State (such as a 'people's State'), but for one's *association*, the union, the ever-fluid union of all that has life. A State exists, even without my aid: I am born in it, educated in it, bound to it, and must 'pay homage' to it.

The State takes me up into his 'grace,' and I live by his 'favour.' Thus the independent existence of the State accounts for my lack of independence; its 'natural growth,' its organism, demands that my nature should not freely grow, but should be cut to fit it.

[...]

One speaks of tolerance, of leaving the opposite tendencies free, and the like, by which the civilised States distinguish themselves. Certainly, some States are strong enough to abstain from intervening

even witnessing the most turbulent meetings, while others instruct their minions to go repressing even minor things. However, for the former as for the latter, the play of individuals among themselves, their buzzing back and forth, their daily lives, is an incident that the States must leave to them, because they cannot do anything with it. Some States control people meticulously even in small things, while others are shrewder. In the latter case, the individuals are 'freer' because they are less pestered. But I am not free under any State.

The vaunted tolerance of the States is only a toleration of what is 'harmless,' 'not dangerous'; it is only a rising above the spirit of pettiness, only a more respectful, more magnificent, more proud despotism. For a time a certain State seemed to wish to remain quite aloof from literary combats that were carried on with all the heat. The State in England is above popular turmoil and leaves people free to smoke tobacco. But woe to the literature that deals blows at the State itself, woe to the popular mobs that 'endanger' the State. In that particular State they dream of a 'free science,' in England of a 'free popular life.'

The State allows its citizens to *play* freely, but they cannot act seriously except with its consent and in the manner it allows. Human beings cannot associate with their fellow human beings except with 'higher supervision and intervention.'

I am not allowed to achieve everything I am capable of, but only as much as the State permits. I am not allowed to make use of my thoughts, my work, anything that is mine. The only aim of the State is to restrict, to subjugate, to subordinate the individual, to make him into some *general* subject. The State will survive only as long as the individual is not fully developed, but becomes a restricted being, a slave.

A State never aims to bring about the free activity of individuals, but always that which is tied to the aim of the State. Nothing *in common* comes about through the State, just as a piece of fabric cannot be said

to be the common work of all the individual parts of a machine; it is rather the work of the whole machine as a unit, it is machine work. In the same way, everything happens through the State machine; for it moves the clockwork of the individual minds, none of which follows their own decisions.

The State seeks to inhibit every free activity through its censorship, its surveillance, its police force, and considers this inhibition to be its duty, being in reality a duty for its self-preservation.

The State wants to make something out of individuals, that is why only *manufactured* individuals live in it. Anyone who wants to be his own self is its enemy and is nothing. 'He is nothing' means as much as: the State has not use for him, leaves him no position, no office, no trade or the like.

Frédéric Bastiat

The State (1848)

This is a masterful text that, with extreme clarity, unmask the dynamics that makes possible for some groups of individuals, using the label of the Nation State, to seize the power in order to dominate everyone, with the illusory claim of acting selflessly for the general good.

Source: Frédéric Bastiat, *L'État*, Journal des Débats (25 September 1848).

I would like to assign a prize, not of five hundred francs, but of a million, with crowns, crosses and ribbons, to the person who gives a good, simple and intelligible definition of this word: the State.

What an immense service it would confer on society!

The State! What is it? where is it? what does it do? what should it do?

All we know is that it is a mysterious character, and certainly the most solicited, the most tormented, the most busy, the most advised, the most accused, the most invoked and the most provoked one that there is in the world.

For, Sir, I do not have the honour of knowing you, but I bet ten to one that for the last six months you have been envisaging utopias; and if so, I bet ten to one that you are entrusting the State for the realization of them.

And you, Madame, I am sure that you wish from the bottom of your heart to cure all the ills of suffering humanity, and that you would not be in the least embarrassed if the State would only lend itself to the task.

But, alas! That poor unfortunate personage, like Figaro, knows neither who to listen to nor which way to turn. The hundred thousand mouths of the press and the gallery are shouting at him all at once:

“Organise work and workers.

Extirpate selfishness.

Repress the insolence and tyranny of capital.

Experiment with manure and eggs.

Cover the country with railways.

Irrigate the plains.

Forest the mountains.

Set up model farms.

Found social workshops.

Colonise Algeria.

Feed the children.

Educate the youth.

Assist the aged.

Send city dwellers to the countryside.

Equalize the profits of all industries.

Lend money, without interest, to those who need it.

Free Italy, Poland and Hungary.

Rear and perfect the saddle horse.

Encourage art, train musicians and dancers.

Prohibit trade and, at the same time, create a merchant navy.

Discover the truth and put a grain of reason in our heads.

The mission of the State is to enlighten, develop, enlarge, fortify, spiritualise and sanctify the souls of the people.”

“Gentlemen, a little patience,” says the State, looking pitiful.

“I will try to satisfy you, but to do so I need some resources. I have prepared plans for five or six brand new taxes, the most benign in the world. You will see what a pleasure it is to pay them.”

But then a loud cry is heard: “No! indeed! Where is the merit of doing something with resources! It wouldn’t be worth calling ourselves the State. Far from hitting us with new taxes, we ask you to withdraw the old ones. Abolish:

The tax on salt.

The tax on liquors.

The tax on letters.

Custom duties.

Patents.

Compulsory services.”

In the midst of this uproar, and after the country has again and again changed the State administration for not having satisfied all these demands, I wanted to point out that they were contradictory. What on earth was I thinking? Couldn't I keep this unfortunate remark to myself?

Here I am, discredited for ever; and it is now accepted that I am *a man without heart and without feeling*, a dry philosopher, an individualist, a bourgeois, and, to put it in a nutshell, an economist of the English or American school.

Oh, forgive me, sublime writers, who stop at nothing, not even at contradictions. I am wrong, no doubt, and I recant with all my heart. I would like nothing better, rest assured, if you had really discovered, outside of us, a beneficent and inexhaustible being, called the State, which has bread for all mouths, work for all hands, capital for all enterprises, credit for all projects, ointments for all wounds, balm for all suffering, advice for all perplexities, solutions for all doubts, truths for all intellects, entertainment for all troubles, milk for infancy, wine for old age, which provides for all our needs, anticipate all our desires, satisfies all our curiosities, rectifies all our errors, all our faults, and exempt us henceforth from the necessity for foresight, prudence, judgement, sagacity, experience, order, economy, temperance and activity.

What reason could I have for not desiring to see such a discovery made? Indeed, the more I think about it, the more I find it convenient, and I long to have within my reach this inexhaustible source of wealth and enlightenment, this universal physician, this unlimited treasure, this infallible adviser that you call the State.

I therefore ask that it be shown to me, that it be defined for me, and this is why I propose the foundation of a prize for the first person to discover this phoenix. After all, I am sure that this precious discovery has not yet been made, since, up to now, anything that presents itself under the name of State is immediately overthrown by the people, precisely because it does not fulfil the rather contradictory conditions of the programme.

Do we have to say it? I am afraid that we are, in this respect, fooled by one of the strangest illusions that has ever seized the human mind.

The human being recoils from pain and suffering. And yet he is condemned by nature to the Suffering of Deprivation, if he does not take the Pain of Toil. So, he has only the choice between these two evils.

How to avoid them both? It has so far found only one way, and no other will ever be found. And this way is: *to enjoy the labour of others*; to ensure that Pain and Satisfaction do not fall to each person according to a natural sharing, but that all the Pain is for some and all the Satisfaction for others. This is the origin of slavery and of plunder, whatever its form may be, whether that of wars, impostures, violence, restrictions, frauds, etc., monstrous abuses, but consistent with the thinking that gave rise to them. Oppressors should be detested and resisted but they cannot be qualified as absurd.

Slavery is disappearing, thanks be to Heaven, and, on the other hand, our disposition to defend our property means that direct and naive Spoliation is not easy. One thing, however, has remained. It is that unfortunate primitive inclination that all human beings have to split the complex lot of life into two parts, passing the Pain on to others and keeping the Satisfaction for themselves. It remains to be seen what new form this sad tendency will take.

The oppressor no longer acts directly on the oppressed. No, our conscience has become too sensitive for that. There is still the tyrant

and the victim, but between them there is an intermediary, namely the State or, in other words, the law itself. What could be more appropriate to silence our scruples and, what is perhaps more appreciated, to overcome all resistance? So, all of us, in one capacity or another, under one pretext or another, turn to the State. We say to it:

“I don’t find that there is a proportion between my enjoyment and my work that satisfies me. To establish the desired balance, I would like to take a little from the property of others. But that’s dangerous. Couldn’t you make it easier for me? Couldn’t you give me a good job? Or hinder the industry of my competitors? Or lend me free of charge capital that you have taken from their owners? Or bring up my children at public expense? Or give me incentives? Or ensure my well-being when I’m fifty? In this way, I will achieve my goal with a clear conscience, because the law itself will have acted on my behalf, and I will have all the advantages of spoliation without the risks or the reproaches!”

Since it is certain, on the one hand, that we all address some similar request to the State, and since, on the other hand, it is proven that the State cannot provide satisfaction to some without adding to the toil of others, while waiting for another definition of the State, I feel authorized to give mine here. Who knows whether it won’t win the prize? Here it is:

**The State
is the great fiction
through which everyone
strives to live at the expense of everyone else.**

Today, as in the past, everyone, a little more or a little less, would like to profit from the work of others. They dare not show it, they hide it from themselves; and then, what do they do? They imagine an intermediary, they turn to the State, and each class in turn comes to say:

“You, who can take justifiably and honestly, take from the public, and we will share.”

Alas! the State is only too inclined to follow this diabolical advice; for it is made up of ministers, civil servants, human beings who, like all human beings, have desire in their hearts and always eagerly seize the opportunity to see their wealth and influence grow. The State is not slow to perceive the advantages it may derive from the role entrusted to it by the public. It will be the arbiter, the master of all destinies: it will take a lot, so it will have much left for itself; it will multiply the number of its agents; it will widen the circle of its attributions; it will end up acquiring an enormous size.

But what must be noted is the astonishing blindness of the public in all this. When victorious soldiers reduced the vanquished to slavery, they were barbaric, but they were not absurd. Their aim, like ours, was to live at the expense of others; and, like us, they did not fail to do so. What are we to think of a people who never seem to suspect that *reciprocal plundering* is no less plunder because it is reciprocal; that it is no less criminal because it is carried out legally and in an orderly fashion; that it adds nothing to public well-being but, on the contrary, it diminishes it just in proportion to the cost of the expensive intermediary we call the State?

And we have placed this great chimera, for the edification of the people, on the frontispiece of the Constitution. Here are the first words of the preamble:

“France has constituted itself as a Republic to ... call all citizens to an ever higher degree of morality, enlightenment and well-being.”

So it is France, or an *abstraction*, that is calling the French people, or the current *realities*, to morality, well-being and so on. Doesn't this produce the bizarre illusion that we expect everything from an energy other than our own? Doesn't this imply that there is, along-

side and outside the French people, a virtuous, enlightened, wealthy being who can and must bestow his benefits upon them? Does this not imply, and certainly quite gratuitously, that there is between France and the French, between the simple, abbreviated, abstract denomination of all individualities and these very individualities, a relationship of father to son, of tutor to pupil, of teacher to school-boy? I am well aware that it is sometimes said metaphorically: The fatherland is a tender mother. But to catch the inanity of such a constitutional proposition, it suffices to show that it can be reversed not only without inconvenience, but even with advantage.

Would accuracy suffer if the preamble had said:

“The French have constituted themselves into a Republic to call France to an ever higher degree of morality, enlightenment and well-being?”

Now, what is the value of an axiom where the subject and the attribute can change places without inconvenience? Everyone understands if we say: the mother will breastfeed the child. But it would be ridiculous to say: the child will breastfeed the mother.

The Americans had a different idea of the relationship between citizens and the State when they placed these simple words at the head of their Constitution:

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish ...”

Here there is no chimerical creation, no *abstraction*, from which the citizens may demand everything. They expect nothing except from themselves and their own energy.

If I have taken the liberty of criticising the opening words of our Constitution, it is because it is not, as one might think, a matter of pure metaphysical subtlety. I claim that this *personification* of the State has been in the past and will be in the future a fertile source of calamities and revolutions.

Here is the Public on the one hand, the State on the other, regarded as two distinct beings. The State bound to bestow upon the Public, and the Public having the right to claim from the State all imaginable human benefits.

What is to happen?

By the way, the State is not one-handed and cannot be. It has two hands, one for receiving and the other for giving, in other words, a rough hand and a soft hand. The activity of the latter is necessarily subordinate to the activity of the former.

Strictly, the State may take and not give. This has been seen and can be explained by the porous and absorbent nature of its hands, which always retain part and sometimes all of what they touch. But what has never been seen, what will never be seen and cannot even be imagined, is for the State to give back to the public more than it has taken from it. It is therefore quite foolish for us to adopt the humble attitude of beggars around him. It is radically impossible for the State to confer a particular advantage on some of the individuals who make up the community, without inflicting a greater damage on the whole community.

As a result, our demands place the State in an obvious vicious circle.

If it refuses the good we demand of him, it is accused of impotence, ill-will and incapacity. If it tries to grant them, it is obliged to load the people with redoubled taxes, doing more harm than good, and attracting, on the other hand, the general disaffection.

Thus, in the public there are hopes, and the State makes two promises: *many benefits and no taxes*. Hopes and promises which, being contradictory, are never fulfilled.

Now, is not this the cause of all our revolutions? For between the State, which lavishes impossible promises, and the public, which has conceived unattainable hopes, come two classes of men: the ambitious and the utopians. Their role is dictated by the situation. All these courtiers of popularity have to do is shout in the ears of the people: "Those in power are deceiving you; if we were in their place, we would shower you with benefits and free you from taxes."

And the people believe, and the people hope, and the people make a revolution.

No sooner are their friends in office, than they are summoned to action. "Give me work, bread, help, credit, education and colonies" — say the people — and at the same time, according to your promises, deliver me from the clutches of the taxman."

The *new State* is no less embarrassed than the old State, because when it comes to implement the impossible, promises can be made but not kept. It tries to gain time because it needs time to mature its vast projects. First, it makes a few timid attempts; on the one hand, it extends primary education a little; on the other, it reduces the tax on liquor a little (1830). But it is always faced with a contradiction: if it wants to be a philanthropist, it has to remain a taxman; and if it gives up taxation, it also has to give up philanthropy.

These two promises always and necessarily prevent each other. Using credit, which is the same as exhausting the future, is indeed a current means of reconciling them; an attempt is made to do a little good now, at the expense of a great deal of harm in future. But this process raises the spectre of bankruptcy, which drives out credit. So what is to be done? The new State power takes, then, a bold step; it gathers forces to maintain itself, it stifles opinion, it resorts to arbi-

trariness, it ridicules its old maxims, it declares that one can only administer on condition of being unpopular; in short, it proclaims itself governmental.

And that's where other wooers of popularity are waiting for. They exploit the same illusion, take the same route, achieve the same success, and will soon be engulfed in the same abyss. This is how we arrived in February 1848. At that time, the illusion which is the subject of this article had penetrated further than ever before into the ideas of the people, by way of the socialist doctrines. More than ever, they expected that the State in its republican form would open wide the source of benefits and close that of taxation.

"I have often been deceived — said the people — but this time I will make sure not to be deceived again."

What could the provisional government do? Alas! what one always does in such circumstances: make promise and gain time. It did not fail to do so, and to make its promises more solemn, it set them down in decrees.

"Increase of prosperity, diminution of workload, relief, credit, free education, agricultural colonies, land clearing, and at the same time a reduction in the tax on salt, liquor, letters, meat, everything will be granted ... when the National Assembly meets."

The National Assembly meets, and as it is impossible to realize two contradictory things, its task, its sad task, is limited to withdrawing, as gently as possible, one after the other, all the decrees of the Provisional Government.

However, in order not to make the disappointment too cruel, it is found necessary to compromise somewhat. Certain engagements are maintained, others are given a very small start, and therefore the new administration is compelled to contrive some new taxes.

Now, I transport myself, in thought, a few months into the future, and I wonder, with sadness in my soul, what will happen when agents of the New State go into our countryside to collect the new taxes on inheritance, on income, on the profits of farming. It is to be hoped that my presentiments may not come true, but I still see a role for the courtiers of popularity.

Read the latest *Manifesto of the Montagnards* [a political group], the one they issued on the subject of the presidential election. It's a bit long, but, after all, it can be summed up in two words: *The State must give much to the people and take little from them*. It's always the same tactic, or, if you like, the same mistake.

"The State must provide instruction and education free of charge to all citizens."

It must give: "General and vocational education appropriate, as far as possible, to the needs, vocations and abilities of each citizen."

It must: "Teach him his duties towards God, towards mankind and towards himself; develop his feelings, his aptitudes and his faculties; in short, give him the science of his work, the understanding of his interests and the knowledge of his rights."

It must: "Make available to all, the arts and letters, the heritage of thought, the treasures of the mind, all the intellectual enjoyments that elevate and strengthen the soul."

It must: "Repair any disaster, fire, flood, etc. (this *et caetera* means more than it says) experienced by a citizen."

It must: "Intervene in the relationship between capital and labour and regulate credit."

It must: "Provide agriculture with serious encouragement and effective protection."

It must: “Buy back the railways, the canals, the mines, and no doubt also administer them with that industrial capacity that is proper to the State.”

It must: “Encourage useful experiments, promote and assist them by every means likely to make them successful. As a regulator of credit, it will give ample support to industrial and agricultural associations, in order to ensure their success.”

The State must do all of this, in addition to the services it is required to perform today; and, for example, it will always have to adopt a threatening attitude towards foreign powers; because, say the signatories of the programme, “bound by this holy solidarity and by the precedents of republican France, we carry our wishes and our hopes beyond the barriers that despotism erects between nations: The rights that we want for ourselves, we want for all those oppressed by the yoke of tyranny; we want our glorious army to still be, if necessary, the army of liberty.”

You can see that the gentle hand of the State, that good hand which gives and distributes, will be very busy under the *Montagnard* government. Do you perhaps think that the same will be true of the rough hand, the hand that penetrates and digs into our pockets?

Do not deceive yourselves. The courtiers of popularity would not know their trade, if they did not have the art, by showing the soft hand, to hide the rough hand.

Their reign will undoubtedly cause the rejoicing of the taxpayer. “It is the superfluous — they say — not the necessary that the tax must reach.”

Will it not be a good time when, in order to overwhelm us with benefits, the taxman will be content to chip away at our superfluities?

And that is not all. The Montagnards aspire to a time when “taxation

loses its oppressive character and becomes nothing more than an act of fraternity.”

Good heavens! I knew that it was fashionable to put fraternity everywhere, but I had no idea that it could be put into the hands of the taxman.

Turning to the details, the signatories of the programme say:

“We want the immediate abolition of taxes on basic necessities, such as salt, beverages, *et cetera*.

The reform of property taxes, custom duties, and patents.

Free justice, i.e. simplification of forms and reduction of fees.” (This, no doubt, refers to stamp duties).

Thus, property tax, excise duties, patents, stamps, salt, liquor, postage, everything is covered. These gentlemen have found the secret of giving an earnest activity to the *gentle hand* of the State, while they entirely paralyze its *rough hand*.

Well, I ask the impartial reader, is this not childishness, and more than that, dangerous childishness?

How can the people not make revolution after revolution, if they have once decided not to stop until they have realised this contradiction: “Give nothing to the State and receive a great deal!”

Do we believe that if the Montagnards came to power, they would not be the victims of the means they employed to seize it?

Citizens, there have always been two political systems, and both can be supported by good reasons. According to one, the State must do a great deal, but it must also take a great deal. According to the other, its twofold action should be little felt. We must choose between these two systems. But as for the third system, which is part of the other two, and which consists in demanding everything from the State without giving it anything, it is chimerical, absurd, childish, contra-

dictory and dangerous. Those who put it forward, in order to take the pleasure of accusing all governments of impotence and thus exposing them to your attacks, are flattering and deceiving you, or at least they are deceiving themselves.

As for us, we believe that the State is or should be nothing other than the *common force* instituted, not to be an instrument of oppression and reciprocal despoilment between all citizens, but, on the contrary, to guarantee each one his own, and to ensure that justice and security reign.

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

The State. Its Nature, Object, and Destiny (1849)

Proudhon presents his critical remarks against the positions of State socialists, like Louis Blanc and Pierre Leroux, who were under the illusion that the State-Master can be magically transformed by them into the State-Servant, at the service of all the people. Unfortunately, this illusion has spread wide and large, and it is still with us. Like all illusions, it needs to be dismantled if we want to become free, rational and responsible human beings.

Source: Extract from Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Résistance. Louis Blanc et Pierre Leroux*, La Voix du Peuple, December 3, 1849. This text has been translated by Benjamin R. Tucker.

The Revolution of February raised two leading questions: one economic, the question of labor and property; the other political, the question of government or the State.

On the first of these questions the socialistic democracy is substantially in accord. They admit that it is not a question of the seizure

and division of property, or even of its repurchase. Neither is it a question of dishonorably levying additional taxes on the wealthy and property-holding classes, which, while violating the principle of property recognized in the constitution, would serve only to overturn the general economy and aggravate the situation of the proletariat. The economic reform consists, on the one hand, in opening usurious credit to competition and thereby causing capital to lose its income, — in other words, in identifying, in every citizen to the same degree, the capacity of the laborer and that of the capitalist; on the other hand, in abolishing the whole system of existing taxes, which fall only on the laborer and the poor man, and replacing them all by a single tax on capital, as an insurance premium.

By these two great reforms social economy is reconstructed from top to bottom, commercial and industrial relations are inverted, and the profits, now assured to the capitalist, return to the laborer. Competition, now anarchical and subversive, becomes emulative and fruitful; markets no longer being wanting, the workingman and employer, intimately connected, have nothing more to fear from stagnation or suspension. A new order is established upon the old institutions abolished or regenerated.

On this point the revolutionary course is laid out; the meaning of the movement is known. Whatever modification may appear in practice, the reform will be effected according to these principles and on these bases; the Revolution has no other issue. The economic problem, then, may be considered solved.

It is far from being the same with the political problem, — that is, with the disposal to be made in the future, of government and the State. On this point the question is not even stated; it has not been recognized by the public conscience and the intelligence of the masses. The economic Revolution being accomplished, as we have just seen, can government, the State, continue to exist? Ought it to continue to exist? This no one, either in democracy or out of it, dares

to call in question; and yet it is the problem which, if we would escape new catastrophes, must next be solved.

We affirm, then, and as yet we are alone in affirming, that with the economic Revolution, no longer in dispute, the State must entirely disappear; that this disappearance of the State is the necessary consequence of the organization of credit and the reform of taxation; that, as an effect of this double innovation government becomes first useless and then impossible; that in this respect it is in the same category with feudal property, lending at interest, absolute and constitutional monarchy, judicial institutions, etc., all of which have served in the education of liberty, but which fall and vanish when liberty has arrived at its fullness. Others, on the contrary, in the front ranks of whom we distinguish Louis Blanc and Pierre Leroux, maintain that, after the economic revolution, it is necessary to continue the State, but in an organized form, furnishing however, as yet no principle or plan for its organization. For them the political question, instead of being annihilated by identification with the economic question always subsists, they favor an extension of the prerogatives of the State, of power, of authority, of government. They change names only; for example, instead of *master-State* they say *servant-State*, as if a change of words sufficed to transform things! Above this system of government, about which nothing is known, hovers a system of religion whose dogma is equally unknown, whose ritual is unknown, whose object, on earth and in heaven, is unknown.

This, then is the question which at present divides the socialistic democracy, now in accord, or nearly so, on other matters: Must the State continue to exist after the question of labor and capital shall be practically solved? In other words, shall we always have, as we have had hitherto, a political constitution apart from the social constitution?

We reply in the negative. We maintain that, capital and labor once identified, society exists by itself, and has no further need of

government. We are, therefore, as we have more than once announced, anarchists. *Anarchy* is the condition of existence of adult society, as *hierarchy* is the condition of primitive society. There is a continual progress in human society from hierarchy to anarchy.

Louis Blanc and Pierre Leroux affirm the contrary. In addition to their capacity of *socialists* they retain that of *politicians*; they are men of government and authority, statesmen.

To settle the difference, we have, then, to consider the State, no longer from the point of view of the old society, which naturally and necessarily produced it, and which approaches its end, but from the point of view of the new society, which is, or must be, the result of the two fundamental and correlative reforms of credit and taxation.

Now if we prove that, from this last point of view, the State, considered in its nature rests on a thoroughly false hypothesis; that, in the second place, considered in its object, the State finds no excuse for its existence save in a second hypothesis, equally false; that, finally, considered in the reasons for its continuance, the State again can appeal only to an hypothesis as false as the two others,—these three points cleared up, the question will be settled, the State will be regarded as a superfluous, and consequently harmful and impossible, thing; government will be a contradiction.

Let us proceed at once with the analysis.

I. Of the nature of the State

“What is the State?” asks Louis Blanc.

And he replies:

“The State, under monarchical rule, is the power of one man, the tyranny of a single individual.

“The State, under oligarchical rule, is the power of a small number of men, the tyranny of a few.

“The State, under aristocratic rule, is the power of a class, the tyranny of many.

“The State, under anarchical rule is the power of the first comer who happens to be the most intelligent and the strongest; it is the tyranny of chaos.

“The State, under democratic rule, is the power of all the people, served by their elect; it is the reign of liberty.”

Of the twenty-five or thirty thousand readers of Louis Blanc, perhaps there are not ten to whom this definition of the State did not seem conclusive, and who do not repeat, after the master: The State is the power of one, of a few, of many, of all, or of the first comer, according as the word State is prefaced by one of these other adjectives: *monarchical*, *oligarchical*, *aristocratic*, *democratic*, or *anarchical*. The delegates of the Luxembourg — who think themselves robbed, it seems, when any one allows himself to hold an opinion different from theirs on the meaning and tendencies of the Revolution of February — in a letter that has been made public, have done me the honor to inform me that they regard Louis Blanc’s answer as quite triumphant, and that I can say nothing in reply. It would seem that none of the citizen-delegates ever have studied Greek. Otherwise, they would have seen that their master and friend, Louis Blanc, instead of defining the State, has only translated into French the Greek words *monos*, one; *oligoĩ*, a few; *aristoĩ*, the great; *démos*, the people; and the privative *a*, which means no. It is by the use of these qualifying terms that Aristotle has distinguished the various forms of the State, which is designated by the word *arché*, authority, government, State. We ask pardon of our readers, but it is not our fault if the political science of the Luxembourg does not go beyond etymology.

And mark the artifice! Louis Blanc, in his translation, only had to use the word tyranny four times, *tyranny of one*, *tyranny of many*, etc., and to avoid it once, *Power of the People, served by their elect*, to win applause. Every State save the democratic, according to Louis Blanc, is tyranny. Anarchy especially receives a peculiar treatment; it is *the power of the first comer who happens to be the most intelligent and the strongest*; it is the *tyranny of chaos*. What a monster must be this *first comer*, who, first comer that he is, nevertheless happens to be *the most intelligent and the strongest*, and who exercises his *tyranny in chaos*! After that who could prefer anarchy to this charming government of all the people, served so well, as we know, by their elect? How overwhelming it is, to be sure! at the first blow we find ourselves flat on the ground. O rhetorician! thank God for having created for your express benefit, in the nineteenth century, such stupidity as that of your so-called delegates of the working classes; otherwise you would have perished under a storm of hisses the first time you touched a pen.

What is the State? This question must be answered. The list of the various forms of the State, which Louis Blanc, after Aristotle, has prepared, has taught us nothing. As for Pierre Leroux, it is not worth while to interrogate him; he would tell us that the question is inconsiderate; that the State has always existed; that it always will exist, — the final reason of conservatives and old women.

The State is the EXTERNAL constitution of the social power.

By this external constitution of its power and sovereignty, the people does not govern itself; now one individual, now several, by a title either elective or hereditary, are charged with governing it, with managing its affairs, with negotiating and compromising in its name; in a word, with performing all the acts of a father of a family, a guardian, a manager, or a proxy, furnished with a general, absolute, and irrevocable power of attorney.

This external constitution of the collective power, to which the Greeks gave the name *arché*, sovereignty, authority, government, rests then on this hypothesis: that a people, that the collective being which we call society, cannot govern itself, think, act, express itself, unaided, like beings endowed with individual personality; that, to do these things, it must be represented by one or more individuals, who, by any title whatever, are regarded as custodians of the will of the people, and its agents. According to this hypothesis, it is impossible for the collective power, which belongs essentially to the mass, to express itself and act directly, without the mediation of organs expressly established and, so to speak, posted *ad hoc*. It seems, we say, — and this is the explanation of the constitution of the State in all its varieties and forms, — that the collective being, society, existing only in the mind, cannot make itself felt save through monarchical incarnation, aristocratic usurpation, or democratic mandate; consequently, that all special and personal manifestation is forbidden to it.

Now it is precisely this conception of the collective being, of its life, its action, its unity, its individuality, its personality, — for society is a person, understand! just as the entire Humanity is a person, — it is this conception of the collective human being that we deny today; and it is for that reason that we deny the State also, that we deny government, that we exclude from society, when economically revolutionized, every constitution of the popular power, either without or within the mass, by hereditary royalty, feudal institution, or democratic delegation.

We affirm, on the contrary, that the people, that society, that the mass, can and ought to govern itself by itself; to think, act, rise, and halt, like a man; to manifest itself, in fine, in its physical, intellectual, and moral individuality, without the aid of all these spokesmen, who formerly were despots, who now are aristocrats, who from time to time have been pretended delegates, fawners on or servants of the crowd, and whom we call plainly and simply popular agitators, *demagogues*.

In short:

We deny government and the State, because we affirm that which the founders of States have never believed in, the personality and autonomy of the masses.

We affirm further that every constitution of the State has no other object than to lead society to this condition of autonomy; that the different forms of the State, from absolute monarchy to representative *democracy*, are all only middle terms, illogical and unstable positions, serving one after another as transitions or steps to liberty, and forming the rounds of the political ladder upon which societies mount to self-consciousness and self-possession.

We affirm, finally, that this *anarchy*, which expresses, as we now see, the highest degree of liberty and order at which humanity can arrive, is the true formula of the Republic, the goal towards which the Revolution of February urges us; so that between the Republic and the government, between universal suffrage and the State, there is a contradiction.

These systematic affirmations we establish in two ways: first, by the historical and negative method, demonstrating that no establishment of authority, no organization of the collective force from without, is henceforth possible for us. This demonstration we commenced in the *Confessions of a Revolutionist*, in reciting the fall of all the governments which have succeeded one another in France for sixty years, discovering the cause of their abolition, and in the last place signaling the exhaustion and death of authority in the corrupted reign of Louis Philippe, in the inert dictatorship of the provisional government, and in the insignificant presidency of General Cavaignac and Louis Bonaparte.

We prove our thesis, in the second place, by explaining how, through the economic reform, through industrial solidarity and the organization of universal suffrage, the people passes from spontaneity to

reflection and consciousness; act, no longer from impulse and enthusiasm, but with design; maintains itself without masters and servants, without delegates as without aristocrats, absolutely as would an individual. Thus, the conception of person, the idea of the *me*, becomes extended and generalized; as there is an individual person or *me*, so there is a collective person or *me*; in the one case as in the other, will, actions, soul, spirit, life, unknown in their principle, inconceivable in their essence, result from the animating and vital fact of organization. The psychology of nations and of humanity, like the psychology of man, becomes a possible science. It was this demonstration that we referred to in our publications on circulation and credit as well as in the fourteenth chapter of the manifesto of *La Voix du Peuple* relative to the Constitution.

So, when Louis Blanc and Pierre Leroux assume the position of defenders of the State, — that is, of the external constitution of the public power, — they only reproduce, in a varied form peculiar to themselves which they have not yet made known, that old fiction of representative government, whose integral formula, whose completest expression, is still the constitutional monarchy. Did we, then, accomplish the Revolution of February in order to attain this retrogressive contradiction?

It seems to us — what do you say, readers? — that the question begins to exhibit itself in a somewhat clearer light; that the weak-minded, after what we have just said, will be able to form an idea of the State; that they will understand how republicans can inquire if it is indispensable, after an economic revolution which changes all social relations, to maintain, to please the vanity of pretended statesmen, and at a cost of two thousand millions per annum, this parasitic organ called government. And the honorable delegates of the Luxembourg, who, being seated in the armchairs of the peerage, therefore think themselves politicians, and claim so courageously an exclusive understanding of the Revolution, doubtless will fear no longer that we, in our capacity of the *most intelligent* and the *strongest*, after having

abolished government, as useless and too costly, may establish the tyranny of chaos. We deny the State and the government; we affirm in the same breath the autonomy of the people and its majority. How can we be upholders of tyranny, aspirants for the ministry, competitors of Louis Blanc and Pierre Leroux?

In truth, we do not understand the logic of our adversaries. They accept a principle without troubling themselves about its consequences; they approve, for example, the equality of taxation which the tax on capital realizes; they adopt popular, mutual, and gratuitous credit, for all these terms are synonymous; they cheer at the dethronement of capital and the emancipation of labor; then, when it remains to draw the anti-governmental conclusions from these premises, they protest, they continue to talk of politics and government, without inquiring whether government is compatible with industrial liberty and equality; whether there is a possibility of a political science, when there is a necessity for an economic science! Property they attack without scruple, in spite of its venerable antiquity; but they bow before power like church-wardens before the holy sacrament. Government is to them the necessary and immutable *a priori*, the principle of principles, the eternal *arché*.

Certainly, we do not offer our affirmations as proofs; we know, as well as any one, on what conditions a proposition is demonstrated. We only say that, before proceeding to a new constitution of the State, we must inquire whether, in view of the economic reforms which the Revolution imposes upon us, the State itself should not be abolished; whether this end of political institutions does not result from the meaning and bearing of economic reform. We ask whether, in fact, after the explosion of February, after the establishment of universal suffrage, the declaration of the omnipotence of the masses, and the henceforth inevitable subordination of power to the popular will, any government whatever is still possible, whether a government would not be placed perpetually in the alternative either of submissively following the blind and contradictory injunctions of the

multitude, or of intentionally deceiving it, as the provisional government has done, as demagogues in all ages have done. We ask, at least, which of the various attributes of the State should be retained and strengthened, which abolished. For, should we find, as may still be expected, that, of all the present attributes of the State, not one can survive the economic reform, it would be quite necessary to admit, on the strength of this negative demonstration that, in the new condition of society, the State is nothing, can be nothing; in short, that the only way to organize democratic government is to abolish government,

Instead of this positive, practical, realistic analysis of the revolutionary movement, what course do our pretended apostles take? They go to consult Lycurgus, Plato, Orpheus, and all the mythological oracles; they interrogate the ancient legends; they appeal to remotest antiquity for the solution of problems exclusively modern, and then give us for answer the whimsical illuminations of their brain.

Once more: is this the science of society and of the Revolution which must, at first sight, solve all problems; a science essentially practical and immediately applicable; a science eminently traditional doubtless, but above all thoroughly progressive, in which progress takes place through the systematic negation of tradition itself?

II. Of the end or object of the State

We have just seen that the idea of the State, considered in its nature, rests entirely on an hypothesis which is at least doubtful, — that of the impersonality and the physical, intellectual, and moral inertia of the masses. We shall now prove that this same idea of the State, considered in its object, rests on another hypothesis, still more improbable than the first, — that of the permanence of antagonism in

humanity, an hypothesis which is itself a consequence of the primitive dogma of the fall or of original sin.

We continue to quote *Le Nouveau Monde*:

“What would happen,” asks Louis Blanc, “if we should leave the most intelligent or the strongest to place obstacles in the way of the development of the faculties of one who is less strong or less intelligent? Liberty would be destroyed.

“How prevent this crime? By interposing between oppressor and oppressed the whole power of the people.

“If James oppresses Peter, shall the thirty-four millions of men of whom French society is composed run all at once to protect Peter, to maintain liberty? To pretend such a thing would be buffoonery.

“How then shall society intervene?

“Through those whom it has chosen to REPRESENT it for this purpose.

“But these REPRESENTATIVES of society, these servants of the people, who are they? The State.

“Then the State is only society itself, acting as society, to prevent — what? — oppression; to maintain — what? — liberty.”

That is clear. The State is a REPRESENTATION of society, externally organized to protect the *weak* against the *strong*; in other words, to preserve peace between disputants and maintain order. Louis Blanc has not gone, far, as we see, to find the object of the State. It can be traced from Grotius, Justinian, Cicero, etc., in all the authors who ever have written on public right.

[...]

Socialism, we know, does not require with certain people great efforts of the imagination. They imitate, flatly enough, the old mythologies; they copy Catholicism, while declaiming against it; they ape power, which they lust after; then they shout with all their strength: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity! and the circle is complete. One passes for a revelator, a reformer, a democratic and social restorer, one is named as a candidate for the ministry of progress, — nay, even for the dictatorship of the Republic!

So, by the confession of Louis Blanc, power is born of barbarism; its organization bears witness to a state of ferocity and violence among primitive men, — an effect of the utter absence of commerce and industry. To this savagism the State had to put an end by opposing to the force of each individual a superior force capable, in the absence of any other argument, of restraining his will. The constitution of the State supposes, then, as we have just said, a profound social antagonism, *homo homini lupus*. Louis Blanc himself says this when, after having divided men into the *strong* and the *weak*, disputing with each other like wild beasts for their food, he interposes between them, as a mediator, the State.

Then the State would be useless; the State would lack an object as well as a motive; the State would have to take itself away, — if there should come a day when, from any cause whatever, society should contain neither *strong* nor *weak*, — that is, when the inequality of physical and intellectual powers could not be a cause of robbery and oppression, independently of the protection, more fictitious than real by the way, of the State.

Now, this is precisely the thesis that we maintain today.

The power that tempers morals, that gradually substitutes the rule of right for the rule of force, that establishes security, that creates step by step liberty and equality, is, in a much higher degree than religion and the State, labor; first, the labor of commerce and industry; next, science, which spiritualizes it; in the last analysis, art, its immortal

flower. Religion by its promises and its threats, the State by its tribunals and its armies, gave to the sentiment of justice, which was too weak among primitive men, the only sanction intelligible to savage minds. For us, whom industry, science, literature, art, have corrupted, as Jean Jacques said, this sanction lies elsewhere; we find it in the division of property, in the machinery of industry, in the growth of luxury, in the overruling desire for well-being, — a desire which imposes upon all a necessity of labor. After the barbarism of the early ages, after the price of caste and the feudal constitution of primitive society, a last element of slavery still remained: capital. Capital having lost its way, the laborer — that is, the merchant, the mechanic, the farmer, the savant, the artist — no longer needs protection; his protection is his talent, his knowledge is his industry. After the dethronement of capital, the continuance of the State, far from protecting liberty, can only compromise liberty.

He has a sorry idea of the human race — of its essence, its perfectibility, its destiny — who conceive it as an agglomeration of individuals necessarily exposed, by the inequality of physical and intellectual forces, to the constant danger of reciprocal spoliation or the tyranny of a few. Such an idea is a proof of the most retrogressive philosophy; it belongs to those days of barbarism when the absence of the true elements of social order left to the genius of the legislator no method of action save that of force; when the supremacy of a pacifying and avenging power appeared to all as the just consequence of a previous degradation and an original stain. To give our whole thought, we regard political and judicial institutions as the exoteric and concrete formula of the myth of the fall, the mystery of redemption, and the sacrament of penitence. It is curious to see pretended socialists, enemies or rivals of Church and State, copying all that they blaspheme, — the representative system in politics, the dogma of the fall in religion.

Since they talk so much of doctrine, we frankly declare that such is not ours.

In our view, the moral condition of society is modified and ameliorated at the same rate as its economic condition. The morality of a wild, ignorant, and idle people is one thing; that of an industrious and artistic people another: consequently, the social guarantees that prevail among the former are quite different from those that prevail among the latter. In a society transformed, almost unconsciously, by its economic development, there is no longer either *strong* or *weak*; there are only laborers whose faculties and means incessantly tend, through industrial solidarity and the guarantee of circulation, to become equalized. In vain, to assure the right and the duty of each, does the imagination go back to that idea of authority and government which attests the profound despair of souls long terrified by the police and the priesthood: the simplest examination of the attributes of the State suffices to demonstrate that, if inequality of fortunes, oppression, robbery, and misery are not our eternal inheritance, the first leprosy to be eradicated, after capitalistic exploitation, the first plague to be wiped out, is the State.

See, in fact, budget in hand, what the State is.

The State is the army. Reformer, do you need an army to defend you? If so, your idea of public security is Cæsar's and Napoleon's. You are not a republican; you are a despot.

The State is the police; city police, rural police, police of the waters and forests. Reformer, do you need police? Then your idea of order is Fouché's, Gisquet's, Carussidière's, and M. Carlier's. You are not a democrat, you are a spy.

The State is the whole judicial system; justices of the peace, tribunals of first instance, courts of appeal, court of cassation, high court, tribunals of experts, commercial tribunals, council of prefects, State council, councils of war. Reformer, do you need all this judiciary? Then your idea of justice is M. Baroche's, M. Dupin's, and Perrin Dandin's. You are not a socialist; you are a red-tapist.

The State is the treasury, the budget. Reformer, you do not desire the abolition of taxation? Then your idea of public wealth is M. Thiers's who thinks that the largest budgets are the best. You are not an organizer of labor; you are an exciseman.

The State is the custom-house. Reformer, do you need, for the protection of national labor, differential duties and toll-houses? Then your idea of commerce and circulation is M. Fould's and M. Rothschild's. You are not an apostle of fraternity; you are a Jew [i.e. a moneylender].

The State is the public debt, the mint, the sinking fund, the savings-banks, etc. Reformer, are these the foundation of your science? Then your idea of social economy is that of MM. Humann, Lacave-Laplagne, Garnier-Pagès, Passy, Duclerc, and the *Man with Forty Crowns*. You are a Turcaret.

The State — but we must stop. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, in the State, from the top of the hierarchy to its foot, which is not an abuse to be reformed, a parasite to be exterminated, an instrument of tyranny to be destroyed. And you talk to us of maintaining the State, of extending the functions of the State, of increasing the power of the State! Go to, you are not a revolutionist; for the true revolutionist is essentially a simplifier and a liberal. You are a mystifier, a juggler; you are a marplot.

III. Of an ulterior destiny of the State

There arises in favor of the State a last hypothesis. The fact that the State, say the pseudo-democrats, hitherto has performed only a rôle of parasitism and tyranny is no reason for denying it a nobler and more humane destiny. The State is destined to become the principal organ of production, consumption, and circulation; the initiator of liberty and equality.

For liberty and equality are the State.

Credit is the State.

Commerce, agriculture, and manufactures are the State.

Canals, railroads, mines, insurance companies, as well as tobacco-shops and post-offices, are the State.

Public education is the State.

The State, in fine, dropping its negative attributes to clothe itself with positive ones, must change from the oppressor, parasite, and conservative it ever has been, into an organizer, producer, and servant. That would be feudalism regenerated, the hierarchy of industrial associations, organized and graded according to a potent formula the secret of which Pierre Leroux still hides from our sight.

Thus, the organizers of the State suppose — for in all this they only go from supposition to supposition — that the State can change its nature, turn itself around, so to speak; from Satan become an archangel; and, after having lived for centuries by blood and slaughter like a wild beast, feed upon plants with the deer, and give suck to the lambs. Such is the teaching of Louis Blanc and Pierre Leroux; such, as we said long ago, is the whole secret of socialism.

“We love the tutelary, generous, devoted government, taking as its motto those profound words of the Gospel: *Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be the servant of all*; and we hate the deprived, corrupting, oppressive government, making the people its prey. We admire it representing the generous and living portion of humanity; we abhor it when it represents the cadaverous portion. We revolt against the insolence, usurpation, and robbery involved in the idea of the MASTER-STATE; and we applaud that which is touching, fruitful, and noble in the idea of the SERVANT-STATE. Or better: there is a belief which we hold a thousand times dearer than life,—our belief in the approaching and final TRANSFORMATION of

power. *That is the triumphant passage from the old world to the new.* All the government of Europe rest today on the idea of the MASTER-STATE; but they are dancing desperately the dance of the dead." (*Le Nouveau Monde*, November 16, 1849).

Pierre Leroux is a thorough believer in these ideas. What he wishes, what he teaches, and what he calls for is a regeneration of the State, — he has not told us yet whereby and by whom this regeneration should be effected, — just as he wishes and calls for a regeneration of Christianity without, as yet, having stated his dogma and given his credo.

We believe, in opposition to Pierre Leroux and Louis Blanc, that the theory of the tutelary, generous, devoted, productive, initiative, organizing, liberal and progressive State is a utopia, a pure illusion of their intellectual vision. Pierre Leroux and Louis Blanc seem to us like a man who, standing above a mirror and seeing his image reversed, should pretend that this image must become a reality some day and replace (pardon us the expression) his *natural person*.

This is what separates us from these two men, whose talents and services, whatever they may say, we have never dreamed of denying, but whose stubborn hallucination we deplore. We do not believe in the SERVANT-STATE: to us it is a flat contradiction.

Servant and *master*, when applied to the State, are synonymous terms; just as *more* and *less*, when applied to equality, are identical terms. The proprietor, by interest on capital, demands *more* than equality; communism, by the formula, *to each according to his needs*, allows *less* than equality: always inequality; and that is why we are neither a communist nor a proprietor. Likewise, whoever says *master-State* says usurpation of the public power; whoever says *servant-State* says delegation of the public power; always an alienation of this power, always a power, always an external, arbitrary authority instead of the immanent, inalienable, untransferable

authority of citizens; always *more* or *less* than liberty. It is for this reason that we are opposed to the State.

Further, to leave metaphysics and return to the field of experience, here is what we have to say to Louis Blanc and Pierre Leroux.

You pretend and affirm that the State, that the government, can, and ought to be, wholly changed in its principle, in its essence, in its action, in its relations with citizens, as well as in its results; that thus the State, a bankrupt and a counterfeiter, should be the sole source of credit; that for so many centuries an enemy of knowledge, and at the present moment still hostile to primary instruction and the liberty of the press, it is its business to officially provide for the instruction of citizens; that, after having left commerce, industry, agriculture, and all the machinery of wealth to develop themselves without its aid, often even in spite of its resistance, it belongs to it to take the initiative in the whole field of labor as in the world of ideas; that, in fine, the eternal enemy of liberty, it yet ought, not to leave liberty to itself, but to create and direct liberty. It is this marvelous transformation of the State that constitutes, in your opinion, the present Revolution.

There lies upon you, then, the twofold obligation: first, of establishing the truth of your hypothesis by showing its traditional legitimacy, exhibiting its historical titles, and developing its philosophy; in the second place, of applying it in practice.

Now, it appears already that both theory and practice, in your hypothesis, formally contradict the idea itself, and the facts of the past, and the most authentic tendencies of humanity.

Your theory, we say, involves a contradiction in its terms, since it pretends to make liberty a creation of the State, while the State, on the contrary, is to be a creation of liberty. In fact, if the State imposes itself upon my will, the State is master; I am not free; the theory is undermined.

It contradicts the facts of the past, since it is certain, as you yourselves admit, that everything that has been produced within the sphere of human activity of a positive, good, and beautiful character, was the product of liberty exclusively, acting independently of the State, and almost always in opposition to the State; which leads directly to this proposition, which ruins your system, that liberty is sufficient unto itself and does not need the State.

Finally, your theory contradicts the manifest tendencies of civilization; since, instead of continually adding to individual liberty and dignity by making every human soul, according to Kant's precept, a pattern of entire humanity, one face of the collective soul, you subordinate the private person to the public person; you submit the individual to the group; you absorb the citizen in the State.

It is for you to remove all these contradictions by a principle superior to liberty and to the State. We, who simply deny the State; who, resolutely, following the line of liberty, remain faithful to the revolutionary practice, — it is not for us to demonstrate to you the falsity of your hypothesis; we await your proofs. The *master-State* is lost; you are with us in admitting it. As for the *servant-State*, we do not know what it may be; we distrust it as supreme hypocrisy. The *servant-State* seems to us quite the same thing as a servant-mistress; we do not wish it; with our present light, we prefer to espouse Liberty in legitimate marriage. Explain, then, if you can, why, after having demolished the State through love of this adored liberty, we must now, in consequence of the same love, return to the State. Until you have solved this problem, we shall continue to protest against all government, all authority, all power; we shall maintain, through all and against all, the prerogative of liberty. We shall say to you: Liberty is, for us, a thing gained; now, you know the rule of law: *Melior est conditio possidentis* [In court, the factual situation of the person who already exercises possession is favored]. Produce your titles to the reorganization of government; otherwise, no government!

To sum up:

The State is the *external* constitution of the social power.

The constitution supposes, in principle, that society is a creature of the mind, destitute of spontaneity, providence, unity, needing for its action to be fictitiously represented by one or more elected or hereditary commissioners: an hypothesis the falsity of which the economic development of society and the organization of universal suffrage agree in demonstrating.

The constitution of the State supposes further, as to its object, that antagonism or a state of war is the essential and irrevocable condition of humanity, a condition which necessitates, between the *weak* and the *strong*, the intervention of a coercive power to put an end to their struggles by universal oppression. We maintain that, in this respect, the mission of the State is ended; that, by the division of labor, industrial solidarity, the desire for well-being, and the equal distribution of capital and taxation, liberty and justice obtain surer guarantees than any that ever were afforded them by religion and the State.

As for utilitarian transformation of the State, we consider it as a utopia contradicted at once by governmental tradition, and the revolutionary tendency, and the spirit of the henceforth admitted economic reforms. In any case, we say that to liberty alone it would belong to reorganize power, which is equivalent at present to the complete exclusion of power.

As a result, either no social revolution, or no more government; such is our solution of the political problem.

Mikhail Bakunin

On the “Popular” State (1873)

In these passages we find all of Bakunin's lucidity and foresight in his analysis of the harmful illusions that socialism would generate in many people in the form of a People's State or of a Temporary State.

Source: Passages taken from Mikhail Bakunin, *Étatisme et anarchie*, Zürich, 1873.

Modern capitalist industry and banking speculation, to develop to their full potential, need the great centralisation of the State, which alone can subject to exploitation the millions and millions of proletarians of the masses of the people. The federal organisation, from bottom to top, of workers' associations, of groups, of communes, of cantons, and finally of regions and nations, is the one and only condition of real and not fictitious freedom. Such condition is contrary to the nature of capitalist industry and banking speculation just as any autonomous economic system is incompatible with them.

On the other hand, capitalist industry and banking speculation are perfectly suited to so-called *representative democracy*. This modern structure of the State, founded on the *pseudo-sovereignty* of the *pseudo-will* of the people, supposedly expressed by so-called representatives of the people in pseudo-people's assemblies, brings together the two preconditions which are necessary for them to achieve their ends, namely, State centralisation and the effective subjection of the sovereign people to the intellectual ruling minority which supposedly represents and infallibly exploits them.

[...]

All exploitation of labour, whatever the political forms of the pseudo-voluntariness and pseudo-freedom of the people with which it is adorned, is bitter to the people. Therefore, no individuals, however docile by nature and however accustomed they may be to obeying the authorities, will willingly resign themselves to submitting to them; for this, permanent constraint is necessary; this means that police surveillance and military force are indispensable.

The modern State, by its very essence and the goals it sets itself, is necessarily a military State, and a military State is almost necessarily destined to become a conquering State. If it does not conquer, it will be conquered, for the simple reason that wherever force exists, it must make itself visible and act. From this it follows once again that the modern State must necessarily become large and strong; this is the indispensable precondition for its survival.

[...]

At the present time, a State worthy of the name, a strong State, can only have one sure foundation: military and bureaucratic centralisation. There is only one notable difference between the monarchy and

the democratic republic: under the former, the bureaucratic gentry oppress and put pressure on the people, in the name of the king, for the greatest profit of the possessing and privileged classes, as well as in its own interest; under the republic, it oppresses and puts pressure on the people in the same way for the same pockets and the same classes, but in the name of the will of the people. Under the republic, the pseudo-nation, the legal nation, supposedly represented by the State, suffocates and will continue to suffocate the real and living people. But the people will not have it any easier when the stick that strikes them is called “the people’s stick.”

The social question, the passion for social revolution, has today seized the French proletariat. It must be satisfied or repressed; but it can only be satisfied when government constraint, the last bulwark of bourgeois interests, collapses. Thus, no State, however democratic its forms, not even the reddest *political* republic, popular only in the sense of that lie known as the representation of the people, can give the people what they need, namely the free organisation of their own interests, from the bottom up, without any interference, tutelage or constraint from above. And this because any State, even the most republican and democratic, even the pseudo-popular State imagined by Monsieur Marx, is nothing other, in its essence, than an entity ruling the masses from the top down through a privileged minority of conceited intellectuals, which pretends to understand the true interests of the people better than the people themselves.

For the ruling and possessing classes, satisfying popular passions and aspirations is an absolute impossibility. But they have only one means left to them: *government coercion*, in a word the *State*, because the State is precisely synonymous with *coercion*, domination by force, camouflaged if possible, brutal and naked if necessary.

[...]

The time will come when there will be no more States — the Revolutionary Socialist Party is striving with all its might to destroy them in Europe — when, on the ruins of the political States, there will be founded in complete freedom the free and fraternal alliance, organised from below upwards, of free associations of production, of communes and regional federations embracing without distinction, because freely, individuals of every language and every nationality; and then access to the sea will be open to all on an equal footing; to the inhabitants of the coast, directly; to the inhabitants of countries far from the sea, by means of railways freed from all State supervisors, taxes, regulations, hassles, prohibitions, authorisations and government orders.

[...]

We have already on several occasions expressed a very strong aversion to the theory of Lassalle and Marx which recommends to the workers, if not as the supreme ideal, at least as the essential immediate goal, *the foundation of a popular State*, which, as they themselves explained, would be nothing other than ‘*the proletariat organised as a ruling class.*’

If the proletariat becomes the ruling class, who, it is asked, will it rule? There will still be a class subject to this new ruling class, to this new State, if only, for example, the plebs of the countryside who, as we know, does not enjoy the favour of the Marxists and who, finding itself on a lower cultural level, will probably be ruled by the proletariat of the towns and factories. Or, if we consider the question from an ethnic point of view, then, presumably, as far as the Germans are concerned, it is the Slavs who, for the same reason, will occupy in regard to the victorious German proletariat the same position of servile subordination that the latter now occupies in relation to its own bourgeoisie.

If there is a State, then necessarily there is domination and consequently slavery. A State without slavery, open or hidden, is inconceivable, which is why we are enemies of the State.

What is meant by: the proletariat organised as a ruling class? Does this mean that the proletariat will be entirely in charge of public affairs? There are about forty million Germans. Can it be that these forty million are part of the government and that, since the whole people rules, no one will be ruled? Then there will be no government, there will be no State; but if there is a State, there will also be those who are ruled, there will be slaves.

In the Marxist theory, this dilemma is resolved very simply. By popular government Marxists mean the government of the people by a small number of representatives elected by the people through universal suffrage. The election by the whole nation of the so-called representatives of the people and of the rulers of the State — which is the last word of both the Marxists and the democrats — is a lie which conceals the despotism of the ruling minority, a lie all the more dangerous because it is presented as the expression of the supposed will of the people.

So, from whatever angle we look at this question, we arrive at the same execrable result: the government of the immense majority of the popular masses by a privileged minority. But this minority, say the Marxists, will consist of workers. Yes, certainly, *former* workers, but who, as soon as they become rulers or representatives of the people, will cease to be workers and will begin to look down on the proletarian world from the height of the State. They will no longer represent the people, but themselves and their own pretensions to govern the people. Anyone who doubts this is not at all familiar with human nature.

These elected representatives will be, however, convinced socialists and, moreover, learned socialists. The terms '*scientific socialist*' and '*scientific socialism*', which recur incessantly in the writings of the

Lassallians and Marxists, prove in themselves that the pseudo-popular State will be nothing other than the despotic government of the proletarian masses by a new and very restricted aristocracy of real or pretended scientists. Since the people are not learned, they will be entirely freed from governmental worries and fully integrated into the herd of the governed. What an emancipation!

Marxists realise this contradiction and, while admitting that the most cumbersome, oppressive and despicable form of governmental leadership of scientists will be, whatever the democratic forms, a real dictatorship, they console themselves with the idea that this dictatorship will be temporary and short-lived. They claim that its only concern and objective will be to educate the people and raise them, both economically and politically, to such a level that government of any kind will soon become unnecessary; and the State, after losing its political, i.e. authoritarian, character, will transform itself into a completely free organisation of economic and communal interests.

There is here a flagrant contradiction. If their State is indeed a People's State, what reasons would there be for abolishing it? And if, on the other hand, its abolition is necessary for the real emancipation of the people, how can it be called a People's State? By arguing with them, we have led them to recognise that freedom or anarchy, that is to say, the free organisation of the working masses from below upward, is the ultimate goal of social evolution, and that every State, including their People's State, is a yoke, which means that it engenders despotism on the one hand and slavery on the other.

In their view, this State yoke, this dictatorship, is a necessary transitional phase in the process of achieving the complete emancipation of the people: anarchy or freedom being the goal, the State or dictatorship the means. So, to free the masses of the people, we must begin by enslaving them.

For the moment, our polemic has stopped at this contradiction. The Marxists claim that only dictatorship, of course their dictatorship,

can create freedom for the people; to this we reply that no dictatorship can have any other end than to last as long as possible and that it is only capable of engendering slavery in the people who suffer it and of nurturing only slavery in the people who endure it. Freedom can only be created by freedom, by the uprising of the whole people and by the free organisation of the working masses from below upward.

Arthur Arnould
**Sovereignty of the State, or Sovereignty of
the People**
(1877)

This short text first appeared, in the form of letter, in a French newspaper. Its apparent levity should not diminish the validity and truthfulness of its content.

It reiterates once again the absurdity of thinking and hoping that a body, the Central Territorial State, created to oppress some and to favor others, can miraculously transform itself into an instrument of liberation and emancipation for all.

Source: Arthur Arnould, *L'État e la révolution*, 1877.

A man eats mushrooms and is poisoned. The doctor gives him an emetic [1] and put him back on his feet. He immediately ran to his cook and said:

Yesterday's mushrooms in white sauce have poisoned me! Tomorrow, you'll prepare them in brown sauce.

The man eats the mushrooms in brown sauce.

A second poisoning takes place, a second visit to the doctor and a second course of emetics.

By Jove! — he says to his cook — I don't want any more mushrooms in brown or white sauce. Tomorrow, you'll fry them.

Third poisoning, accompanied by a doctor and an emetic.

This time — cries our man — I won't be poisoned again! Maître Jacques, put the mushrooms under oil.

The oil preserved mushrooms poison him again.

But he is an imbecile! — you will say. Let him throw away the mushrooms and stop eating them.

Be less severe, I beg you, for this imbecile is you, it is us, it is the whole of humanity.

For four or five thousand years you have been cooking up the State — that is to say, Power, Authority, Government — in all sorts of sauces, making, undoing, trimming and cutting constitutions for all kinds of bosses, and the poisoning goes on.

You have tried constitutional monarchies, absolute monarchies, parliamentary monarchies, unitary and centralised republics, and the one thing you always suffer from, namely despotism, the tyranny of the State, you have scrupulously respected and jealously maintained.

Yet, instructive events were not lacking, and after the 4th of September [2] you could see, over the course of five years, that an elected parliament behaved just as well, in terms of a state of siege, stifling of freedom and arbitrary decision-making, as any monarch.

Oh, that was the Parliament of the 'day of sorrow' — they say. — Then, we forgot to tell the MPs when they had to leave and what they had to do.

That is not the point. The fact is that a House with no executive power other than its own, elected by you, can govern you as it pleases, ignoring your wishes, your needs, your desires, and you have no means of imposing them on it. The fact is that, instead of a one-headed dictatorship, you have a 500-headed dictatorship.

The evil is not that we are governed by this or that king, absolute or constitutional, or by a republic with or without a president.

Evil consists essentially in this: that it is illusory to share power, that it is illusory to share strength.

If the State has the power, you don't have it.

If the State has the strength, you don't have it.

And if you have neither power nor strength, what do you have?

You have nothing!

You are at the State's disposal. You are its property, its thing.

You belong to it, and it does not belong to you, and, consequently, you do not belong to yourselves.

— Oh, the next time, I will take guarantees, and I will have my ordinary Representatives draw up a Constitution that will bind the State so tightly that it will no longer be able to make a single move without my permission.

So, you recognise that we need to take out guarantees against the State, that we need to bind it? Is it therefore dangerous?

What, then, is this State that you supposedly cannot do without, and which you must always distrust and from which you should defend yourself?

But, who will be responsible for applying these laws against the State, responsible for protecting you against the encroachments, omnipotence and dictatorship of the State?

The State, of course, because if you took care of your own affairs directly, the State would no longer exist.

So, you say to the dictatorship:

By virtue of your dictatorial powers, you will be responsible for restraining, moderating and controlling yourself. I entrust you with the duty of reducing the State to a bare minimum!

Does that sound absurd?

But that's what you do every fifteen years, after every revolution.

There must be a central power — you say — a supreme authority, to enforce and pass into law the will of the sovereign people. Provided I enjoy all the necessary freedoms, the stronger the State, the stronger I will be myself, since the State represents me.

You have already had all these freedoms, either in law, during the first Revolution, or in fact, for a few months or a few days, after 1848 [3] and the 4th of September. You have had and practised the right of assembly and association, you have had freedom of the press, you have had, through the national guard, the armed nation, — and all this has always been taken away from you.

Why?

Because freedom and dictatorship cannot coexist. There is an absolute antinomy between them, and one must suppress the other.

Each time, the State came to say:

I can no longer govern. I am no longer the master. To live, I need certain conditions. I am threatened. I will die.

And it was right, it was telling the truth.

So, your representatives, and you yourselves, also imbued with the religion of the State, with the idea of the necessity of the State, all of you, replied:

Take back those freedoms with which you cannot function. Take charge of the Police, Defence, Justice, Education and Administration. I reserve the right to put you in charge of everything. That's what my Sovereignty consists of.

You always hope that, thanks to progress, there will come a time when the State will be occupied by people who represent your ideas exactly, and then, on that day, when the dictatorship of the State becomes, in fact, your own dictatorship, the question will be resolved.

Make no mistake about it. If this impossible agreement were ever to exist, it would not last for more than twenty-four hours, for the good reason that your Representatives, having in turn become the State, would immediately have the same interests as the State. And since the interest of the State consists in Power and Centralisation, i.e. dictatorship, and your interest instead in freedom, i.e. autonomy, the split and antagonism would immediately be re-established by the sheer force of things.

So, stop trying to combine fire and water, the right of the people and the right of the State.

The Sovereignty of the people is called Liberty.

The Sovereignty of the State is called Dictatorship.

The first is expressed by the free grouping of natural autonomies.

The second is expressed by Centralisation and uniform Compression under the same level.

The first is called Free Union — it is the association.

The other is called Imposed Unity — it is the barracks.

Notes

[1] The term emetic literally means ‘causing emesis’ (Greek **εμειν**, to vomit), thus indicating an action that is capable of stimulating vomiting, i.e. expelling the food that caused the poisoning.

[2] The revolution of 4 September 1870 put an end to the Monarchy of Napoleon III and introduced the Third Republic.

[3] The revolution of February 1848 led to the fall of King Louis Philippe and the establishment of the Second Republic.

Friedrich Nietzsche

The State as the Coldest Monster (1883)

A piece of writing that portrays the State as the most horrific entity ever invented in the history of humanity.

Source: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Chapter XI: The New Idol, 1883.

The new idol

Somewhere there are still peoples and herds, but not here, my brothers: here there are States.

The State? What is that? Well! Then open your ears, for now I will say something to you concerning the death of peoples.

The State is the coldest of all cold monsters. It also lies coldly; and this lie crawls out of its mouth: “I, the State, am the people.”

It is a lie! It was creators who created peoples and hung a faith and a love over them: thus, they served life.

Destroyers are they who set traps for many and call them the State: they hang a sword and a hundred cravings over them.

Where there is still a people, there the State is not understood, but hated as the evil eye, and as sin against morals and rights.

This sign I give to you: every people speak its language of good and evil, which its neighbour does not understand. It has invented its own language in customs and laws.

But the State lies in all the tongues of good and evil; and whatever it says, it lies — and whatever it has, it has stolen.

Everything in him is false; he bites with his stolen teeth, the vicious one. Even his entrails are false.

Confusion of language of good and evil. I give you this sign as a sign of the State. Truly, this sign signifies the will to die! Truly, it beckons to the preachers of death!

Far too many are born: for the superfluous ones was the State invented!

Look at how it lures them to itself, the far too many! How it devours them and chews and regurgitates them!

“On earth there is nothing greater than I: it is I who am the regulating finger of God” — thus roars the monster. And not only the long-eared and short-sighted fall upon their knees!

Oh, even to you, you great souls, it whispers its dark lies! Oh, it finds out the rich hearts that gladly waste themselves!

Yes, he also recognises you, defeaters of the old God! You grew weary in battle, and now your weariness serves the new idol!

The new idol wants to surround himself with heroes and honourable people! He likes to bask in the sunshine of a good conscience — the cold monster!

He wants to give *you* everything if *you* worship him, the new idol: so, he buys the splendour of your virtues and the look of your proud eyes.

He wants to lure, through you, the far too many! Yes, a hellish trick has been devised here, a horse of death jingling with the trappings of divine honours!

Yes, a death for many was devised here, which glorifies itself as life: truly, a service to the heart to all preachers of death!

I call it State, where all drinks are poisonous, the good and the bad. State where all lose themselves, the good and the bad. State where the slow suicide of all is called “life”.

Just see these superfluous beings! They steal the works of the inventors and the treasures of the wise. They call culture their theft — and everything becomes sickness and misery for them!

Look at these superfluous people! They are always sick; they vomit their bile and call it a newspaper. They devour one another and cannot even digest themselves.

Look at these superfluous ones! They acquire wealth and become poorer with it. They want power, and, first of all, the lever of power, a lot of money — these incompetents!

See them climb, these nimble monkeys! They climb over each other and drag themselves into the mud and the abyss.

They all want to get to the throne: it's their madness — as if happiness were sitting on the throne! Often the filth sits on the throne — and often the throne sits on the filth.

They are all madmen to me and climbing monkeys and fanatics. Their idol smells bad to me, the cold monster: they all smell bad to me, these idolaters.

My brothers, do you want to suffocate in the darkness of their maws and appetites? Why don't you break the windows and jump into the open air?

Get out of the way of the stench! Get away from the idolatry of the superfluous!

Avoid the bad odour! Depart from the fumes of these human sacrifices!

The earth is still free for great souls. There are still many empty seats for the lonely and for people together, surrounded by the scent of quiet seas.

A free life is still available to great souls. Truly, he who possesses little is so much the less possessed: blessed be moderate poverty!

Where the State ends, there begins the human being who is not superfluous. There begins the song of the necessary, the unique and irreplaceable melody.

There, where the State *ends* — look at me, my brothers! — Do you not see it, the rainbow and the bridges of the superhuman?

Thus spoke Zarathustra.

Paul Leroy-Beaulieu

The Modern State

(1890)

An analysis of the modern State formulated more than a century ago that still today appears extremely meaningful and relevant.

Source: Paul Leroy Beaulieu, *L'État Moderne*, First edition 1890, Third edition revised and enlarged 1900.

The nature of the State

What is the State? This is an awkward question to answer. We are familiar with Ernest Renan's fine lecture on the subject: *What is a nation?* The nature and essence of the State are no less difficult to unravel.

The answer must not be sought in a purely philosophical conception. Only through the examination of historical facts, of human evolution, by the attentive study among various peoples of the way in which society lives, moves and progresses, it is possible to discern with some clarity the concrete State, which is,

moreover, a very different reality according to countries and times.

[...]

The concrete State, as we see it functioning in all countries, is an organism that manifests itself by two essential characteristics, which it always possesses and which it is alone in possessing: the power to impose by coercion on all the inhabitants of a territory the observance of injunctions known as laws or administrative regulations; the power, moreover, to levy, also by coercion, on the inhabitants of the territory, sums of money of which it has the free disposal.

The organism of the State is therefore essentially coercive: coercion manifests itself in two forms, laws and taxes. Legislative or regulatory power and fiscal power, both accompanied by coercion, either actual or potential — these are the distinguishing marks of the State.

Whether the body that possesses these powers is central or local, it is always the State. Provincial and municipal authorities, which hold regulatory and tax powers by delegation or remote transmission, are just as much the State as the central body.

[...]

The activity of free social associations

In almost every sphere of human activity we see free groupings of individuals originally responsible for organising various services of general interest, which the State then, sometimes after many centuries, regularise.

This is the case for viability: for military reasons, the States, whether ancient or modern, built a few rare roadways before the 18th century. By doing so, they were discharging not an economic function, but a strategic one.

Private associations did the rest: the ferries, created by these special brotherhoods, which, particularly in the South of France, were called *pontifices*; the toll roads in England and in many other countries; the toll bridges too, primitive instruments if you like, but which preceded by a long time the public works carried out by means of taxes; even ports and docks, the work of companies, founded and maintained according to strictly commercial principles. All these spontaneously hatched creations have left, even today, interesting traces especially in Great Britain and, by a singular contrast, also in some primitive countries.

The only road that exists in Syria, the one from Beirut to Damascus, is the work and the property, sufficiently remunerative, of a private company, a French company.

Undertakings which, because of their even more eminently disinterested nature, seem to be unpalatable to private initiative, have nevertheless, on many occasions, been accomplished by it with resounding success.

Stuart Mill still classed scientific exploration, *de jure* and *de facto*, as one of the State's rights. Could he say so today? Even thirty years ago, he should have been more circumspect. He forgot that the earliest and perhaps the most remarkable of Europe's travellers, Marco Polo, was the son and nephew of merchants, who accompanied his father and uncle on a trading voyage to the court of the great Khan of the Moguls, and from there extended his journeyings throughout the whole of Asia.

Above all, he was unaware of our incomparable René Caillié [a French explorer], who, at the beginning of this century, without any resources or support, crossed the dreaded corner of North-West Africa from Senegal to Morocco, passing through Timbuktu, a perilous journey which was only repeated half a century later by a young German traveller.

[...]

What I want to demonstrate is that, among the attributions that certain giddy theorists claim as a monopoly for the State, there are many that have been and still can be exercised in the happiest manner by free groupings, whether of wealthy men, of learned men, of devoted men, of curious men, or of men who have thrown into a common stock their share of wealth, devotion, education and curiosity.

Far from the State being at the origin of all the great works of general utility, we can observe, on the contrary, that historically, free associations have constantly lent their energies and resources to the State for the services which, most indisputably, were subsequently devolved to the latter.

[...]

The historical account we have given, no doubt leaves us with a major difficulty. We have seen that most of the attributions, now considered essential to the State, did not originally belong to it, but remained for a long time in the hands of private individuals or free associations, and only gradually were devolved to the State through the slow application of the principle of the division of labour. And this because a great collective entity, armed with the power of compulsion, is more capable of generalising them than the small spontaneous and variable organs which possess scarcely more than the power of persuasion. It is then necessary to see how are we to fix, either in the present or in the future, the limit of the State's attributions.

[...]

The State as a machine without creativity

The first observation which is impossible to ignore is that the State is totally devoid of the spirit of invention.

The State is a rigid collective entity, which can act only by means of a complicated apparatus, composed of numerous cogs, subordinate to one another. The State is a hierarchy, either aristocratic, bureaucratic, or elective, where spontaneous thought is subject, by the nature of things, to a prodigious number of controls. Such a machine cannot invent anything.

The State, in fact, invents nothing and has never invented anything. All human progress, or almost all of it, relates to specific individuals and groups, to those human beings outside the State machine that an important minister of the Second Empire called 'individualities without a mandate.'

[...]

In saying that the State essentially lacks the faculty of invention and the aptitude for the prompt application of discoveries, we do not intend to denigrate it, to offer it to damaging sarcasm. We simply note its nature, which has different, opposing merits.

From the social point of view neither the bill of exchange, nor the promissory note, nor the cheque, nor the multiplied operations of the banks, nor the clearing house, nor insurance, nor savings banks, nor those various ingenious methods of remuneration known as profit-sharing, nor co-operative societies, did emerge from the thought or action of the State: all these ingenious combinations have sprung out of the free social environment.

Then, what is the State? It is not a creative entity, far from it. It is an organ apt at criticising, capable of generalisation, coordination, vulgarisation. Above all, it is an organ of conservation.

The State is a copyist, an amplifier. In its copies and adaptations from private companies, it is very likely to make a few mistakes or to multiply indefinitely those found in the original from which it is borrowing.

It intervenes after discoveries have been made, and can then lend them a degree of support. But it can also stifle them: in the intervention of the State, which can sometimes be beneficial, there is always that capricious, brutal, monopolising element to be feared, that *quia nominor leo* [because Lion is my name]. It has, in fact, a double power, which is a terrible force: legal coercion and fiscal coercion.

From the fact that the State is thus absolutely divested of the faculty of invention, from the fact that it possesses only, to a very variable extents, the spirit of assimilation and co-ordination, it follows that the State cannot be the primary agent, the principal cause of progress in human society. It can only play the role of an auxiliary, an agent of propagation, which nevertheless risks, through clumsy presumption, to become an agent of disruption.

It must therefore descend from the throne on which some have attempted to elevate it.

What is the modern State

An apparatus of coercion, subjecting all citizens to the double constraint of the law, which regulates certain acts in their lives, and the tax, which takes a large part of their resources; a machine, necessarily complicated in proportion to the extension and variety of the tasks for which it is intended, comprising a generally increasing number of superimposed or entangled cogs, able to act only with slowness and uniformity, unless it goes astray: that is what the State essentially is, as soon as society has passed through the first stages of barbarism.

We have recognised that, by its very nature, this organism lacks one of the finest attributes ever to fall to the human being: the spirit of invention.

[...]

Whatever the machinery of government, today the public opinion among all Christian peoples obeys the same general impulses: the idea that the will of the greater number makes the law, that government forces should be employed as far as possible in the relief of the labouring classes. Moreover, most people show a certain disdain for tradition, a naïve confidence in legislative change. Such is the social atmosphere in which the modern people of the Western World live.

[...]

Serious consequences flow from the general characteristics of the modern State. It would be absurd to pass them over in silence as do many who deal with the role of the State. The first is that the modern State, which emerges from the mass of citizens by short-term delegation, is not only in principle no more intelligent than they are, especially the most enlightened among them, but it is subject to all the successive prejudices that dominate humanity and which lead humankind astray. The State is prey to all kind of fads, one after the other

The modern voter is rather like the poor devil who used to be snatched up at a crossroads by a rakish sergeant, intoxicated with promises and wine, and made to sign up for the army. The same methods are used. Thus, the modern State generally represents the highest triumph of the momentary infatuation of the majority of the nation.

[...]

In theory, the State represents the universality of citizens. The State is therefore theoretically the impartial being *par excellence*. However, in the modern State, this impartiality is a pure illusion; it does not exist, it cannot exist. Absolute and undisputed monarchies may claim to have this ideal of sovereign impartiality; it is scarcely possible for them to attain it completely; but there is nothing in their very constitutions to disqualify them from it. On the contrary, constitutionally the modern State, the State based on election, cannot be impartial: this is contrary to its very definition, since it is the government of a party.

The State, as conceived today by the Western peoples, is the real agent, not of the universality of the citizens, but of the mere majority, generally of a small majority, instantaneous, momentary, precarious, variable. Not only is there a party in power, but a party always threatened by the rival party, always fearful of losing that power which it has with difficulty conquered. Moreover, there are not only ideas and feelings, but also interests that, in our bitter contemporary societies, can be favoured by the possession of power.

A famous minister, a great theorist, once said that politics is not the work of the saints. Anticipating this admission, the Scriptures, always so wonderfully perceptive, assigned to the violent the very conquest of heaven: *violenti rapiunt illud* [the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it. — Matthew 11].

Violence in modern political struggles is most often disguised by cunning and intrigue, but partiality remains. It is further increased by one of the effects of this very active principle, the division of labour and the specialisation of professions. The conduct of State affairs has become a profession, not a gratuitous one. People live off the State, just as they live off the altar; but everywhere there are two rival personnel, if not three or four, vying for this nourishment, one

fasting while the other feasts, each with his own clientele and each obliged to satisfy it.

Thus, the modern State, which philosophers and abstract thinkers regard as the most disinterested of all personalities, is, in fact, doomed to partiality, relentless partiality. A few statesmen, of an elevated spirit, of a heart personally detached from purely pecuniary interests, may try to escape this tendency or to moderate it. They hardly succeed. They are obliged to make constant sacrifices to the party which has raised them and supports them. Even if they are not naturally inclined to be partial, they are obliged to become so by tactics and with resignation.

If we were to confine ourselves to simple theory, we would also believe that the State is the least hurried than any other existing personality, the one that has, before it, the longest time to carry out its wishes, that can avoid haste and do everything with measure and ponderation.

This is another mistake. The State rulers know that they have only two, three or four years, rarely seven or eight, to carry out their plans, to satisfy their party. Ministerial tenures lasting ten, fifteen or twenty years, like those of Sully, Richelieu, Colbert and Louvois, are beyond their reach. The current rulers must act quickly, without rest or hesitation, otherwise the rival that treads at their heels, the enemy and presumptive successor, will surprise them and overthrow them before they had done anything. Hence this feverish activity which touches everything at once, which becomes dizzy with its perpetual buzzing.

[...]

We have not exhausted the enumeration of all the particular features which characterise the modern State and which influence all its actions. One of the least known of these features, and one whose

consequences are the most serious, is the general way in which the modern State, the elective State, conceives the interests of society, and consequently seeks to satisfy them.

As a result of its origin, which is by incessant election, always disputed and often indecisive, the modern State almost never conceives of social interests in their synthetic form; it sees them only as fragmented, in a situation of antagonism to one another. It has, so to speak, only particular interests in view; the absolutely collective interest escapes it. It shares the very common notion that the general interest is merely the sum of the various particular interests. A proposition which holds good in ordinary cases, but which cannot always be admitted without reserve.

[...]

Just as it is more concerned with particular interests than with the common interests of the nation, the modern State, for the same reasons of origin and precarious power, is also more sensitive to immediate and present interests than to a greater but deferred or distant interest. In this, it contradicts one of the most important missions of the State, which is to preserve the future, even the very distant future.

[...]

I come now to the last of the weaknesses of the State, whether modern or ancient, republican or monarchical, moderate or despotic. The State is removed from the conditions of competition, the most energetic of all social forces, that which tends most to the improvement of society and the individual.

With this dual power of legal and fiscal constraint vested in it, the State, when it acts on the territory of the nation, need not fear that it will be supplanted, annulled or suppressed. Being an unrivalled

personality, since it is the only one of its kind, it is safe from that ousting, that annihilation, to which individuals or free associations that perform their task poorly or mediocrely are exposed.

[...]

We have listed the main weaknesses, both of the State in general and of the modern State in particular. These are the many reasons for the State rulers to be modest. If they were to examine their conscience every evening, in the absence of any flatterer and in the quietness that is denied to them, they would realise that they have many faults, that the nature of the State is full of contradictions and inconsistencies, that they should be prudent, reserved, limiting their action to what is indispensable. But no, the modern State rulers are presumptuous, like children, like victors. Those who hold State power have emerged from a relentless struggle, constantly renewed. They have the feelings of triumphers, and the anger of precarious holders.

Pyotr Kropotkin

The State. Its Historic Role

(1897)

The origin of this text was a lecture that Kropotkin was supposed to give in Paris in March 1896 following the invitation by Jean Grave, editor of *Les Temps Nouveaux*. The lecture was never delivered because the French police stopped Kropotkin when he disembarked from the Newhaven-Dieppe day ferry.

The text is an interesting reconstruction of the origin and growth of State power, and a powerful indictment of the disasters and abominations it has committed during its nefarious existence.

Source: Extract from Pyotr Kropotkin, *L'État. Son rôle historique*, 1897.

Introduction

In taking as the subject of this conference the State and its historical role, I thought I was responding to a need which is keenly felt at the present time: that of examining in greater depth the very idea of the

State, of studying its essence, its role in the past and the part it may be called upon to play in the future.

It is above all on the question of the State that the socialists are divided. Two main currents can be discerned in all the fractions which exist among us, and which correspond to different temperaments, different ways of thinking, and above all to the extent that one believes in the coming revolution.

On the one hand, there are those who hope to achieve the social revolution through the State, by preserving and even extending most of its powers to be used for the revolution. And there are those who, like us, who see in the State, not only in its present form, but in its very essence and in all the forms it could take, an obstacle to the social revolution. The obstacle *par excellence* to the emergence of a society based on equality and liberty, as well as the historic means designed to prevent this blossoming. They therefore work to abolish the State, not to reform it.

As you can see, the division runs deep. It corresponds to two divergent currents, which are to be found throughout the philosophy, literature and action of our time. And if the current notions of the State remain as obscure as they are today, it will undoubtedly be on this question that the most obstinate struggles will be waged, when — soon, I hope — communist ideas are subject to practical application in the life of societies.

It is important, then, having so often criticised the present State, to investigate why it came into being, to look more closely at the part it has played in the past, and to compare it with the institutions it has replaced.

Let us first agree on what we mean by the term State.

As you know, there is the German school which likes to confuse the *State* with *Society*. This confusion is found among the best German thinkers and many French ones, who can only conceive of society in

terms of a Central State; and this is why anarchists are usually accused of wanting to 'destroy society', of preaching a return to 'the perpetual war of each against all'.

However, to reason in this way is to ignore entirely the progress made in the field of history over the last thirty years or so. It is to ignore the fact that human beings lived in societies for thousands of years before the State had been heard of. It is to forget that, for the nations of Europe, the State is of recent origin — dating from barely the sixteenth century. And it is to ignore the fact that the most glorious periods of humanity were those when freedoms and local life had not yet been destroyed by the State, and when large numbers of people lived in communes and free federations.

The State is only one of the forms taken by Society in the course of history. How then can we confuse the permanent with the accidental?

On the other side, the *State* has also been confused with *Government*. It has sometimes been said that it is the absence of government, and not the abolition of the State, that we must aim for.

It seems to me, however, that State and government are two notions of a different order. The idea of the State implies something quite different from the idea of government. It implies not only the existence of a power placed above society, but also *a territorial concentration as well as the concentration in the hands of a few of many functions in the life of societies*. It implies certain new relationships between members of society, which did not exist before the formation of the State.

This distinction, which perhaps escapes notice at first glance, is particularly apparent when we study the origins of the State.

In fact, there is only one way to understand the State properly: to study its historical development, and that is what I shall try to do.

[...]

The origin of societies

Most of the philosophers of the last century had a very elementary idea on the origin of societies.

In the beginning, they said, people lived in small, isolated families, and perpetual warfare between these families was a recurrent occurrence. But one day, finally realising the drawbacks of their endless struggles, people decided to form a society. A social contract was concluded among the scattered families, who willingly submitted to an authority, which — need I say it? — became the starting point and initiator of all progress. Need I add, since you have already been told this at school, that our current governments have so far maintained their role as the salt of the earth, the peacemakers and civilisers of the human race?

Conceived at a time when little was known about the origins of humankind, this idea dominated the last century; and it must be said that, in the hands of the Encyclopaedists and Rousseau, the idea of the ‘social contract’ became a weapon against kingship by divine right. However, despite the services it may have rendered in the past, this theory must be recognised as false.

The fact is that all animals, with the exception of a few carnivores and birds of prey, and of a few species that are becoming extinct, live in society. In the struggle for life, it is the sociable species that win out over those that are not. In every class of animal, they are at the top of the ladder, and there can be no doubt that the first human beings were already living in societies.

The human being did not create society. Society existed before the Human Being.

Today, we also know — anthropology has demonstrated it perfectly well — that the starting point of humanity was not the family, but the

clan, the tribe. The paternal family, as we know it, or as it is depicted in Hebrew traditions, did not appear until much later. Tens of thousands of years were spent by humans in the tribe or clan phase, and during this first phase — let's call it the primitive or savage tribe, if you like — humans already developed a whole series of institutions, uses and customs, many of them predating the institutions of the patriarchal family.

[...]

The primitives undoubtedly had temporary leaders. The sorcerer, the rainmaker — the scientist of the time — sought to take advantage of what he knew, or thought he knew, about nature, to dominate his fellows. Similarly, those who were better at remembering proverbs and songs, in which all tradition was embodied, gained ascendancy. At popular festivals he would recite these proverbs and songs in which were incorporated the decisions that had been taken on such-and-such an occasion by the assembly of the people in this or that dispute. And from that time onwards, these 'educated' people sought to ensure their domination by transmitting their knowledge only to the chosen few, the initiated. As you know, all religions, and even all arts and crafts, began with 'mysteries'.

The brave, the daring, and above all the prudent, also became temporary leaders in conflicts with other tribes, or during migrations. But there was no alliance between the bearer of the 'law' (the one who knew from memory the tradition and the ancient decisions), the military chief and the sorcerer. And the *State* was no more part of these tribes than it is of the society of bees or ants, or of our contemporaries the Patagonians and the Eskimos.

[...]

The Medieval Commune

The commune of the Middle Ages, the free city, had its origins, on the one hand, in the village commune and, on the other, in the thousand fraternities and guilds that were formed outside the territorial union. As a federation between these two kinds of unions, it was able to assert itself under the protection of its fortified ramparts and turrets.

In many regions, it was the outcome of a natural growth. Elsewhere — and this applied in general to Western Europe — it was the result of a revolution. When the inhabitants of a particular town felt sufficiently protected by their walls, they would make a '*con-juration*'. They swore an oath to each other that they would drop all outstanding cases involving slander, violence or wounding, and that in any disputes that arose from then on, they would never again have recourse to any judge other than the syndics they themselves appointed. In every art or neighbourhood guild, in every sworn fraternity, this had long been the regular practice. In every village commune, this had been the way in the past, before the bishop or the king had succeeded in introducing, and later imposing, his judge.

Now, the hamlets and parishes that made up the town, as well as all the guilds and fraternities that had developed there, considered themselves as a single *amitas*, appointed their own judges and swore permanent union between all these groups.

A charter was soon drawn up and accepted. If necessary, the charter of some small neighbouring commune was copied (hundreds of these charters are known today), and the commune was constituted. Then the bishop or prince, who had hitherto been the judge in the commune, and had often become more or less its master, had only to acknowledge the *fait accompli* — or fight the young conspiracy by force of arms. Often the king — in other words, the prince who sought to give himself

superiority over the other princes and whose coffers were always empty — ‘granted’ the charter, in return for money. In this way, he gave up trying to impose *his* judge on the commune, while at the same time making himself more important in relation to other feudal lords. But this was by no means the rule: hundreds of communes lived with no sanction other than their goodwill, their ramparts and their lances.

Within a hundred years, this movement spread, with striking consistency, throughout Europe, — by imitation, to be sure — encompassing Scotland, France, the Low Countries, Scandinavia, Germany, Italy, Poland and Russia. And when we compare the charters and internal organisation of French, English, Scottish, Dutch, Scandinavian, German, Polish, Russian, Swiss, Italian or Spanish communes today, we are struck by the almost identical nature of these charters and the organisation that grew up under the shelter of these ‘social contracts’. What a striking lesson for Romanists and Hegelians who know no other way of achieving similarity in institutions than servitude before the law!

From the Atlantic to the middle reaches of the Volga, and from Norway to Italy, Europe was covered with similar communes — some becoming populous cities like Florence, Venice, Nuremberg or Novgorod, others remaining small towns of a hundred or even twenty families, and yet treated as equals by their more prosperous sisters.

As vibrant organisms, the communes obviously differed in their development. Their geographical position, the nature of their foreign trade, the resistance they had to overcome on the outside, gave each commune its own history. But the principle is the same for all of them. Pskov in Russia and Bruges in Holland, a Scottish market town of three hundred inhabitants and rich Venice with its islands, a market town in northern France or Poland and Florence the Beautiful, all represent the same *amitas*: the same friendship of village

communes and associated guilds. Their constitution, in its general features, is the same.

Generally speaking, the city, whose walls grew in length and thickness with the population, and were flanked by increasingly high towers, each raised by a particular district or guild and bearing its individual stamp, — generally, I would say, the city was divided into four, five or six sections, or sectors, radiating from the citadel towards the city ramparts. Preferably, each of these sectors was inhabited by an ‘art’ or trade, while the new trades — the ‘young arts’ — occupied the suburbs, which in due course were enclosed by a new fortified wall.

The street, or the parish, represented the territorial unit corresponding to the former village commune. Each street, or parish, had its own popular assembly, forum, popular court, priest, militia, banner and often its own seal, the symbol of sovereignty. Federated with other streets, it nevertheless retained its independence.

The professional unit, which was often, more or less, confused with the district or with the sector, was the guild — the union of trades. It also had its saints, its assembly, its forum and its judges. It had its treasury, its land, its militia and its banner. It also had its seal, symbol of its *sovereignty*. In the event of war, its militia joined, assuming it was considered expedient, with the other guilds and planted its own banner alongside the large banner or carriage, of the city.

Lastly, the city was the union of neighbourhoods, streets, parishes and guilds, and had its own plenary assembly in the great forum, its own belfry, its own elected judges and its own banner to rally the militias of the guilds and neighbourhoods. It dealt as a sovereign with other cities, federated with whomever it wished, and entered into national alliances, or alliances outside the nation. Thus, the English ‘Cinque Ports’ around Dover were federated with the French and Dutch ports on the other side of the Channel; the Russian Novgorod was allied with the Scandinavian-German Hansa, and so on. In its

external relations, each city possessed all the attributes of the modern State, and from this time onwards, through free contracts, what would later be known as international law was established, subject to the sanction of public opinion in all the cities, just as later it was to be more often violated than respected by the States.

On how many occasions would a particular city, unable 'to find the sentence' in a particularly complicated case, send someone to 'seek the sentence' in a neighbouring city! How often did this dominant spirit of the time — arbitration rather than the authority of the judge — manifest itself in two communes taking a third as arbitrator!

The trades acted in the same way. Their commercial and craft relations extended beyond the city, and their agreements were made without taking into account nationality. And when, in our ignorance, we boast of our international workers' congresses, we forget that international congresses of trades, and even of apprentices, were already being held in the fifteenth century.

Finally, the city either defended itself against aggressors and waged its own fierce wars against the feudal lords in the surrounding area, appointing each year one or rather two military commanders from its militia; or it accepted a 'military defender' — a prince, a duke, whom it chose for one year and dismissed at will. For the maintenance of his soldiers, he would be given the receipts from judicial fines; but he was forbidden to interfere in the affairs of the city. Or if the city were too weak to free itself from its neighbours, the feudal vultures, it kept as its more or less permanent military defender, the bishop, or the prince of a particular family — Guelf or Ghibelline in Italy, the Rurik family in Russia, or the Olgerds in Lithuania — but was jealously vigilant in preventing the authority of the bishop or the prince extending beyond the men encamped in the castle. They were even forbidden to enter the city without permission. You no doubt know that up until now the Queen of England has not been able to enter

the city of London without the permission of the Lord Mayor of the city.

I would like to speak at greater length about the economic life of the cities of the Middle Ages, but I am forced to pass over it in silence. It was so varied that it would require rather lengthy elaboration. Suffice it to say that domestic trade was always conducted by guilds — not by individual craftsmen — with prices set by mutual agreement; that at the beginning of this period, foreign trade was conducted exclusively through the city; that only later did it become the monopoly of the merchants' guilds and, later still, of individual merchants; that no one ever worked on Sundays or Saturday afternoons (bathing day); and finally, that the supply of the main commodities was always done through the city. This practice continued in Switzerland for wheat until the middle of the 19th century. In short, it is proven by an immense mass of documents of all kinds that mankind has never before or since experienced a period of relative well-being as secure for all as it was in the cities of the Middle Ages. The present poverty, insecurity, and physical exploitation of labour were then unknown.

[...]

The rise of the State

During the 16th century, modern barbarians destroyed the entire civilisation of the cities of the Middle Ages. These barbarians may not have wiped it out, but they at least stopped it in its tracks for two or three centuries. They launched it in a new direction.

They subjugated the individual, they took away all his freedoms, they expected him to forget all his unions that were based on free initiative and free understanding. The aim was to level the whole of society in a unique submission to the master. They destroyed all bonds between human beings, declaring that the State and the Church alone must henceforth form the union between subjects;

that the Church and the State alone have the task of looking after the industrial, commercial, judicial, artistic and emotional interests for which individuals in the twelfth century were accustomed to unite directly.

And who are these barbarians? — It is the State: the Triple Alliance, finally constituted, of the military leader, the Roman judge and the priest — the three forming a mutual assurance for domination, the three united in a single power that will command in the name of the interests of society — and will crush that same society.

[...]

To annihilate the independence of the cities; to plunder the rich guilds of merchants and craftsmen; to centralise in its hands the foreign trade of the cities, and ruin it; to seize all the internal administration of the guilds and subject domestic trade, as well as the manufacture of everything down to the smallest detail, to a swarm of officials — and in this way to kill industry and the arts ; to take over the local militias and all municipal administration, to crush the weak for the benefit of the strong through taxation, and to ruin countries through war — such was the role of the nascent State in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with regard to urban agglomerations.

The same tactics, of course, applied to the villages and the peasants. As soon as the State felt up to it, it rushed to destroy the village commune, to ruin the peasants left at its mercy, and to pillage the communal lands.

Historians and economists in the pay of the State have no doubt taught us that the village commune, having become an outmoded form of land ownership that hindered the progress of agriculture, had to disappear under the action of natural economic forces. Bourgeois politicians and economists continue to repeat this to this day, and

there are even revolutionaries and socialists — those who claim to be scientists — who recite this conventional fable learned at school.

Well, never has a more odious lie uttered in the name of science. A deliberate lie, because history is full of documents to prove to anyone who wants to know — for France, it would simply suffice to consult Dalloz — that the village commune was first deprived by the State of all its powers, its independence, its legal and legislative power; and that its lands were then either simply stolen by the rich under the protection of the State, or directly confiscated by the State.

In France, looting began as early as the 16th century and continued apace in the following century. As early as 1659, the State took the communes under its high authority, and you only have to look at Louis XIV's edict of 1667 to see how communal property was plundered from that time onwards. — The '*Roi Soleil*' said in that edict:

"Each one has made the best of it for his best interests ... communal properties have been divided ... to strip the communes they have used fictitious debts" ... and two years later he confiscated all the income of the communes for his own benefit.

This is what is known as 'natural death' in the so-called scientific language.

In the following century, it is estimated that at least half of the communal land was simply appropriated by the nobility and clergy under State patronage. Nevertheless, the commune continued to exist until 1737. The village assembly met under the elm tree to allocate land and distribute taxes — documentary evidence can be found in Albert Babeau's book (*Le village sous l'ancien régime*).

Turgot, however, in the province in which he was the administrator, had already found the village assemblies 'too noisy', and under his administration they were abolished and replaced by assemblies elected from among the village bigwigs. And on the eve of the Revolution, in 1787, the State introduced this measure across the board.

The *mir* was abolished, and the affairs of the communes fell into the hands of a few syndics, elected by the richest bourgeois and peasants.

The Constituent Assembly was quick to confirm this law in December 1789, and the bourgeoisie then took the place of the lords in stripping the communes of what was left of their communal land. It took one Jacquerie after another to force the Convention, in 1793, to confirm what the peasants in revolt had just achieved in the eastern part of France. That is to say, the Constituent Assembly gave orders for the return of the communal lands to the peasants — which was in fact only done when *already achieved by revolutionary action*. As you know, this is the fate of all revolutionary laws. They are only enacted after the *fait accompli*.

But whilst recognizing the right of the communes to the lands that had been taken away from them since 1669, the law had to add some of its bourgeois venom. Its intention was that communal land should be shared, in equal parts, only among the ‘active’ citizens — in other words, among the village bourgeoisie. With a stroke of the pen, it wanted to dispossess the ‘passive citizens’, i.e. the mass of impoverished peasants who needed the land the most. Fortunately, there were new Jaqueuries, and in July 1798 the Convention authorised the division of land on a *per capita* basis among all the inhabitants — again, this was only done here and there, but it served as a pretext for a new plundering of communal land.

Weren't these measures already enough to bring about what some people call ‘the natural death’ of the commune? And yet the commune was still alive. Then, on 24 August 1794, the reactionaries who had come to power struck a blow. The State confiscated all the lands of the communes and turned them into a fund to guarantee the State debt, putting them up for auction and surrendering them to its creatures, the Thermidorians.

On 2 Prairial, Year V, after three years of rushing after the spoils, this law was fortunately repealed. At the same time, however, the

communes were abolished and replaced by cantonal councils, so that the State could more easily pack them with its own creatures. This lasted until 1801, when the communes were reintroduced, but then the government took it upon itself to appoint the mayors and syndics in each of the 360,000 communes! And this absurdity lasted until the Revolution of July 1830, after which the law of 1789 was reintroduced. In the meantime, all the communal land was confiscated again by the State in 1813 and plundered again for three years. What remained was not returned to the communes until 1816.

Do you think that was the end? Not at all! Each new regime has seen communal land as a source of reward for its henchmen. So, since 1830, on three separate occasions — the first time in 1837 and the last under Napoleon III — laws were passed to *force* the peasants to share what was left of their communal forests and pastures, and three times the State was obliged to repeal these laws because of peasant resistance. All the same, Napoleon III took advantage of the situation to seize some large estates and make gifts of them to some of his creatures.

These are the facts. And this is what these gentlemen call, in ‘scientific’ language, the natural death of communal ownership ‘under the influence of economic laws’. You might as well call the massacre of a hundred thousand soldiers on the battlefield a natural death!

The Europe of States

Now, what was done in France was done in Belgium, England, Germany, Austria — everywhere in Europe, except for the Slavic countries.

But then, the periods of looting the communes are the same throughout Western Europe. Only the methods vary. In England, for example, they did not dare to take general measures; they preferred to pass several thousand separate Enclosure Acts through Parlia-

ment, by which, in each special case, Parliament sanctioned the confiscation — as it does to this day — and gave the lord the right to keep the communal lands he had enclosed by fences. And while nature has so far respected the narrow furrows by which the communal fields were temporarily divided between the various families of a village in England, and while we have, in the writings of a certain Marshal, clear descriptions of this form of possession at the beginning of the nineteenth century, there is no lack of scholars (such as Henry Seebohm, a worthy emulator of Fustel de Coulanges) to maintain and teach that the commune has never existed in England except in the form of serfdom!

The same processes were being used in Belgium, Germany, Italy and Spain. And, in one way or another, the individual seizure of lands that were once communal was almost completed in Western Europe by the 1850s. Of their communal lands the peasants only retain a few scraps.

This is how the mutual alliance between the lord, the priest, the soldier and the judge — that we call the State — acted towards the peasants in order to strip them of their last guarantee against misery and economic enslavement.

But while the State was organising and approving this pillage, could it respect the institution of the commune as the organ of local life?

— Obviously not.

It would have been a contradiction in principle to allow citizens to form a federation among themselves to take over some of the functions of the State. The State demands direct, personal submission from its subjects, without intermediaries; it wants equality in servitude; it cannot accept 'a State within the State'.

So, as soon as the State began to take shape in the 16th century, it set about destroying all the ties of union that existed between citizens, whether in towns or villages. If it tolerated, under the name of

municipal institutions, a few vestiges of autonomy — never of independence — it was solely for fiscal purposes, to reduce the central budget by the same amount; or else, to allow the bigwigs of the province to enrich themselves at the expense of the people, as was the case in England, legally until recent years, and even to this day in its institutions and customs.

This is understandable. Local life is based on customary law, while the centralisation of powers is based on Roman law. The two cannot live side by side; one had to destroy the other.

This is why, under the French regime in Algeria, when a *diemka kabyle* — a village community — wanted to plead for its land, each inhabitant of the commune must lodge a personal complaint with the tribunals, which would judge fifty or two hundred isolated cases, rather than accept the collective complaint of the commune. The Jacobin code of the Convention (known as the Napoleonic Code) was barely aware of customary law: it preferred Roman law, or rather Byzantine law.

This is why, still in France, when the wind has felled a tree on a national road, or when a peasant, not wanting to do the work himself to repair a communal road, prefers to pay two or three francs to a stone breaker — from twelve to fifteen employees of the Ministries of the Interior and Finance have to be set in motion and more than fifty papers exchanged between these austere civil servants, before the tree can be sold, or the peasant receives permission to pay his two or three francs into the commune's coffers.

Those who may have doubts as to the veracity of this statement will find these fifty documents, listed and duly numbered by Mr Tricoche, in the *Journal des Economistes* (April, 1893).

This is, of course, under the Third Republic, because I'm not talking about the barbaric procedures of the *Ancien Régime*, which was

satisfied with five or at most six pieces of paper. Scholars will also tell you that in those barbaric times, State control was only fictitious.

And were it only paperwork! It would, after all, be just twenty thousand civil servants too many and another billion added to the budget. A mere trifle for the lovers of 'order' and the falling into line! But at the heart of it all is the principle that kills everything.

The peasants in a village have a thousand interests in common: household interests, neighbourhood interests, ongoing relationships. They are bound to unite for a thousand different things. But the State will not, cannot, allow them to unite! It gives them the school and the priest, the gendarme and the judge — that should be enough for them. And if other interests arise, let them go through the channels of the State and the Church.

Until 1883, villagers in France were strictly forbidden to form unions, even if only to buy chemical fertiliser together or irrigate their meadows. It was not until 1883-1886 that the Republic decided to grant farmers this right, by passing a law on trade unions, albeit with many precautions and restrictions.

And we, dumbed down by our statist education, are able to rejoice in the sudden progress made by the agricultural unions, without blushing at the idea that this right, of which the peasants were deprived until the present day, belonged in the Middle Ages, without any dispute, to every person — free or serf. Slaves that we are, we already see this as a 'conquest of democracy'.

That's how dumb we have become with our distorted education, vitiated by the State, and our Statist prejudices!

The Master State

"If you have common interests, in your town or village, then ask the State or the Church to look after them. But it is forbidden to join

forces to look after them yourselves!" This is the motto that has resonated throughout Europe since the 16th century.

Already at the end of the fourteenth century an edict by Edward III, King of England, stated that "all alliances, connivances, congregations, chapters, ordinances and oaths, made or to be made between carpenters and masons, will be null and void."

But it wasn't until the defeat of the cities and the popular uprisings we mentioned earlier that the State dared to lay its hands on all the institutions — guilds, fraternities, etc. — that linked craftsmen together, and wiped them out.

This can be seen so clearly in England, where we have a mass of documents to follow this movement step by step. Little by little, the State got hold of all the guilds and fraternities. It clamped down on them, abolished their conspiracies and their syndics, replacing them with its own officials, courts and feasts. And at the beginning of the sixteenth century, under Henry VIII, the State confiscated everything the guilds owned without any further procedure. The heir to the great protestant king completed his work.

It is theft in broad daylight, without apology, as Thorold Rogers so aptly put it. And it is this theft that so-called scientific economists will portray as the 'natural' death of the guilds, under the influence of economic laws!

Indeed, could the State tolerate the guild, the guild of trades, with its court, its militia, its fund, its sworn organisation? It was the 'State within the State'! The State, the real State, *had* to destroy it, and it destroyed it everywhere: in England, in France, in Germany, in Bohemia, preserving only the appearance of it, as an instrument of the tax authorities, as part of its vast administrative machine.

And, is it any wonder that guilds, master's guilds and wardenships, stripped of everything that had once been their lifeblood, placed under royal civil servants and turned into mere cogs in the

machinery of the administration, were nothing more than an encumbrance in the eighteenth century, an obstacle to the development of industry, whereas four centuries before they had been life itself? The State had killed them off.

But it was not enough for the State to abolish all the inner workings of the trade associations, which hindered it by placing themselves between it and its subjects. It was not enough to confiscate their funds and properties. The State had to seize their functions as well as their assets.

In a city of the Middle Ages, when interests conflicted in the same trade, or when two different guilds disagreed, there was no other recourse than the city. They had to come to some sort of arrangement, because they were all bound together in the city. And this never failed to happen — by arbitration, by referring the dispute to another city, if necessary.

From then on, the only arbitrator was the State. All local disputes, sometimes minute in small towns of a few hundred inhabitants, had to be piled up as paperwork in the offices of the King or Parliament. The English Parliament was inundated with a thousand petty local disputes. Thousands of civil servants — most of them corruptible — were needed in the capital to file, read and judge them all, to rule on every little detail, to regulate how a horseshoe should be forged, how a piece of cloth should be bleached, how a herring should be salted, how a barrel should be made and so on *ad infinitum*... and the flood kept rising!

But that wasn't all. Soon the State got its hands on the export trade. It saw it as a source of enrichment — and took it over. In the past, when a dispute arose between two towns over the value of exported cloth, the purity of wool, or the capacity of herring barrels, the towns would admonish each other. If the dispute dragged on for too long, a third city was called in to act as arbitrator (this happened all the time). Or a congress of weavers' or coopers' guilds was convened to

decide, on an international level, on the quality and value of cloth or the capacity of barrels.

Now it was the State, in London or Paris, that took charge of settling all these disputes. Through its officials, it regulated the capacity of the barrels, specified the quality of the cloth, established and ordered the number of threads and their thickness in the warp and weft, and, through its orders, interfered in the smallest details in each industry.

You can guess the result. Industry was dying under this tutelage in the eighteenth century.

What had become of Benvenuto Cellini's art under the tutelage of the State? — Gone! — And the architecture of those guilds of masons and carpenters whose works of art we still admire? — Just look at the hideous monuments of the statist period, and at one glance you will know that architecture was dead, so dead that to this day it has not been able to recover from the blows dealt to it by the State.

What had become of the fabrics of Bruges and the sheets of Holland? Where were the blacksmiths who were so skilled at handling iron and who, in every European village, knew how to make this ungrateful metal lend itself to transformation into the most exquisite decorations? Where were the turners, the watchmakers, the fitters who had made Nuremberg one of the glories of the Middle Ages for precision instruments? — Just ask James Watt, who searched in vain for thirty years for a workman who could make a roughly round cylinder for his steam engine, and whose machine remained in the rough for thirty years because there were no craftsmen able to build it.

Such was the work of the State in the industrial field. All it could do was tighten the screws on the worker, depopulate the countryside, sow misery in the city, reduce millions of people to a condition of starvation, impose industrial serfdom.

And it is these wretched remains of the old guilds, these organisms bruised and squeezed by the State, these useless cogs of the administrative machine, that the economists, always 'scientific', have the ignorance to confuse with the guilds of the Middle Ages. What the Great French Revolution swept away as harmful to industry was not the guild, nor even the trade union; it was a useless and harmful cog in the State machine.

But what the French Revolution was careful not to sweep away was the power of the State over industry, over the serf in the factory.

Do you remember the discussion that took place in the Convention — the terrible Convention — about a strike? To the strikers' grievances, the Convention replied (and I quote from memory):

"The State alone has the duty to look after the interests of all citizens. By striking, you form a coalition, you create a State within the State. So — death!"

In this reply we have only seen the bourgeois character of the Revolution. But does it not have a much deeper meaning? Does it not sum up the attitude of the State, which found its full and logical expression in the Jacobinism of 1793, towards society as a whole? — You have something to complain about? Then address your complaint to the State! The State alone has the task of redressing the grievances of its subjects. As for getting together to defend yourselves — never! It was in this sense that the Republic was called one and *indivisible*.

Does not the modern Jacobin socialist think in the same way? Did not the Convention express the essence of Jacobin thinking with its own severe logic?

The Convention's response summed up the attitude of all States towards all coalitions and private companies, whatever their purpose.

As far as strikes are concerned, this is still the case in Russia, where strikes are considered a crime of *lèse Etat*. And to a large extent in

Germany, where young Wilhelm very recently told the miners: "Appeal to me; but if you ever allow yourselves to take action, you will know the sword of my soldiers!"

This is still, and almost always, the case in France. And even in England, only after having struggled for a century by means of secret societies, by stabbing traitors and masters, by explosive powders under machines (as late as 1860), by emery powder poured into grease-boxes and so on, did English workers begin to win the right to strike, and will soon have it altogether — if they don't fall into the traps already set for them by the State, in seeking to impose compulsory arbitration in return for a law on the eight-hour working day.

More than a century of terrible struggles! And how much misery, how many workers died in prison, transported to Australia, shot, hanged, to regain the right to associate, which — I never tire of repeating — every man, free or serf, practised freely, as long as the State had not imposed its heavy hand on societies.

But then, was it only the worker who was treated in this way?

Just think of the struggles that the bourgeoisie had to wage against the State to win the right to form commercial companies — a right that the State only began to concede when it discovered a convenient way of creating monopolies for the benefit of its creatures and to feed its coffers. Think of the struggles for daring to write, speak, or simply think differently from the way the State orders through the Academy, the University and the Church! Think of the struggles that have had to be sustained to this day to teach children to read — a right that the State reserves for itself but does not use! To the struggles to obtain the right to have fun together! Not to mention the struggles we must endure to dare to choose our judge and our law — something that was once common practice — or the struggles that will be needed before one is able to make a bonfire of that book of infamous punishments, invented by the spirit of the Inquisition and the despotic empires of the Orient, known as the Penal Code!

Then look at taxation — an institution of purely statist origin — this formidable weapon which the State uses, in Europe as in the young societies of the United States, to keep the masses under its heel, to favour its minions, to ruin the many to the advantage of the rulers and to maintain the old divisions and the old castes.

Then there are the wars without which States cannot be formed or maintained, wars that become inevitable as soon as it is accepted that a given region — because it is a State — may have interests opposed to those of its neighbours. Think of past wars and the wars that subjugated peoples will have to wage to win the right to breathe freely; the wars for markets; the wars to create colonial empires... And what each war, victorious or not, brings with it in terms of servitude, you, in France, unfortunately know only too well.

And finally, what is worse than all that has just been enumerated, is the fact that the education we all receive from the State, at school and later, has so warped our minds that the very notion of freedom ends up being lost, disguised as servitude.

It is a sad spectacle to see those who believe themselves to be revolutionaries devote their deepest hatred to the anarchist — because the anarchist's conceptions of freedom go beyond their petty and narrow conceptions of freedom, learned in the statist school. And yet, this spectacle is a fact.

Libertarian philosophy is stifled by the Roman Catholic pseudo-philosophy of the State. History is vitiated from its first page, where it lies about Merovingian and Carolingian royalty, to its last page, where it glorifies Jacobinism and refuses to recognise the role of the people in creating institutions. The natural sciences are perverted to serve the dual idol of Church and State. The psychology of the individual, and even more so that of societies, is falsified in every one of its assertions in order to justify the Triple Alliance of soldier, priest and executioner. Finally, after centuries of preaching obedience to the Church, or to the book, morality

today emancipates itself from it only to preach servitude to the State.

“You have no direct moral obligations to your neighbour, not even a feeling of solidarity; all your obligations are to the State”, we are told and taught in this new cult of the old Roman and Caesarian divinity. “The neighbour, the comrade, the companion — forget about them. You will know them only through the intermediary of some organ or other of your State. And all of you will make a virtue of being equally subservient to it.”

And the glorification of the State and discipline, to which the University and the Church, the press and the political parties all worked, is propagated so successfully that even revolutionaries dare not look this fetish straight in the eye.

The modern radical is a centralising, statist and rabid Jacobin. And the socialist follows in his footsteps. Like the Florentine of the late fifteenth century, who could only invoke the dictatorship and the State to save him from the patricians, — the socialist can only invoke the same gods, the dictatorship and the State, to save him from the abominations of the economic regime created by that very same State!

Beyond the State

If we delve a little deeper into all these various categories of facts, which I have barely touched upon in this brief outline, we will understand why — seeing the State as it was in history, and as it is in its very essence today and being convinced that a social institution cannot lend itself to every possible purpose, since, like every organ, it was developed for such and such a function, for such and such a purpose, and not for every possible purpose, — it will be understood, I say, why the conclusion we arrive at is that the State should be abolished.

We see it as an institution, developed in the history of human societies, to prevent direct union between people, to hinder the development of local and individual initiative, to crush existing liberties, and to prevent their new blossoming.

And we know that an institution with a history dating back thousands of years cannot lend itself to a function opposite to the one for which it was developed in the course of history.

To this question — absolutely unshakeable for anyone who has thought about history — what reply do we get?

The answer is... almost childish.

“The State is there, we are told. It exists, it represents a powerful, ready-made organisation. Why destroy it instead of using it? It works for evil — it’s true; but that’s because it’s in the hands of the exploiters. If it were taken over by the people, why should it not be used for a better purpose, for the good of the people?”

Always the same dream — that of the Marquis of Posa, in Schiller’s drama, trying to make absolutism an instrument of emancipation; or the dream of the gentle Abbé Pierre, in Zola’s *Rome*, wanting to make the Church the lever of socialism!

How sad it is to have to respond to such arguments! For those who reason in this way either they have not the slightest clue of the true historical role of the State; or they conceive the *social* revolution in such an insignificant and dull form that it no longer has anything in common with socialist aspirations.

Take France, for example.

All of us here have certainly pointed out the striking fact that the Third Republic, despite its republican form of government, remained monarchical in essence. We have all criticised it for not having republicanised France — I am not saying for not having done anything for the social revolution, but for not having introduced the

mores of the simply republican spirit. For the little that has been done in the last twenty-five years to democratise social attitudes, or to spread a little education, that has been done everywhere, in all the European monarchies, under the very pressure of the times we are living through. Then where does this strange anomaly of a republic which has remained a monarchy come from?

It comes from the fact that France is still a State, just as it was thirty years ago. The holders of power have changed their names; but all that immense ministerial scaffolding, all that centralised organisation of bureaucrats, all that imitation of the Rome of the Caesars which has developed in France, has remained. And these cogs of the administrative machine continue, as before, to exchange their fifty pieces of paperwork when the wind has felled a tree on a national road. The stamp of the paperwork has changed; but the State, its spirit, its organs, its territorial centralisation and its centralisation of functions have remained. And, like an octopus, they are spreading over the country day by day.

The republicans — and I'm talking about the sincere ones — had nurtured the illusion that we could 'use the organisation of the State' to bring about a change in the republican direction, and here are the results. When it was necessary to smash the old organisation, *smash the State* and rebuild a new organisation, starting with the very foundations of society — the freed village commune, the free workers' union, etc. — they thought they could use 'the organisation that already existed'. And because they failed to understand that you can't make a historical institution work in the direction you want it to — that it has its own way of working — they were swallowed up by the institution.

And yet, in this case, it was not yet a question of modifying the whole of economic relations in society. It was only a question of reforming certain aspects of political relations between human beings!

But after such a complete failure, in the light of such a pitiful experience, they persist in telling us that the conquest of power in the State, by the people, will suffice to bring about the social revolution! That the old machine, the old organism, slowly developed in the course of history to crush liberty, to crush the individual, to establish oppression on a legal basis, to lead the brain astray by accustoming it to servitude, will lend itself marvellously to new functions. That it will become the instrument, the framework for germinating a new life, for establishing liberty and equality on an economic basis, for awakening society and marching towards the conquest of a better future!...

What an immense mistake!

In order to give free rein to socialism, it is necessary to reconstruct from top to bottom a society which is today based on the narrow individualism of the shopkeeper. It is not only a question — as has sometimes been said by those indulging in metaphysical emptiness — of giving the worker ‘the entire product of his labour’; it is a question of completely rebuilding all relationships, from those which exist today between each individual and his churchwarden or his stationmaster, to those which exist between trades, hamlets, towns and regions. In every street and hamlet, in every group of men gathered around a factory or along a railway line, we need to awaken the creative, constructive, organising spirit, in order to rebuild the whole of life — in the factory, on the railway, in the village, in the shop, in supply, in production, in distribution. All relationships between individuals and between human communities need to be rebuilt, from the very day, from the very moment that we touch the current commercial or administrative organisation.

And they want this immense work, which requires the free exercise of popular genius, to be carried out within the framework of the State, within the pyramidal scale of organisation which is the essence of the State! They want the State, whose *raison d'être*, we have seen,

consists in the crushing of the individual, in the hatred of initiative, in the triumph of *one* idea which must necessarily be that of mediocrity, to become the lever for accomplishing this immense transformation!... They want to direct the renewal of a society with decrees and electoral majorities...

How childish!

Throughout the history of our civilisation, two traditions, two opposing tendencies, have stood side by side: the Roman tradition and the popular tradition; the imperial tradition and the federalist tradition; the authoritarian tradition and the libertarian tradition.

And once again, on the eve of the social revolution, these two traditions find themselves face to face.

Between these two currents, always operating, always struggling with each other, — the current of the people and the current of minorities hungry for political and social power — our choice is made.

[...]

Death?

Yes, death — or renewal!

Either States smashed to pieces, and a new life beginning in a thousand and one centres, based on the principle of the lively initiative of individuals and groups, on free mutual understanding.

Or always the State crushing individual and local life, taking over all areas of human activity, bringing its wars and internal struggles for power, its fake revolutions that only change tyrants and, inevitably, at the end of this evolution — there is death!

The choice lies with you!

Adolph Wagner

The Expansion of the State Activities (1901)

This extract presents the author's view, known as Wagner's law, on the tendency of the State to increasingly expand the sphere of its activities and interventions. However, even in the presence of this phenomenon, the author recognises that the State “does not, cannot and should not absorb all individual, associational and self-governing activity, which, while influenced and regulated by it, must nevertheless maintain a certain independence in the name of the overall interest.”

Source: Adolph Wagner, *Staat in nationalökonomischer Hinsicht*, in *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften* (Sechster Band), Jena, 1901.

The trend towards the development of public services, especially State services, particularly in the modern constitutional and cultural State

Observationally, historically and statistically, there is a clear tendency for the State to expand public or State activities with the progress of the national economy and culture in the areas of the two organic State ends, the juridical and the political.

This expansion appears as something so regular and so clearly traceable to its internal causes and conditions that it seems appropriate to speak of a 'law' of the increasing expansion of public (including municipal, etc.), and especially State, activities in the sense in which this expression is used and can be used in the field of social and economic phenomena.

From the perspective of the national economy, this law means the absolute and even relative expansion of the public sector, especially the State public sector, alongside and instead of the private sector within the national economy.

The causes lie in the emergence of new, increased, more refined public needs, namely common needs in the entire life of the people. The conditions consist to a large extent in changes in production and transport technology, which make the State's function and possibly, alongside or instead of it, other public, communal, etc. functions more feasible and desirable.

The consequences are that the individual, the private economies, achieve the satisfaction of their needs to an ever-greater extent through the mediation of the State and other public bodies and pay for this in taxes and fees; or that the State and these authorities appropriate more of the sources of income from the private economy and draw from their surpluses the means to cover the costs of public services.

The preconditions for and, in turn, the consequences of the development are therefore also specifically economic and financial: the private-economy norms of remuneration are replaced by public-economy norms; the free transaction price is replaced by fees, taxes and duties.

Public finances, especially State finances, expand more and more in revenue and expenditure, taking on new forms, 'taxes grow' without definite limits, but the taxed, the entire population, receive the equivalent value – and, on average, a fully sufficient equivalent value – in increased and improved public services.

But for the most part, each individual is not billed for his or her individual receipt of public services, the value of his or her participation in them and his or her individual estimate in accordance with the private-sector principle of value correspondence between a specific service and its estimated value.

This only happens to some extent in the 'financial fee system' and in related cases, with court costs, administrative costs, school fees, transport charges according to tariffs, etc. Rather, public services are predominantly made available to the population as a whole and to the individuals as its members and, in accordance with the public-service principle of general remunerability, the individuals are then obliged to provide individual services in return according to certain standards that are deemed appropriate, i.e. they are generally taxed according to their economic capacity. The development, expansion and growth of public finances, especially State finances, therefore reflect the expansion of public activities.

In the area of both ends of the State, the juridical and the political, this development manifests itself to an even greater extent as far as the State is concerned, and this is due to historical development, to emerging needs, i.e. to the aforementioned possibility of a greater uniformity of public institutions and functions throughout the State. The effect is

that the State as such assumes the main tasks of legal protection both internally and externally, even in place of other public bodies and organs (municipalities, landlords) that were previously involved in these tasks (military, judiciary, police, legislation, foreign representation).

In the field of culture and welfare, there are not the same needs for uniformity, concentration and centralisation of public institutions and functions, and in some cases the needs are just the opposite. For this reason, other public bodies are heavily involved in providing services alongside and sometimes instead of the State, and are increasingly doing so. Newer administrative institutions, such as the organisation of larger self-governing bodies between the local community and the State, serve this purpose ('associations', counties, districts, the recent so-called 'higher-order self-governing bodies').

The guarantee of undisturbed legal security within the country – the national economy – as well as externally – from one country to another, from one people to another – is becoming increasingly important with the progress of culture, again as both a condition and a consequence of that progress. The ever more complicated circulation, economic and legal relationships resulting from increasing population density, greater local concentration of the population (cities, industrial centres) and the ever more developed division of labour — these are the decisive factors that lead to an extensive and intensive increase in public and especially State activity in the area of law and power. At the same time, these are the same factors which make the principle of prevention and the corresponding institutions increasingly dominant.

The needs of the developed national economy, in particular, drive in these two directions, and the well-functioning public institutions and their services then become the prerequisite for many economic advances and thus for a generally higher level of culture. The great similarity in the development of public institutions and services in

the area of law and power clearly shows that there are here general needs and conditions for development.

In the field of culture and welfare, the expansion of public, State and communal facilities and services is as much an effect and consequence as it is a cause and condition of economic and cultural progress. The only difference is that the development is not as uniform across time and space, and is subject to greater temporary and permanent differences, especially with regard to the distribution of facilities and services among the State (Empire) and the associations, municipalities or bodies acting for a specific purpose. However, the tendency towards expansion also has the character of an evolutionary law.

In the field of the production of material goods, with regard to its legal and economic basis, the land, buildings, capital – especially in the field of the circulation system – the current evolution of production technology, the needs of large companies, the evils of speculative private capital and its forms of organisation (shareholding system, stock exchange), the general climatic, health, ethical and political interests of the national community and the area in which it lives – all these factors mean that, here too, public institutions, establishments and services provided by the State, by associations and by local authorities take precedence over the private economy of individuals and commercial companies.

This is then associated with the upholding or expansion of ‘public’ ownership (albeit in the form of private law) of land, buildings, transport facilities and capital (State forests, mines, banks, commercial enterprises, transport routes, transport facilities, post office, telegraph, railways, insurance facilities, municipal transport, market, lighting and medical facilities, etc.). Subsequently, in an extensive and intensive way, an ever-richer deployment of public institutions and services takes place in the most diverse specialised fields of the

production of material goods and transport – here again, with no determinable limits.

But still, according to previous experience, this only ever occurs in special areas, for special reasons, according to case-by-case decision and not according to a general formula and an absolute principle. This is a major error of socialism. The usual main areas of economic life – agriculture, trade and commerce – are and will presumably remain, at least in the main and rightly so, beyond the reach of the State or communal economy.

In other cultural fields, there has been a similar development, but on the whole even more extensive and intense, with the State, local authorities and associations taking charge of institutions, facilities and services in the areas of education, training, schools, health care, aid to the poor, charity work, etc.

This is partly because, according to the dominant ideas of the world of culture, these are more important matters for the common good: the duties of society towards the socially and economically weaker elements, the broad general interests of the whole population, a greater guarantee and a more abundant measure of satisfaction of the needs concerned, the widest possible accessibility for all circles and classes of people, the consequences of scientific progress in the most diverse areas of life, the use of the results of this progress to increase and better guarantee the welfare of the people, to safely prevent dangers and eliminate evils.

Through legislative and administrative measures and financial aid, the State is once again intervening alongside, before, and in place of, smaller public bodies, because a greater uniformity of institutions, facilities and services must be guaranteed in the interests of success. Or because it offers the best guarantee that what is necessary will be carried out in the most perfect and perhaps also the most economical way, or because it bears the costs in the easiest and most appropriate

way, or distributes the costs to the population in the most correct way (taxation).

The progress made by the natural sciences in understanding the conditions of health and disease in humans, animals and plants, as regards light, air, water, food, housing, etc., the pathogens and the means of prevention in many of these relationships, has had an influence on the fact that State activities are increasingly taking place in the general interest to guarantee conditions of sanitary well-being.

The prevalence of the principle of prevention in the developed constitutional and cultural State

As everywhere in the national economy, the performance of State activities at the higher levels of State life displays a growing importance taken by the capital factor, in particular by fixed capital, in the form of large institutions and permanent establishments and, partly linked to this, by skilled labour, in the form of professionally trained civil servants and soldiers.

This development is linked, particularly in the field of legal and power activities, but also in certain cases of a different nature, such as in the health sector, to a particularly important change of principle with far-reaching consequences for the entire method of carrying out public activities.

This change of principle, however, is in turn conditioned by the course of cultural development and by the needs of national life, especially economic life, arising from the latter and thus becoming a necessity. The aim is to prevent disruption of the rule of law at home and abroad, and to instil in the public mind a sense of the greatest possible security in this respect.

This is a goal of civilisation, and in many cases, under the complex conditions of the division of labour and circulation at the higher

levels of the national economy – in the latter's industrial-mercantile phase, especially with the increasing importance of the long-distance sale of domestic products and the long-distance purchase of foreign ones, with the growing participation in world economic circulation, with the development of the credit economy – it is a prerequisite of the whole economic machinery and its smooth functioning.

There is therefore every incentive to create, through major institutions and events serving this purpose, guarantees for the secure maintenance of the rule of law, so that disruptions to the rule of law can be avoided as far as possible, so that they are suppressed at their root and, if this does not succeed completely, they are apt to be eliminated all the more safely and quickly.

This development, which can be witnessed everywhere in the cultural world and is therefore very uniform, can be summarised in the following formula: The existence of a principle of prevention along with comprehensive capabilities for the anticipation of legal disorders and other evils (e.g. in the field of health care). A formal preventive system is increasingly being implemented, so that the principle of repression recedes, only to be put into operation with all the more vigour, if necessary but on the whole exceptionally, on the basis of the preventive facilities.

Here again, in the sense of the word mentioned earlier, one can speak of a 'law' of the prevalence of the principle of prevention in the developed constitutional and cultural State.

In no other area of State activity is this development more important and more fraught with consequences – including economic and financial ones – than in the area of defence, in the organisation of standing armies, in particular surrounding the principle of universal conscription, major fortifications, the war fleet and related institutions.

But equally characteristic and important evidence of this law are the security police with its large institutions (Gendarmerie, Auxiliary Police), the entire judicial organisation with its standing courts, which are always ready for action, the prison system, the standing diplomatic and consular service, and in the field of culture and welfare many preventive institutions and measures of the sanitary, medical, poor-relief and charity system.

Many of these institutions and establishments in the preventive system require skilled workers and significant capitalistic resources to carry out State and other public activities. Hence the particular organisation of the modern civil service as a whole, and of the education and pension system, which often differs in principle from the wage regulations of the private economy, a kind of 'social tax' based on scales of value for needs and benefits.

This is why there are large standing capital investments in buildings, land, inventories, the war machinery system, weapons, tools, devices for the attack and defence of land and for sea warfare – all things whose nature and extent are determined by the state of the art and whose use requires a large permanent staff, regularly trained, even in peacetime.

This prevalence of the principle of prevention, along with all these institutions and the conditions of its application, also has far-reaching consequences for the organisation of State finances. It necessitates a very large financial outlay, which on the whole is already increasing according to the demands of technology and which remains high even in normal peacetime. And this, in turn, necessitates a structure of revenue which guarantees that this outlay is regularly covered.

Hence the huge budgets, even in times of peace, the high taxes and other significant non-tax revenues which weigh heavily on the national economy as a whole, but which are also the means of guaranteeing order and tranquillity, the primary condition of any healthy

economic life and of any national culture, constituting the economic and cultural 'insurance costs.'

However, the occasional need for repressive action increases the financial requirements even more (major modern wars) in order to be able to shift the preventive institutions into the function of repression.

But the well-prepared preventive system which then turns into repression also guarantees the greater and, above all, swifter success of repression, and therefore the quicker restoration of the rule of law and of tranquillity – an economic, social and ethical postulate of the first order, since the major costs in times of unrest (war, etc.) can then remain moderate due to their shorter duration.

Thus, from a financial point of view, the preventive system does not lead, as is too often claimed and deplored, to an increase in the overall financial needs and costs of the State, but, at least when viewed over longer periods of changing national destinies, to a different and overall more economically advantageous distribution of these needs and of the financial resources (taxes, etc.) used to cover them over longer periods.

On the whole, therefore, the preventive system may be regarded not only as a necessary development under human conditions still displayed by all present-day civilised peoples and probably also by the ones of the future, but it can also be regarded as something overwhelmingly favourable, especially in economic terms.

The evil that lies therein is not the fault of this system, but of those aspects of human nature that make such a system necessary for the maintenance of law, peace and order, probably forever – since we are dealing with aspects of human nature that are not very changeable in terms of history and location – but at any rate for an incalculably long time.

Determination of the scope of State activity

This domain is a historical product, and therefore subject to change, as we have already emphasised several times. But it is nevertheless possible to formulate some general conditions and rules for identifying this area. The result is a certain guideline which, in concrete cases, not only does not render more specific studies useless, but in fact makes them necessary for its practical application.

The 'national-economic analysis' of the State (Schäffle) [*] provides valuable information for determining the scope of State activity in general, and in particular in relation to the activity of private economies and the remaining public bodies.

It is possible to identify characteristics whose isolated and, above all, grouped occurrence leads to the presumption that a State activity has been rightly identified. Even then, a more precise justification remains necessary in the specific case or, on the contrary, a refutation remains possible. The former is facilitated, however, and the latter rightly becomes more difficult when this presumption is established, which makes it easier to justify both a positive and a negative decision.

The general rule for State activity can thus be summarised as follows: 'The State must take on those activities to satisfy the needs of its citizens which neither private businesses nor free associations nor other compulsory communities (public self-governing bodies) can perform at all or which all of these can only perform less well or more expensively.'

The presumption of State activity also exists in the particular case when the following three conditions for the proper manufacturing (production) of the services concerned and a fourth condition for the use (consumption) of these services are met separately or jointly: in the first instance, as regards production, the greatest possible sustainability over time, spatial extension and uniformity or even exclusivity

of the necessary activities within a single hand; in the second instance, concerning consumption, if the consumption of the service is inevitably, by its intrinsic nature, common to several people or even all, or can become so without specific difficulties, in particular without correspondingly increasing costs, if the service in general benefits a plurality of individuals, each of them to a non-measurable degree (essentially according to Schäffle and Wagner).

It is precisely on the basis of this rule and of these conditions that the main activities in the field of law and power – which, according to the historical development of civilised peoples, have been exclusively or predominantly taken over by the State – appear in principle to be properly entrusted to the State: the military, the judiciary, the security police, foreign representation.

However, important tasks and activities in the field of culture and welfare that have been retained or newly assumed by the modern State can also be explained and justified in principle as State activities in this way: State forestry, legislation and control over private forests, waters, mining, hunting, fishing; public roads, in particular State roads, transport (post, telegraph, railway); weights and measures, money and coinage, part of credit and banking and insurance; humanitarian assistance, poverty relief, sanitation, medical services; education and teaching; legislation around and support of agriculture, trade, commerce – all these are areas of comprehensive and expanding State activity, partly exclusive, partly shared only with the other public bodies.

In order to carry out the practical tasks of correctly determining the scope of State activity and correctly solving the financial problems associated with it, it is necessary to re-emphasise the political assumption among cultured peoples that the people's representatives should participate alongside the government (*System der konstitutionellen Budgetwirtschaft*, Schäffle).

As to the practical implementation of the assumed State activities themselves, the importance of a correspondingly efficient civil service must be emphasised. Therefore, here we encounter all the major questions surrounding the organisation of the civil service, the system of appointments to public offices, the guarantee of moral integrity, technical efficiency, independence of mind but also proper subordination.

The solution to the correct definition of the area of State activity, the correct organisation and function of the State administration, and the correct financial regulations and institutions, depends to a large extent on the correct solution to these questions.

It is obvious, therefore, that the modern constitutional and cultural State increasingly permeates the entire life of the people in all its aspects, the entire national economy in all its relations. However it does not, cannot and should not absorb all individual, associational and self-governing activity, which, while influenced and regulated by it, must nevertheless maintain a certain independence in the name of the overall interest.

It is not possible in principle to draw a definite line between the activities of the State and those of all others – private individuals, associations, societies, larger and smaller self-governing bodies. The correct limit must be determined according to the points of view and considerations outlined above; it is never stable, it changes and must change with the changes in the living conditions of the people, with the technology of production, with the transport system, with the transformations in the national economy in general.

But there is nevertheless a limit and there always will be. The ‘theory’, including that of *Nationalökonomie* and ‘social economics’, can only mention these points of view. It is up to the statesman, the legislator, to draw the relatively most correct line in each case – the only one that is within man’s reach. But he must of course also take into account history, the existing conditions and needs, the facts at issue,

as well as the theory, the science of the State and the national economy.

Note

[*] Albert Schäffle (1831-1903) was a German sociologist, political economist and newspaper editor. In his major work, a treatise bearing the title *Bau und Leben des sozialen Körpers* (Construction and Life of the Social Body) he attempted to show a unity between social behaviour and biological processes, attributing to the State (the "rational social State") an important role.

Clarence S. Darrow

The Nature of the State (1902)

Clarence Seward Darrow (1857-1938) was a lawyer and a leading member of the American Civil Liberties Union. In this extract he portrays the State as a criminal organisation made of rulers whose aim is to subject and exploit people living in the territory they control. And there is no difference between the barbarous chiefs of the past and the political party leaders of the present, once they gain power over individuals.

Source: Clarence S. Darrow, *Resist Not Evil*, Chapter 1, 1902.

The beginnings of the State can be traced back to the early history of the human race when the strongest savage seized the largest club and with this weapon enforced his rule upon the other members of the tribe. By means of strength and cunning he became the chief and exercised this power, not to protect the weak but to take the good things of the earth for himself and his. One man by his unaided strength could not long keep the tribe in subjection to his will, so he

chose lieutenants and aids, and these too were taken for their strength and prowess, and were given a goodly portion of the fruits of power for the loyalty and help they lent their chief. No plans for the general good ever formed a portion of the scheme of government evolved by these barbarous chiefs. The great mass were slaves, and their lives and liberty held at the absolute disposal of the strong.

Ages of evolution have only modified the rigors of the first rude States. The divine right to rule, the absolute character of official power, is practically the same to-day in most of the nations of the world as with the early chiefs who executed their mandates with a club. The ancient knight who, with battle-ax and coat of mail, enforced his rule upon the weak, was only the forerunner of the tax-gatherer and tax-devourer of to-day. Even in democratic countries, where the people are supposed to choose their rulers, the nature of government is the same. Growing from the old ideas of absolute power, these democracies have assumed that some sort of government was indispensable to the mass, and no sooner had they thrown off one form of bondage than another yoke was placed upon their necks, only to prove in time that this new burden was no less galling than the old.

Neither do the people govern in democracies more than in any other lands. They do not even choose their rulers. These rulers choose themselves and by force and cunning and intrigue arrive at the same results that their primitive ancestor reached with the aid of a club.

And who are these rulers without whose aid the evil and corrupt would destroy and subvert the defenceless and the weak? From the earliest time these self-appointed rulers have been conspicuous for all those vices that they so persistently charge to the common people whose rapacity, cruelty and lawlessness they so bravely curb. The history of the past and the present alike proves beyond a doubt that if there is, or ever was any large class, from whom society needed to be saved, it is those same rulers who have been placed in absolute

charge of the lives and destinies of their fellow men. From the early kings who, with blood-red hands, forbade their subjects to kill their fellow men, to the modern legislator, who, with the bribe money in his pocket, still makes bribery a crime, these rulers have ever made laws not to govern themselves but to enforce obedience on their serfs.

The purpose of this autocratic power has ever been the same. In the early tribe the chief took the land and the fruits of the earth, and parceled them amongst his retainers who helped preserve his strength. Every government since then has used its power to divide the earth amongst the favored few and by force and violence to keep the toiling, patient, suffering millions from any portion of the common bounties of the world.

In many of the nations of the earth the real governing power has stood behind the throne, has suffered their creatures and their puppets to be the nominal rulers of nations and states, but in every case the real rulers are the strong, and the State is used by them to perpetuate their power and serve their avarice and greed.

Warlaam Tcherkesoff

The State and Social Economy

(1902)

In this extract the author dismantles the idea that the State is a useful tool for the emancipation of the working class and that it can be used as a point of passage towards the stateless and classless society, as sustained by Marxists and social-democrats alike.

Source: Warlaam Tcherkesoff, *Pages of Social History*, 1902.

If the fatalist law had turned many Socialists from the economic struggle, and driven the masses exclusively into electoral agitation, that would have been an evil, but only a partial one. For example, in Germany, where the Social Democratic party boasts so remarkable a success, the conditions of labor are far worse not only than in England, where the masses continue the purely economic contest, but worse than in France. But this evil has remained partial, for the majority of workers have instinctively kept to the economic battlefield of the strike.

But if in our times we are witnesses of an injurious and miserable development of the all powerful State, centralizing everything, paralyzing the productive energy and the intellectual life of nations, enchaining European humanity and eating up whole nations by its millions of functionaries, its prodigious standing armies, and if the masses of the people are submitting to the Despotism of the State, the police and any sort of authority, a great part of the responsibility, if not the whole, falls upon the metaphysical, authoritarian, Social Democratic, German school.

Before the doctrines of Social Democracy had so fully developed, all independent spirits, among the middle classes and the people alike, attempted by every means to lessen and curtail in every possible way the influence of the State in social life, the number of its officials, and its financial powers. Under the influence of the revolution in North America and the formation of the United States, the ideas of Autonomy and Federation began to gain sympathy in the popular mind. Before 1848, both Liberal politicians and Socialists were partisans of the complete autonomy of productive groups. Even Louis Blanc, the admirer of the Jacobins and the Convention, with their motto, "The Republic one and indivisible," recognized in his project for the "Organization of Labor" that, "organized workshops and loans to the poor being set on foot, the State has no further right to meddle with the autonomous life of the association."

But Social Democracy began to preach that all must be sacrificed to the State, that it must be allowed to absorb and centralize everything; for, thanks to economic destiny, one fine day, instead of Hohenzollerns and Bismarcks, there would be Liebknecht, Engels, and Bebel organizing a terrestrial paradise by means of their industrial and agricultural armies. All ideas of autonomy were treated as ridiculous, Federalism was persecuted in the International, and Liebknecht, with comically reactionary arrogance, declared, "I am the enemy of all Federal republics."

We are already sufficiently acquainted with their fundamental economic theory. Let us see if their love for the State has turned out any better than their economic Fatalism. In the following analysis I limit myself exclusively to France, with its centralized and all powerful State.

It is well known to every one that every event in social and organic life is the result of an expenditure of energy, a use of matter. If the expenditure exceeds the advantage of an enterprise, sensible men give up the enterprise. The same thing occurs in social life: a hurtful institution is in the end always rejected. In our fathers' days, when Marxian metaphysic, with its fantastic laws and hypotheses, had not yet invaded Socialism, everyone rebelled against the useless expenses of the State, against the crushing burden of taxation. And what did the State take that our worthy fathers and grandfathers should thus rebel?

GROWTH OF THE EXPENSES OF THE STATE (in Pounds Sterling)

	1750	1810	1850	1889	Increase 1750 - 1889
France	14,200,000	40,000,000	51,000,000	121,800,000	9 times
Germany	7,000,000	11,500,000	23,800,000	154,700,000	22 times
Russia	1,600,000	11,000,000	39,900,000	88,800,000	55 times
Italy	1,500,000	4,600,000	12,000,000	72,000,000	48 times

They were ignorant fellows, those men of the Great Revolution, to rebel against the charges of the State. "Scientific Socialism" teaches the people that they must joyfully put up with expenditure 22 and 48 and 55 times greater than formerly. But I, an ignorant Anarchist, I approve the revolt of our grandfathers, and I grow indignant over the completely ruined condition of the people in Russia, where State

expenses have increased 55 times, over the misery of Italy, where the expenditure is 48 times as great as before, and over Germany, where Social Democracy flourishes and the workers toil 13, 15, and often 18 hours a day for wages amounting to ls. 6d. (36 cents).

But we shall be told that, if the expenses of the State are increased, it is the people themselves who profit thereby. Indeed? Let us look into that.

The French budget for 1892 shows us that the State took 3,780,077,692 francs that year. From this enormous sum,

The bourgeoisie received as interest on the "public debt"	1,284,191,874
The same bourgeoisie received for the administration of finance and collection of taxes for the government	1,193,494,440
The same bourgeoisie received for the army commissariat at least one third of the military expenses amounting to	285,142,000
Total allowance to the bourgeoisie	2,762,827,814

If we add the military expenses destined to protect the same bourgeoisie	1,284,191,874
Remains the following modest sum for education, post office and public works, also largely for the benefit of the bourgeoisie	1,193,494,440

To the State budget must be added 500,000,000 francs for the municipal budgets, a third of which is also distributed among the rulers and exploiters, and we arrive at the fact that the State, so loved and favored by the Marxian metaphysicians, every year deprives the French people of three and a half milliards for the advantage of the bourgeoisie! It is a pretty sum to distribute. It forms a third of all of which the bourgeoisie deprives the people by direct exploitation. For, according to the calculations of Leroy Beaulieu, the annual revenue of all France is equal to 25 millions of francs, which are divided about as follows:

To the State, returned	4,000,000
To the bourgeoisie, counting the nine million of producers who gain for their employers 250 francs per day	8,212,000
For the national consumption, counting 50 centimes per day per head	7,300,000
The costs of production	5,488,000

Three milliards and a half given by the State, eight milliards and 212 millions extracted under the protection of the same State, altogether 11,712,000,000 francs that the exploiters in France can divide between them each year.

And now, reader, do you understand why the number of capitalists increases without the millionaires eating up the smaller bourgeois? With this enormous sum, 11,712 millionaires (in francs) might be created a year, and 23,434 capitalists possessing 500,000 francs; or, as actually happens, the sum may be divided rather more generally, and the whole bourgeoisie, who rule us and make the laws for their own advantage, thus prosper and multiply.

But you see that the empire has fallen. The people, placing their hope in the republic, that beloved Marianne, would relieve them of their crushing burdens, would diminish national Parasitism. They flattered themselves in vain with such hopes. The republican State showed itself even more wasteful. You may judge by these figures:

Years	Salaries (million francs)	Pensions (million francs)
1855	241	30
1870	296	30
1880	440	47
1893	517	81

and the number of functionaries has increased by 806,000 individuals.

You must not think this malady peculiar to French republicans. In Russia, Germany, Italy, everywhere, the growth of Parasitism is as rapid.

It is the same in the United States, where functionaries' pensions are a great burden, and ever go on increasing. If we examine the expenses of administration of the national debt and of pensions, we find for the year 1892:

Administration	\$100,000,000
Interest of public debt	\$23,000,000
Pensions	\$125,000,000
Total	\$248,000,000

The entire budget is \$409,000,000; to put it in another way, more than half of the expenditure goes to those who produce nothing. And we hear men extol the State and think they can ever reform it! (Childlike faith!)

But have you noticed that the State not only plays the part of protector of capitalist exploitation, but itself directly accomplishes a third of this exploitation? And the people are told that they must leave to the State the absolute monopoly of economic affairs.

What would you say, reader, if I advised that for the solution of the social question full power should be allowed to the exploiters to ruin the people, and that this misery or dishonour imposed upon the people by the exploiters should be submitted to joyfully? Or what would you think of my sincerity if I advised you to acquiesce in your

slavery because one fine day all the wealth accumulated and wasted by your oppressors might, thanks to a miracle worked by a fantastic law, become the possession your great-grandchildren?

But thus stands the case of those gentlemen who preach to you the benefits of the State, without considering its exploiting action in the economy of social life.

Lev Tolstoy

The State

(1905)

A powerful essay on the criminality of the States and their utter obnoxiousness and superfluity.

Source: Lev Tolstoy, *The End of the Age. An essay on the approaching revolution*, 1905.

To people living in States founded upon violence, it seems that the abolition of the power of Government will necessarily involve the greatest of disasters.

But the assertion that the degree of safety and welfare which men enjoy is ensured by State power is altogether an arbitrary one. We know those disasters and such welfare as exist among people living under State organization, but we do not know the position in which people would be were they to get clear of the State. If one takes into consideration the life of those small communities which happen to have lived and are living outside great States, such communities, whilst profiting from all the advantages of social organization, yet

being free from State coercion, do not experience one-hundredth part of the disasters which are undergone by people who obey State authority.

The people of the ruling classes for whom the State organization is advantageous speak most about the impossibility of living without State organization. But ask those who bear only the weight of State power, ask the agricultural labourers, the one hundred million peasants in Russia, and you will find they feel only its burden, and, far from regarding themselves as safer because of State power, they could altogether dispense with it. In many of my writings I have repeatedly endeavoured to show that what intimidates men — the fear that without governmental power the worst men would triumph while the best would be oppressed — is precisely what has long ago happened, and is still happening, in all States, since everywhere the power is in the hands of the worst men; as, indeed, cannot be otherwise, because only the worst men could do all these crafty, dastardly and cruel acts which are necessary for participation in power. Many times I have endeavoured to explain that all the chief calamities from which men suffer, such as the accumulation of enormous wealth in the hands of some people and the deep poverty of the majority, the seizure of the land by those who do not work on it, the unceasing armaments and wars, and the deprivation of men, flow only from the recognition of the lawfulness of governmental coercion. I have endeavoured to show that before answering the question whether the position of men would be the worse or the better without Governments, one should solve the problem as to who makes up the Government. Are those who constitute it better or worse than the average level of men? If they are better than the average run, then the Government will be beneficent; but if they are worse it will be pernicious. And that these men — Ivan IV, Henry VIII, Marat, Napoleon, Arakcheyef, Metternich, Tallyrand, and Nicholas — are worse than the general run is proved by history.

In every human society there are always ambitious, unscrupulous, cruel men, who, I have already endeavoured to show, are ever ready to perpetrate any kind of violence, robbery or murder for their own advantage; and that in a society without Government these men would be robbers, restrained in their actions partly by strife with those injured by them (self-instituted justice, lynching), but partly and chiefly by the most powerful weapon of influence upon men - public opinion. Whereas in a society ruled by coercive authority, these same men are those who will seize power and will make use of it, not only without the restraint of public opinion, but, on the contrary, supported, praised and extolled by a bribed and artificially maintained public opinion.

It is said: 'How can people live without Governments and coercion?' On the contrary, one should say: 'How can people, if they are rational beings, live recognizing violence and not rational agreement as the inner connecting link of their life?'

Either one or the other: individuals are either rational or irrational beings. If they are not rational beings, then all matters between them can and should be decided by violence, and there is no reason for some to have and others not to have this right to violence. But if men are rational beings, then their relations should be founded, not on violence, but on reason.

One would think that this consideration would be conclusive to individuals recognizing themselves as rational beings. But those who defend State power do not think of man, of his qualities, of his rational nature; they speak of a certain combination of men to which they apply a kind of supernatural or mystical signification.

What will happen to Russia, France, Britain, Germany, say they, if people cease to obey Governments? What will happen to Russia? - Russia? What is Russia? Where is its beginning or its end? Poland? The Baltic Provinces? The Caucasus with all its nationalities? The Kazan Tartars? Ferghana Province? All these are not only not Russia,

but all these are foreign nationalities desirous of being freed from the combination which is called Russia. The circumstance that these nationalities are regarded as parts of Russia is an accidental and temporary one, conditioned in the past by a whole series of historical events, principally acts of violence, injustice and cruelty, whilst in the present this combination is maintained only by the power which spreads over these nationalities. During our memory, Nice was Italy and suddenly became France; Alsace was France and became Prussia. The Trans-Amur Province was China and became Russia, Sakhalin was Russia and became Japan. At present the power of Austria spreads over Hungary, Bohemia and Galicia, and that of the British Government over Ireland, Canada, Australia, Egypt and India, that of the Russian Government over Poland and Guria. But tomorrow this power may cease. The only force uniting all these Russias, Austrias, Britains and Frances is coercive power, which is the creation of men who, contrary to their rational nature and the law of freedom as revealed by Jesus, obey those who demand of them evil works of violence. Men need only become conscious of their freedom, natural to rational beings, and cease to commit acts contrary to their conscience and the Law, and then these artificial combinations of Russia, Britain, Germany, France, which appear so splendid, will no longer exist, and that cause, in the name of which people sacrifice not only their life but the liberty proper to rational beings, will disappear.

It is usual to say that the formation of great States out of small ones continually struggling with each other, by substituting a great external frontier for small boundaries, diminishes strife and bloodshed and their attendant evils. But this assertion also is quite arbitrary, as no-one has weighed the quantities of evil in the one and the other positions. It is difficult to believe that all the wars of the confederate period in Russia, or of Burgundy, Flanders and Normandy in France, cost as many victims as the wars of Alexander or of Napoleon or as the Japanese war lately ended. The only justification

for the expansion of the State is the formation of a universal monarchy, the existence of which would remove all possibility of war. But all attempts at forming such a monarchy by Alexander of Macedon, by the Roman Empire, or by Napoleon, never attained this objective of pacification. On the contrary, they were the cause of the greatest calamities for the nations. So that the pacification of men cannot possibly be attained except only by the opposite means: the abolition of States with their coercive power.

There have existed cruel and pernicious superstitions, human sacrifices, burnings for witchcraft, 'religious' wars, tortures ... but men have freed themselves from these; whereas the superstition of the State as something sacred continues its hold upon men, and to this superstition are offered perhaps more cruel and ruinous sacrifices than to all the others. The essence of this superstition is this: that men of different localities, habits and interests are persuaded that they all compose one whole because one and the same violence is applied to all of them, and these men believe this, and are proud of belonging to this combination.

This superstition has existed for so long and is so strenuously maintained that not only those who profit by it — kings, ministers, generals, the military and officials — are certain that the existence, confirmation and expansion of these artificial combinations is good, but even the groups within the combinations become so accustomed to this superstition that they are proud of belonging to Russia, France, Britain or Germany, although this is not at all necessary to them, and brings them nothing but evil.

Therefore if these artificial combinations into great States were to be abolished by people, meekly and peacefully submitting to every kind of violence, while ceasing to obey the Government, then such an abolition would only lead to there being among such men less coercion, less suffering, less evil, and to its becoming easier for such men to live according to the higher law of mutual service, which was

revealed to men two thousand five hundred years ago, and which gradually enters more and more into the consciousness of mankind.

In general for the Russian people, for both the town and the country population, it is, in such a critical time as the present, important, above all, not to live by the experience of others, by others' thoughts, ideas, words, by various social democracies, constitutions, expropriations, bureaux, delegates, candidatures and mandates, but to think with their own mind, to live their own life, constructing, out of their own past, out of their own spiritual foundations, new forms of life proper to this past and these foundations.

Georg Jellinek

Theories of the State

(1911)

Throughout history, human beings have produced various justifications for the existence of the State. Reading this extract from a famous text by the law scholar Georg Jellinek, one could say that they are all valid because they are reasonable and sufficiently grounded in factual reality. At the same time, none of them can claim to be exclusively valid. Hence it follows that each human being should be free to choose the form of State that is most congenial to him because only then would all justifications concerning the existence of the State really have a rational and universally acceptable basis. This would put an end to any conflict between States and between people living under a certain State because the State would then become nothing else than the form of organisation that each person has chosen for himself in association with the people who have made the same choice. In other words, compulsory State subjection would be replaced by voluntary community choice.

Source: Georg Jellinek, *Allgemeine Staatslehre*, 1911.

There are many moral theories and hence many attempts to justify the State. However, these theories can be reduced to certain fundamental ideas and thus classified into a small number of general categories. The way in which the State is justified can be divided into five distinct categories. These justifications can be reduced to a religious, physical, legal, moral or psychological necessity. We will deal with each of these in detail.

1. Religious and theological justification for the State

The State is the work of God; the State exists by divine Providence. Consequently, everyone is obliged by divine will to recognise it and submit to its organisation. This doctrine is the oldest and most widespread; it was necessarily in force among peoples whose religious community and State community coincided to a greater or lesser extent; this was the case in the ancient Eastern States, in Greece and in Rome.

The words of Demosthenes, quoted in the *Digest*, that the law must be obeyed because it is the work and gift of God, are a striking expression of the widespread conviction among ancient peoples of the divine sanction of the organisation of the State. This doctrine developed in an entirely different way in the Christian world.

In the beginning, Christianity was at least indifferent to the State. But from the moment it became necessary for Christianity to come to terms with the Roman State, Christian doctrine taught that it was necessary to recognise the authority of the State and to submit to it, no doubt seeking in this way to avoid the suspicion of being hostile to the State.

But this doctrine changed with the victory of Christianity. An important development took place with St John Chrysostom, and it became even more pronounced with St Augustine. Saint Augustine contrasts the *civitas dei* with the *civitas terrena*; the latter is not, it is

true, entirely identical with the State as we know it from history, but, nonetheless, it has undeniably all its characteristics. Saint Augustine declares that original sin necessarily produced the earthly State; thus the State would be the work of the spirit of evil and one day, at the consummation of time, it too will receive the retribution of sin. So, this earthly State is not divine but diabolical, and thus the doctrine according to which authority derives all its powers from God is completely overturned.

However, like sin, the State exists only by virtue of God's permission, and to that extent is always part of the divine plan. Like everything that derives from sin, the State also serves to highlight in the most vivid way the divine grace that promises deliverance to the elect. God's grace will triumph on the day when the divine State will have won the victory over the earthly State and eternity will have consumed time.

Only the State which devotes itself to the service of the kingdom of God is legitimate to a certain extent, although it is still earthly and mortal.

[...]

The theological argument in favour of the State is no less present in modern times in the struggle between different conceptions, and it is extremely interesting to see how opposing parties try to reduce their claims to the divine will in order to be able to assign to their claims a legal basis that cannot be disputed.

So, it is not only the institution of the State in general, but also a particular form of government which is presented by them as invested with immediate divine sanction. From these facts follows the important proposition that no rigorous political conclusion whatsoever can be deduced from these ecclesiastical doctrines, since all times and all parties professing religious ideas have deduced, and

with rigorous logic, from theological premises, such principles as were favourable to them.

2. Theory of force

The distinctive feature of this theory is that it conceives of the State as the domination of the strongest over the weakest, and declares that this relationship of domination is founded in nature. The State is therefore based on a natural law that cannot be abolished by human arbitrariness. And this is why the individual must recognise the State, i.e. submit to it, realising that the State is an inescapable natural force like solar heat, earthquakes, ebb and flow, etc... The theory of force is the materialist counterpart of the theological doctrine. Just as the latter demanded submission to the divine will, so the theory we are dealing with demands submission to blind social forces.

[...]

In modern times, the theory of force did not appear for the first time until the struggle against theological conceptions. Hobbes already recognised no other limit to the right of the individual living in the state of nature than the extent of his power, and he asserted that the state of force and the contractual state were two equally legitimate manifestations of the State, and that they were equally binding on their members. Spinoza went further and simply identified force with right.

[...]

In modern times, the socialist theory of society, for which the concrete organisation of the State is simply the expression of the relations of power between the classes in society, merely reiterates in a

new form the ancient conception of the sophists. The *de facto* relations of power which are to be found in every society, declares Lassalle, constitute that active force which determines all the laws and all the legal effects of that society, in such a way that the relations of law cannot basically be otherwise than they are. And Friedrich Engels declares, on the basis of Marx's theory: "The State is the oppressor of civilised society, for in all epochs it has been without exception the State of the ruling classes, and it remains always and in all times essentially the machine which serves to oppress the enslaved and exploited class."

The theory of force is rarely found in all its purity. In Spinoza, for example, it is tempered by certain elements of contractual theory. Finally, modern socialists declare that this brutal fact, which only appears at a certain stage in economic history and which consists of the public relations of domination produced by the struggle of social classes, will one day, thanks to evolution, be transformed into a society based on the idea of universal solidarity. One day, as a result of a perfectly natural evolution, competition and class struggle will cease to exist in humanity, and with them what we today call the State. A society reorganised on the basis of a free and egalitarian association of producers will relegate all this old machinery of the State to the museum of antiquities alongside the spinning wheel and the bronze axe. Thus socialists deny, at least as far as the future is concerned, the necessity of the State as a power of domination.

The theory of force apparently finds considerable support in the facts of history. Indeed, in the process of the historical formation of States there has almost always been struggle and victory by a superior force, and war has been the principal source for the formation of most States.

It also seems to be confirmed by the indisputable truth that every State, by its very nature, is an organisation of force and domination. However, the aim of the theory of force is not only to explain, but

also to justify the given fact. This applies to the future, but not to the past.

There is no doubt, as we have explained elsewhere, that in human affairs the fact often has a normative bearing; but another element also acts powerfully against the recognition of the fact as a normative bearing, namely: the need to transform the given conditions according to certain ends. This is why the theory of force can only convince those who fatalistically accept the given conditions as inevitable and unchangeable; but it cannot convince those who want to try to see if it could not be otherwise.

For the knowledge of all natural laws rests, after all, exclusively on experience; it must therefore be permissible for the empirical method to put them to the test again, all the more so since new experiments, pushed further, have often shown that many so-called natural laws are erroneous.

Furthermore, the adherents of these theories totally ignore the following fact: that the dominating power is everywhere and above all of a psychological and not a physical nature, which is already sufficiently proven by the other fact that, in general, a small minority dominates the majority. The same power that ensures English domination in India would be incapable of maintaining in obedience a small Germanic people momentarily subjugated.

Political and social relations of dependence are thus closely related to the moral and intellectual condition of the dominant and the dominated. The practical consequences of the theory of force are therefore not a justification but a demolition of the State. If the State is nothing other than a brutal and unreasonable power, why should anyone oppressed by such a power not try to shake off the yoke, do away with authority or blow up our much-vaunted civilisation? And all the more so since such actions, like all other actions, would not be outside the demand of 'natural laws'.

3. Legal theories

By legal theories I mean that group of doctrines which claim to base the State on a principle of law and therefore consider it to be a product of law. They all start explicitly or tacitly from the principle that there is a legal order that pre-exists the State and is superior to it, from which the State must be derived. Historically, the legal theories have taken three forms. Either the State is seen as an institution of family law, or as an institution of property law, or as an institution of contractual law; consequently, we will have to talk about the patriarchal, property and contractual theory.

a) The State is founded on family right. The patriarchal theory.

That the State, historically, derives from the family or takes the form of an extended family, is a conception found in the historical memories of many peoples. The Greeks, for example, saw the process of State formation essentially as a gradual extension of the family, and as the amalgamation of several enlarged families into a single community. Rome was no less deeply rooted in the original federation of families.

But it was above all the Israelite State which, according to the Bible, came from the descendants of a family. At a time when scientific research into the origins of civilisation was non-existent, theological thinking had to take the family as the foundation of the State; it based the State in such a way that the respect owed by divine and human law to ancestors had to be transferred to the heads of the State, who were the fathers of the extended family.

b) Patrimonial theory

The idea that the institution of property chronologically, or at least logically, preceded the institution of the State was not unknown to the ancients. Allusions to it can be found in the second book of Plato's *Republic*, where the State is ultimately reduced to the union

of different economic occupations, to the union necessitated by the needs of different species of human labour.

This theory is set out very clearly by Cicero, who finds in the protection of property the cause of the formation of States. Modern writers on natural law, as well as contemporary socialist theorists, have often posited the institution of property as the primary legal cause of the institution of the State.

But no attempt was ever made to derive the State systematically from the principles of a so-called pre-State economic order. In the eyes of the Middle Ages, the Germanic concept, which reinforced the feudal system and according to which the king was the supreme owner of all land, was sufficient justification for a State based on land ownership.

In Germany, this idea corroborated the considerable importance of large estates for the exercise of sovereign rights, and so territorial sovereignty appeared to be a prerogative of landed property. Until the end of the Old Empire, there were authors who defended this theory, but they could not even explain the basis of the empire's power, given that only the territorial sovereignty of States, and not imperial power, depended *de jure* on territorial possession. Apart from that, the patrimonial State is only ever considered as one of the possible forms of the State.

c) Contractual theory

By far the most important of the legal theories is the theory that the contract is the basis of the State, not only because of the importance of the authors who have defended it, but also because of the immense influence it has had on the formation of the modern State.

The origins of contractual theory go back a long way. The ancients already had the idea that the contractual union of hitherto free men was the origin of the State. Protagoras saw in a meeting of men the origin of the State, and Plato had the sophists develop the idea that a

voluntary agreement between men led them to protect themselves against injustice. It is clear that all those who see justice as the result of human precepts must have come to this view, for in their eyes the law could only be the result of an agreement between members of the same nation.

And it was the Epicureans in particular who deduced this necessary consequence. In accordance with their primordial, mechanistic and atomistic conception, they consider that the State was formed by means of a contract between social atoms, i.e. between primitively isolated individuals, and that the purpose of this institution was to guarantee them against the wrongs they might do to each other. But it was not so much Greek ideas as Jewish and Roman ones that had an influence on political ideas in the Middle Ages and on the origins of contemporary thought.

[...]

First of all, we find the thesis of the contractual origin of sovereignty at the time of Pope Gregory VII; the supporters of Gregory defend it, to show that the character of imperial power is not of divine origin; and also the anti-Gregorians defend it to show that the emperor is independent of papal power. In the course of the struggles between the General Estates and the princes, the contractual nature of the reciprocal relations between the two was always brought to light. This concept played a major role in seventeenth-century England, and even later in the continental States having General Estates; for the contractual theory of the Middle Ages sought to demonstrate not the foundation of the State institution but that of the concrete power of government.

It would be a serious mistake to look to the Middle Ages for a doctrine that recognised contract as the primary legal foundation of the State. Two major factors opposed the development of the principle of contractual theory in the Middle Ages. The first was the reli-

gious conception, which saw the foundation of the State in an act of will superior to man, the necessary product of original sin. The human will could not therefore be considered as the sole foundation of the State.

Then came the undisputed authority of Aristotle, whose ideas on the origin of the State became those of the Scholastic authors. Not only St. Thomas Aquinas, but also the daring Marsilio of Padua were completely faithful to Aristotelian theological doctrine.

The contractual doctrine of the Middle Ages is not a theory of the primary creation of the State but a theory of the institution of the sovereign within the State. It is not the *populus* but the *rex* who is established by contract. The doctrine of the Middle Ages is therefore above all a theory of the contract of subjection which creates not the State but the constitution of the State; and although here and there we find traces of a social contract which does not relate to the authority of the government in a given State, but claims to constitute the State itself, nowhere do we find a clear statement of this contract.

Even where God is regarded as the *causa remota* and nature as the *causa proxima* of the State, and where, moreover, a contract is required for its foundation, there has been no departure from the basis of the Aristotelian theory according to which the fact that man was originally isolated and that the creation of the State was conscious, are regarded as historical facts. A logical development of the idea of the social contract would necessarily have given rise to the idea of the sovereign individual, source of all organisation and all domination, an idea which, had it been clearly expressed, would have been immediately rejected as heretical.

That this social contract was in fact a heresy is sufficiently proven by the result reached by historical science on the subject. Moreover, this idea was only fully and logically developed by the Reformation and in the Reformed Church. In England, Richard Hooker was the first

to assert the idea of the social contract as the foundation of the State when he set out to found his theory of the Church.

It was the Congregationalists and Independents who applied the democratic idea of the reformed community constitution to the State; they developed the idea that the State is the result of a contract between primitively sovereign individuals, who, by entering into this contract, are voluntarily fulfilling a divine command.

It was in England that this theory was born, and it was there and in the American colonies that it was first put into practice.

On the continent, however, the social contract first appeared in a shapeless form. Gierke wanted to credit Althusius not with the idea, but with the modern scientific theory of the social contract. However, Althusius cannot be said to have made a clear study of the nature of this contract and the position of the individual in relation to it. It is not individuals but cities and provinces that are the constituent elements of this contract.

Grotius himself, who for a long time was considered the creator of the contractual theory, cannot be considered to have developed the theory of the social contract in a complete and systematic way. The same is true of many other authors of this period, who only allude to, but do not develop in detail, the contract that constitutes the State. This theory, which at bottom is only one part of a deeply thought-out system, was constructed by a man who had grown up in an atmosphere filled with the idea of the social contract in England under the first two Stuarts.

[...]

The theory of the social contract began to make scientific headway with Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes stood on the ground of a mechanistic conception of nature, based on modern natural science and the philosophical doctrines that accompanied it, in particular the

Epicurean doctrine, which rejected teleology and constructed the entire physical and moral world on the basis of natural elements and their inherent qualities alone.

This also establishes the principle that all social relations derive from the individual, from his own qualities and nature. Hobbes distinguishes two categories of State. The first is the *historically* formed natural State, based on power relations; the other is the *rationaly* constituted State (*civitas institutiva*), which the scholar deduces not from history but from human nature. He deduces this State analytically, not historically, from the elements composing the State.

To this end, hypothetically, he abolishes the State; in its place he assumes the reign of the state of nature in its clearest and most categorical form (and in this he obviously stands on the ground of the traditional conceptions of antiquity and of the Church). In this state of nature reigns only individual egoism, which leads human beings to be constantly at war with one another, the precepts of natural law having only the value of moral demands, without presenting any guarantee of their fulfilment.

The basic instinct of self-preservation gives rise to fear, and fear in turn leads to the desire for peace; but since man's natural qualities cannot succeed in creating a constant union between individuals, there can be no lasting peace unless all men enter into a treaty of union under the terms of which all submit to a single will.

Thanks to this treaty, the *status civilis* replaces the *status naturalis*. This fundamental treaty is both a social treaty and a contract of subjection; it replaces the state of unassociated individuals with the *persona civilis*, namely the State. In this way, Hobbes establishes that the Absolute State with a single sovereign body (individual or assembly) is the reasonable normal form of the State, and must therefore be recognised purely and simply.

His doctrine is in absolute contradiction with doctrines that consider the sovereign himself as a contracting party. It is not the sovereign, but simply the individuals who conclude a treaty together. He who rises up against the sovereigns is not therefore observing the fundamental treaty he has concluded with the others, a treaty that the sovereign cannot transgress because, as sovereign, he has not concluded it at all. The natural State is considered to exist in law only from the moment when the person who is subject to the power gives his approval to the fact that there must be someone above him: the State is therefore justified by the idea of the contract.

Thus, the common opinion that this eminent thinker, in his doctrine of the foundation of States, wanted to represent the historical birth of the State, is absolutely false. Rather, his doctrine is one that gives the process of State formation a rationalist character, a process that depends on neither place nor time.

He wanted to show his generation that submission to absolute authority is demanded, and therefore justified, by the very essence and nature of the State. It did not occur to him to claim that present times could be bound by treaties concluded long ago. From these fundamental ideas, on the contrary, it follows that every man, by the very fact that he lives in the State, tacitly enters into the treaty of union.

England in particular, where, especially in recent centuries, dynasties have succeeded one another more frequently, could not represent the 'natural' state. Consequently, Hobbes, as a proponent of the idea of a strong State power, the only one capable of ensuring the greatest measure of intellectual freedom, had to find, in the presence of revolutionary theories on the one hand, and doctrines of the divine right of kings on the other, a solid rational foundation for the right of the sovereign, and this was the aim pursued by Hobbes in his studies, as Pufendorf has long since pointed out.

Since Hobbes, the theory of the social contract has been the permanent foundation of the doctrine of the State according to natural law. But the rationalist and historical points of view are often intertwined. For many authors, the formation of the State by contract is a historical fact that gives rationalist doctrine unassailable empirical support.

From this point of view, Locke is well below Hobbes. For Locke, there is no doubt that the historical beginning of all political life is to be found in the constitutive pacts of the State. It is true that Locke opposed Filmer's doctrine on Adam. Nevertheless, he also regarded Adam as the historical origin of humanity. However, he rejects Adam's founding of the State. Consequently, he can only derive the State, historically, from the free consent of Adam's sons.

On the continent, Pufendorf methodically formulated Hobbes's theory of the State contract. He divided Hobbes' contract, which contains multiple elements, into several parts: into a contract of union that unites individuals into a nation; into a *decretum* by which the nation establishes the form of the State; and into a contract of subjection that confers on the sovereign the power to govern.

Thus, the State is completely independent of the existence of the reigning dynasty. Pufendorf maintains the rationalist character of the doctrine, partly by declaring that contracts are the unspoken content of the will of the primitive constituents; partly by claiming that those born later and foreigners tacitly submit to the State. Whatever the case, for Pufendorf the contractual regime of the State is also a historical fact, and it is his doctrine which, variously modified, became the dominant doctrine of natural law until the end of the last century. In this way the historical and rationalist elements are combined.

Rousseau's doctrine of contract takes a completely different form. There is no doubt in the mind of anyone who has actually read his *Social Contract* that in this work, which caused such a stir, Rousseau did not set out to explain the existing State, but to outline and justify

the State that corresponds to the nature of man. Starting from the principle that man, born free, is everywhere in chains, he does not set out to answer the historical question of where and how the present State came into being, but simply to solve the problem of how the present State can be legitimised.

After criticising and rejecting all previous theories of the justification of the State, he starts from the principle vigorously defended before him by Locke that freedom is an inseparable attribute of the human being and that it cannot be renounced. He thus arrives at the postulate that the State must be founded on a social contract by which those who participate in this contract place themselves under the direction of a will emanating from the whole. Since the will of each individual is contained in the common will, the individual, in the State thus constructed, is subject only to himself, and consequently the principle of liberty is also safeguarded.

Rousseau's contract, which founds the State, is therefore apparently a purely social contract. On closer examination, however, we see that, like Hobbes' contract, it is also a contract of subjection. For the individual has two qualities: as a participant in the common will, he is a citizen; as subordinate to the common will, he is a subject. The social contract therefore in no way eliminates the contract of subjection.

From these rational premises, Rousseau drew a series of profound consequences that were in absolute contradiction with what existed at the time. Given that the common will cannot be delegated, shared or ceded, the object of the common will, which is the law, must necessarily be a common decision of the sovereign people, whatever the form of government, given that the sole duty of government is the execution of the law.

The rational and lawful State is and remains direct democracy, a concept whose powerful influence can be felt even today in the programmes of the radical parties.

Drawing his inspiration from Rousseau, and yet holding his own views on many points, Kant, whose great authority sustained contractual theory for a long time in the nineteenth century, pointed out the exclusively rationalist nature of the social contract: He states: «the act by which the people constitutes itself into a State, and in fact the very idea of this State which makes it possible to consider it in conformity with the law, is the primitive contract according to which all, *omnes et singuli*, in the people, renounce their freedom in order to take it up again immediately as members of a community, that is to say as members of the people considered as a State (*universi*).»

Criticism of contract theory has to deal only with the rationalist side of this theory. The theory of the contract as a theory of the historical origin of the State cannot be taken seriously by modern science, since it lacks any historical basis. We shall see elsewhere what is to be thought of historical examples of the so-called founding of States by contract.

The historical doctrine of the social contract was the necessary consequence of the civilisation of an age which knew the primitive existence of the human race only as a state of affairs in which, if we were to believe the authoritative documents, there would have been no State, and from which men would have emerged on the basis of rational considerations to achieve precise and clear-cut goals.

The great importance and the secular consideration that this theory has had rests on the fundamental rationalist idea, which represents to the individual the State as the rational product of his own will.

There can be no more profound justification of the State than that which proves to the individual that he himself has recognised the State as necessary, and therefore freely and consciously created it; in submitting to it he is merely recognising a consequence of his own action. Moreover, this theory must be brought together with all the other conceptions that attribute to the State a historical contractual origin, since, logically and clearly developed to the end, they claim to

attribute, not to the past State, but to the present and future State, a rational basis, as do all the other theories of the justification of the State.

Even if blind forces of nature had produced the State in its present form, why should not what those forces produced be adapted to our purified nature, as happens with other institutions, the family, for example? This is why the contractual theory has not been refuted in any way when it is proved that it is not historical, an argument which is for many the only one, but which always comes back in various forms.

The theory of Herbert Spencer is nothing else, although he expressly refuses to acknowledge it, than the theory of natural law in a new form. Following in the footsteps of Auguste Comte, he contrasts two social states: the state of war based on law and the industrial state based on contract; it is the latter state that he claims for the future, thus placing at the end of historical evolution what the natural theory placed at the beginning.

The free society built on a collectivist basis and such as socialism calls for and dreams of, is basically nothing other than the contractual State to which we do not give the name of State, for the purpose of political propaganda, because this name is too reminiscent of an odious constraint.

Even if we reject all atomistic justification of the State, and regard it as the immediate product of natural and intellectual forces, as an organism of some kind, we cannot simply reject the idea that what is objectively necessary cannot also be rationally willed, and that in this reasonable will, the content of which would be in agreement with that of others, the need for the individual to devote himself to the community would be justified.

That what is objectively necessary is consciously willed is, moreover, the idea that dominates deeply thought-out moral systems, such as

those of Stoicism in antiquity and the doctrine of Spinoza in modern times. This is because we have to remember that the fact of being and the recognition of what ought to be are two entirely different things. And words like atomism, mechanism and individualism are not the way to refute something.

The great flaw in contractual theory, as in all legal theories, is that it misconceives the nature of law. In all its forms, this theory proceeds from a law that would exist without any social organisation; it takes one or more principles from an existing political legal order, and derives the State from it. How long was it before the principle of the binding force of contracts, which today seems so obvious to natural law, was invented!

That consent alone is binding is a principle that even today is not applied without exceptions. Moreover, it is impossible to demonstrate that objective law is the content and the legal consequence of the primitive contract. This explains why the theories of natural law and the social contract are so interesting and instructive: they make the political requirements of the moment seem to be deduced from general premises in which these theories were careful to include the so-called consequence, either overtly or covertly.

But the greatest flaw in the natural law justification of the contract is the impossibility of showing that consent, once given, is absolutely binding on the individual. If the human being is free by nature, then Rousseau's principle that freedom cannot be renounced is irrefutable; but then the individual could, by virtue of this same freedom that cannot be renounced, break the contract at any time.

This last logical consequence of the theory of natural law was clearly deduced by J. G. Fichte. If someone changes his will, he no longer participates in the contract, he no longer has any right to the State and the State no longer has any right over him. But if one individual can leave the State, then so can several. These individuals find themselves in relation to each other and in their relations with

the State they have left, under the empire of simple natural law. And if those who have separated wish to unite more closely and conclude a new social contract on whatever terms they please, they have, by virtue of the natural law on whose ground they have withdrawn, an absolute right to do so. And a new State would thus be created.

Thus, the contractual theory, logically developed to its last limits, does not justify the State, but rather refutes it. And if Fichte was the only one to deduce this consequence, it is because all the others either uncritically accepted the principle of the binding force of the contract and regarded it as a dogma that cannot be questioned, or else invoked another force in addition to the contract to justify the State.

For many, the contract is merely the *causa proxima* of the State, behind which we must look as *causa remota* either natural instinct or a moral law of a higher order, and from then on, these doctrines enter the psychological and moral terrain.

If, as we have just seen, contractual theory has not achieved its goal, the historical influence it has had and still has is incalculable.

The modern State, in its structure and institutions, is deeply imbued with it. We will simply recall here that it is from this theory that the idea of clearly expressed rights of freedom derives; as well as the postulate of the institution of the rule of law and the realisation of this postulate through judicial sanctions, in particular the legal guarantee of the individual's sphere of public rights. The principles of the liberal political and economic parties were formed and developed under the influence of this same theory.

Being closely united with the modern doctrine of the sovereignty of the people, it has also provided the basis for the consequences that have been deduced from the latter doctrine; it is this that we find in the plebiscitary theory in France, in the referendum in Switzerland

and America, and in the political claims of the German Social Democrats.

An undisputed dominant idea in the last century, the contractual theory helped to reduce the old regime in Europe to ruins and to build a new world on the other side of the ocean. This is because political doctrines, similar in this respect to religious theories, act not only to the extent of the abstract truth they contain, but to the extent and by the force with which they are able to impose themselves on minds and dominate them. Thus, all legal theories have a common flaw: they seek to rely on a legal order pre-existing the State. But since modern science has had a clear notion of the nature of law, all these theories have been relegated to the past, even if their influence is and will continue to be felt in the future.

4. The moral theory

Proving that the State is a moral necessity and thus justifying it in the eyes of the individual is a consequence of religious theory, given that the divine act of will constituting the State contains within itself the moral requirement that it be recognised by the individual. But the moral justification of the State can also be found as far back as antiquity, independent of any religious principle. Ancient philosophy, when it had reached its perfection, considered that there was no life worthy of man outside the State.

For Plato and Aristotle, man is only truly man in the absolute sense of the word when he belongs to a community organised in the form of a State, since it is in this community alone that human nature can develop to the full.

Outside the State, he would be a God or an animal; the moral perfection to which man must tend by his nature is only possible in the State. But the modern doctrine of natural law also claims, as we have just seen, that the *causa remota* of the State is often a moral

commandment; thus Hobbes finds the *causa remota* of the State to be the *lex naturæ fundamentalis*, which accords with the moral law; this law commands the pursuit of peace, which can only be achieved in a lasting way within the State.

According to Christian Wolff's principles, the need for the institution of the State derives from the higher moral duty of perfection. Kant, for his part, declares that the rule of law is a categorical imperative, and thus he justifies a union of men under rules of law, which for him constitutes the State.

Fichte considers it a duty of absolute conscience to join together to form a State and to realise the rational State of his own free will. The rule of law, he says in his latest book, contains at the same time a moral obligation for everyone to recognise and uphold it. Anyone who does not want to create a rational State, who infringes the rights of others, should not be tolerated anywhere, but should be tamed like a wild natural force.

Hegel, too, affirmed the moral necessity of the State, but in a completely different way from the theorists of natural law; he started from ancient conceptions, and considered the State to be the highest degree of dialectical development of the objective spirit; he also refers to the State as the reality of the moral idea. The State, having thus become morality incarnate, is reasonable in itself, and it is therefore the primary duty of the individual to be a member of the State. The idea of the moral necessity of recognising the State is found in later writers with certain variations. It is closely correlated with the theory we are about to expound.

5. The psychological theory

The adherents of this theory are those who regard the State as a historical necessity, and there are many of them, many of whom do not realise it because of the lack of clarity among political writers.

Given that the State does not exist apart from men, but lives and manifests itself through human actions, the historical necessity we are asserting cannot, once it has been clearly and scientifically examined, be described as anything other than psychological. This category therefore includes all those who regard the State as a formation of nature, as a product of the popular mind, as a historical fact, and who thus claim to justify it.

The person who can be considered the ancestor of all those who have developed similar theories is Aristotle; he, it will be remembered, declared that man was naturally disposed to live in society and subject to an instinct that drives him to achieve higher social forms.

The psychological theory also has more or less numerous points of contact with other theories, in particular with certain theories of natural law, insofar as these see certain human instincts (social instinct, utilitarian instinct, fear) as the principle of State formation. Nowadays, however, it is mostly combined with moral theory, since the historical or psychological phenomenon of the State is also considered to be rational.

What has become a historical fact contains within itself, according to these conceptions, the moral requirement of being recognised as a rational fact. Finally, given today's abhorrence of metaphysics, the question of the absolute rational character of the State is no longer addressed, and philosophers and historians alike presuppose that the State is psychologically justified by its existence, which is asserted to be historically necessary and based on the requirements of human organisation.

Max Weber

State, Parties and Politics

(1919)

These are selected passages from a series of lectures given by Max Weber at the end of 1918 to the Free Students Union of Munich University and published the following year.

The author clarifies very lucidly the nature of the State, and the basic characteristics of politics, parties and political bosses.

Source: Max Weber, *Politik als Beruf*, 1919.

The State

“Every State is founded on force,” said once Trotsky at Brest-Litovsk. That is indeed true. If only social entities existed to which violence was unknown as a means, then the term ‘State’ would have ceased to exist, and what one would call ‘anarchy’ in this particular sense of the word would have occurred.

Of course, violence is not the normal or only means of the State — there is no question of that — but it is specific to it. The relationship

between the State and violence is particularly intimate today. In the past, the most diverse organisations — starting with the clan — have known physical violence as a quite normal means.

Today, however, we will have to say: the State is that human community which (successfully) claims for itself the *monopoly of legitimate physical force* within a certain territory. Note that 'territory' is one of the characteristics of the State.

What is specific to the present is that the right to use physical violence is granted to all other associations or individuals only to the extent that the State permits it. The State is considered as the sole source of the 'right' to use violence.

Politics as power

'Politics' would therefore mean for us: striving for a share of power or for influencing the distribution of power, whether between States or, within a State, between the groups of people it encompasses.

Every enterprise of domination which requires continuous administration requires, on the one hand, the attitude of human action towards obedience to those masters who claim to be the bearers of legitimate power, and on the other hand, by means of this obedience, the disposal of those material goods which may be necessary for the implementation of the physical use of force: the personal administrative staff and the material means of administration.

This essentially corresponds to the use of language. When one says of a question that is a 'political' question, that a minister or civil servant is a 'political' civil servant, that a decision is 'politically' conditioned, what is always meant is that interests in the distribution of power, the preservation of power or the shifting of power are decisive for the answer to that question or condition this decision or determine the sphere of activity of the civil servant concerned.

Those who pursue politics strive for power — power either as a means in the service of other goals — more idealistic or more selfish — or power ‘for its own sake’: to enjoy the feeling of prestige that it gives.

The types of power

The State, just like the political organisations that preceded it in history, is a relationship of rule by people over people based on the means of legitimate (i.e. considered legitimate) violence. For the State to exist, the dominated people must therefore submit to the claimed authority of those in power.

When and why do they do this? On what internal justifications and external means is this domination based?

To begin with, in principle, there are three internal justifications, i.e. reasons for the *legitimacy* of domination.

Traditional. Firstly, the authority of the ‘eternally past’: the authority sanctified by precedented validity and a habitual attitude towards its internal maintenance.

This is ‘traditional’ domination exercised by the patriarch and the patrimonial prince of yore.

Charismatic. There is then the authority of the extraordinary personal *gift of grace* (charisma), the very personal devotion and personal trust in revelations, heroism or other leadership qualities of an individual: ‘charismatic’ rule, as exercised by the prophet or — in the realm of the political — by the crowned warlord or the plebiscitary ruler, by the great demagogue and the political party leader.

Legal. Finally: rule by virtue of ‘legality’, by virtue of the belief in the validity of legal statutes and the factual ‘competence’ justified by rationally created rules, i.e.: the attitude of obedience in the fulfil-

ment of statutory duties. This is domination as exercised by the modern 'public servant' and all those bearers of power who resemble him in this respect.

It goes without saying that, in reality, the most robust motives of fear and hope — fear of the revenge of magical powers or of the ruler, hope of otherworldly or this-worldly reward — as well as interests of the most diverse kinds determine docility.

But if you ask about the 'legitimacy' reasons for this docility, then you come across these three 'pure' types: 'traditional,' 'charismatic,' and 'legal.' And these ideas of legitimacy and their inner justification are of very considerable importance for the structure of domination.

The pure types are, of course, rarely found in reality.

The bureaucracy

However, these politicians by virtue of their 'profession' in the truest sense of the word are not, of course, the only decisive figures in the gears of the political struggle for power. Rather, what is most decisive is the type of tools they have at their disposal.

How do the politically ruling powers begin to assert their domination? This question applies to every type of rule, including political rule in all its forms: traditional, legal and charismatic.

The administrative staff, which represents the political power organisation like any other organisation in its external appearance, is of course not only chained to obedience to the ruler by the concept of legitimacy that was just mentioned, but also by two means that appeal to personal interest: material reward and social honour. The fiefs of vassals, the sinecures of patrimonial officials, the salaries of modern civil servants, the honour of knighthood, the privileges of the estates, the honour of civil servants — they form the reward. The fear

of losing them is the final decisive basis for the solidarity of the administrative staff with the ruler.

This also applies to the charismatic dominion of leaders: honour of war and booty for the followers in war; for the followers of the demagogue there are the 'spoils' — that is, exploitation of the dominated through the monopolization of office — and there are politically determined profits and vanity bonuses.

The maintenance of every dominion by force requires certain external material goods, just like an economic enterprise. All orders of government can now be classified according to whether they are based on the principle that the staff of men — officials or whoever else they may be — on whose obedience the ruler must be able to count, are in possession of the means of administration, that might consist of money, buildings, war material, wagons, horses, or whatever else; or whether the administrative staff is 'separate' from the means of administration, in the same sense as today the employee and proletarian within the capitalist enterprise is 'separate' from the material means of production.

Whether, therefore, the ruler has the administration under his own direction, organised by himself, and has it administered by personal servants or employed officials or personal favourites and confidants, who are not owners — possessors in their own right — of the material resources, but are directed by the master, or whether the opposite is the case. The difference runs through all administrative organisations of the past.

The bureaucratic State

The bureaucratic State order is especially important; in its most rational development, it is precisely characteristic of the modern State

Everywhere the development of the modern State is set in motion by the fact that the prince initiates the expropriation of the independent 'private' bearers of administrative power standing next to him: those self-owners of administrative and war resources, financial resources and politically usable goods of all kinds.

The whole process is a complete parallel to the development of the capitalist enterprise through the gradual expropriation of the independent producers. In the end we see that in the modern State the disposal of the entire political means of production actually converges in a single head. No single official is any longer the personal owner of the money he spends, or of the buildings, supplies, tools, war machines at his disposal. In today's 'State' — and this is essential to its concept — the 'separation' of the administrative staff, of the administrative officials and administrative workers, from the material resources is thus fully realised.

This is where the most modern development comes in and we see with our own eyes the attempt to inaugurate the expropriation of this expropriator of the political means, and therewith of political power.

The revolution has achieved this at least to the extent that the established authorities have been replaced by leaders who, through usurpation or election, have placed themselves in control of the political human and material apparatus and derive their legitimacy — no matter how rightly — from the will of the ruled.

Professional politicians

We will not comment on this today. I merely state for our consideration the purely *conceptual* aspect that the modern State is an institutional association of rulers, which has endeavoured successfully to monopolise legitimate physical force as a means of dominion within a territory. To this end has combined the material means of operation in the hands of its leaders, and has expropriated all the indepen-

dent functionaries of the estates, who formerly controlled these means in their own right, and has placed itself in their place at its highest apex.

In the course of this process of political expropriation, which took place in all countries of the world with varying degrees of success, the first categories of 'professional politicians' appeared, in a different sense. These are people who did not want to be masters themselves, like the charismatic leaders, but who entered into the *service* of political masters. In this struggle, they placed themselves at the disposal of the prince and by managing the princes' politics they earned, on the one hand, a living and, on the other hand, an ideal for their life. Again, it is *only* in the Occident that we find this type of professional politician in the service of powers other than just the princes. In the past, they were their most important instrument of power and political expropriation.

The way of politics

Before we go into them in more detail, let us make the facts of the existence of such 'professional politicians' clear to all sides. It is possible to engage in 'politics' — in other words, to endeavour to influence the distribution of power between and within political entities — both as an 'occasional' politician and as a part-time or full-time politician, just as it happens in the economic field.

We are all 'occasional' politicians when we cast our ballot or make a similar expression of will, such as applauding or protesting in a 'political' meeting, making a 'political' speech, etc., — and for many people their entire relationship to politics is limited to this. 'Part-time' politicians today are, for example, all those shop stewards and board members of party-political organisations who — as is the rule — only carry out this activity when necessary and do not primarily 'make their living' from it, either materially or ideally.

[...]

There are two ways to make a career out of politics. Either you live 'for' politics — or 'off' politics. The dichotomy is by no means exclusive. As a rule, one does both, at least ideally, but mostly also materially: those who live 'for' politics make 'their life out of it' in an inner sense: they either enjoy the naked possession of the power they wield, or they feed their inner balance and sense of self from the awareness of giving their life meaning by serving a 'cause'.

In this inner sense, every serious person who lives for a cause also lives from that cause. The distinction therefore relates to a much more important side of the matter: the economic side.

Those who strive to make politics a permanent source of income live 'off' politics as a profession, and those for whom this is not the case live 'for' politics. In order for someone to be able to live 'for' politics in this economic sense, under the rule of private property there must be a few, if you like, very trivial prerequisites: he must — under normal circumstances — be economically independent of the income that politics can bring him. That means quite simply: he must be wealthy or in a private position in life which yields him an adequate income.

[...]

The leadership of a State or a party by people who live (in the economic sense of the word) exclusively for politics and not off politics necessarily means a 'plutocratic' recruitment of the politically leading strata. To be sure, this does not mean that such plutocratic leadership as politically dominant class will not also seek to live 'off' politics, i.e. does not use its political rule for its private economic interests.

Clearly, there is no question of that. There has never been a class that has not done this in some way. It only means this: that professional politicians are not compelled to seek direct payment for their political services, as every destitute person has to do.

[...]

Politics can either be run on a 'voluntary' basis and then by, as they say, 'independent', i.e. wealthy people, especially rentiers.

Or political leadership is made accessible to those without means, and then they must be remunerated. The professional politician who lives off politics can be a pure 'prebendary' or a salaried 'official.' Either he receives income from fees and donations for certain services — tips and bribes are only one irregular and formally illegal variety of this category of income — or he receives a fixed payment in kind or a monetary salary, or both at the same time.

He may assume the character of an 'entrepreneur,' like the *condottieri* or the holder of a farmed-out or purchased office of the past, or like the American boss, who regards his expenses as an investment which he makes yield by utilising his influence. Or he may draw a fixed salary, like a journalist, a party secretary, a modern minister or a political official.

Feudal fiefs, land grants, and prebends of all sorts have been typical, in the past.

But with the development of the monetary economy, perquisites and prebends especially are the typical rewards for the following of princes, victorious conquerors, or successful party chiefs.

Today it is offices of all kinds in parties, newspapers, co-operatives, health insurance companies, municipalities as well as in the State, which are awarded by party leaders for loyal service.

All party struggles are not only struggles for objective goals, but above all for patronage of office. In Germany, all struggles between the proponents of local and of central government are focused upon the question of which powers shall control the patronage of office, whether they are in Berlin, Munich, Karlsruhe, or Dresden. Setbacks in participating in offices are felt more severely by parties than failure in their objective goals.

In France, a turnover of prefects because of party politics has always been regarded as a major upheaval and caused more of a stir than a modification in the government's program — the latter almost having the significance of mere verbiage.

Some parties, especially those in America, have become pure job-hunting parties since the old differences over the interpretation of the constitution have faded, changing their substantive programme according to the chances of grabbing votes.

In Spain, until recent years, the two major parties alternated in conventionally fixed cycles in the form of 'elections' fabricated from above to provide their followers with offices. In the Spanish colonial territories, in both the so-called 'elections' and the so-called 'revolutions,' what was at stake was always the State bread-basket from which the victors wished to be fed.

In Switzerland the parties divide the offices peacefully among themselves by proportional representation, and some of our 'revolutionary' constitutional drafts, such as the first one drawn up for Baden, wanted to extend this system to the ministerial offices and thus treated the State and its offices as pure institutions for the provision of spoilsmen.

The Centre Party, in particular, was enthusiastic about this and in Baden even made the proportional distribution of offices according to denomination, i.e. regardless of merit, a point on its programme. With the increasing number of offices as a result of general bureau-

cratisation and the growing desire for them as a form of specifically secured provision, this tendency increased for all parties, and they became more and more a means to an end for their followers, to be provided for in this way.

The lawyers

Without this juristic rationalism, the emergence of the absolute State is as inconceivable as is the Revolution. If you look through the remonstrances of the French Parliaments or the *Cahiers de doléances* of the French Estates-General from the 16th century up to the year 1789, you will find the spirit of jurisprudence everywhere.

And if you look through the professional affiliations of the members of the French Convention, you will find — although it was elected on the basis of equal suffrage — a single proletarian, very few bourgeois entrepreneurs, but a *masse* of lawyers of all kinds, without whom the specific spirit that animated these radical intellectuals and their designs would be quite unthinkable.

The modern advocate and modern democracy have belonged together ever since — and advocates in our sense, as an independent profession, have only existed in the Occident, since the Middle Ages, where they developed from the ‘advocate’ of the formalistic Germanic trial procedure under the influence of the rationalisation of the process.

The importance of the advocates in occidental politics since the emergence of parties is no coincidence. The management of politics through parties simply means management through interest groups. We shall soon see what that means. And managing a matter effectively for interested parties is the craft of the trained advocate. In this — as the superiority of enemy propaganda has taught us — he is superior to any ‘official’. He can certainly lead a case that is

supported by logically weak arguments, in this sense a 'bad' case, and still be victorious.

The demagogue

The 'demagogue' has been the type of leading politician in the Occident since the time of the constitutional State and even more so since democracy has been established. The unpleasant connotation of the word should not make us forget that it was not Cleon but Pericles who was the first to bear this name. In contrast to the offices of ancient democracy that were filled by lot, Pericles led the sovereign *Ecclesia* of the demos of Athens as a supreme strategist without any office at all or entrusted with the only elective office.

Modern demagoguery also makes use of oratory to a tremendous extent, if one considers the election speeches that a modern candidate has to deliver. But the use of the printed word is even more enduring. The political publicist, and above all the journalist, is nowadays the most important representative of the demagogic species.

The political parties

Political organisations with periodic elections of rulers are necessary in all political associations of a certain size, i.e. beyond the sphere and range of small rural districts. This means that a relatively small number of people who are primarily interested in political life, i.e. in participating in political power, create a following through free recruitment, present themselves or their protégés as candidates for election, collect the funds and go on the hunt for votes.

It is incomprehensible how elections in large organisations could be properly held without this system. In practice, this means the division of citizens entitled to vote into politically active and politically passive elements. And since this difference is based on voluntariness, it cannot be eliminated by any measures, such as compulsory voting or 'professional' representation or similar proposals explicitly or actually directed against this fact and thus against the rule of professional politicians.

The active leadership and their freely recruited following are the necessary elements in the life of any party. The following, and through it the passive electorate, are necessary for the election of the leader.

The modern parties

This idyllic state of rule by circles of notables and, above all, parliamentarians, is now sharply contrasted with the most modern forms of party organisation. These modern forms are the children of democracy, of mass suffrage, of the necessity of mass recruitment and mass organisation, of the development of the highest unity of leadership and the strictest discipline.

The rule of notables and guidance by members of parliament ceases. 'Full-time' politicians *outside* the parliaments take over the business.

They do so either as an 'entrepreneur' — the American boss and the English election agent are, in fact, such entrepreneurs — or as officials with a fixed salary. Formally, a far-reaching democratisation is taking place. It is no longer the parliamentary group that creates the authoritative programmes, and it is no longer the local notables who nominate the candidates, but rather assemblies of organised party members who select the candidates and delegate members to the higher-order assemblies, of which there may be several up to the general 'party congress'.

The fact is, of course, that power lies in the hands of those who continuously carry out the work within the organization, or of those on whom — e.g. as patrons or leaders of powerful political interest clubs (Tammany Hall) — the company is dependent for its operation in terms of money or personnel. The crucial point is that this whole human apparatus — the ‘machine’, as it is characteristically called in Anglo-Saxon countries — or rather those who run it, are able to keep the members of the parliament in check and impose their will on them to a fairly large extent.

And this is particularly important for the selection of the party leadership. The leader is now the one who is followed by the machine, even over the head of the parliamentary party. The creation of such machines means, in other words, the advent of *plebiscitarian* democracy.

Party followers, especially party officials and entrepreneurs, naturally expect personal rewards from their leader’s victory: offices or other advantages. The decisive factor is that they expect such advantages from their leader and not merely from the individual member of parliament

Above all, they expect that the demagogic effect of the leader’s *personality* in the election campaign will bring the party votes and mandates, and thus power, and thereby maximise the chances of its supporters finding the hoped-for reward for themselves.

And ideally, the satisfaction of working for a person with devout personal dedication and not just for an abstract programme of a party made up of mediocrities — this ‘charismatic’ element of all leadership — is one of the driving forces.

The party leader

How does the selection of these strong leaders take place? And, first of all, according to what ability are they selected?

In addition to the qualities of will, which are decisive everywhere in the world, the power of demagogic speech is of course the most important factor. Its nature has changed since the time speakers like Cobden addressed themselves to the intellect, and Gladstone who mastered the technique of apparently 'letting sober facts speak for themselves.' At the present time often purely emotional means are used — such as those used by the Salvation Army — in order to set the masses in motion.

The current state of affairs may well be called a 'dictatorship based on the exploitation of the emotionality of the masses'. Yet, the highly developed system of committee work in the English Parliament makes it possible and also compels every politician who counts on a share in the leadership to cooperate in committee work. All the important ministers of the last decades have undergone this very real and effective work-training. And the practice of committee reports and public criticism of these deliberations is a condition for training, for really selecting leaders and eliminating mere demagogues.

This is the case in England. The caucus system there, however, has been a weak form, compared with the American party organization, which brought the plebiscitarian principle to an especially early and an especially pure expression. According to George Washington's idea, America was to be a polity administered by 'gentlemen'. In his time, in America, a gentleman was also a landlord, or a man with a college education. That's how it was at first.

In the beginning, when parties were formed, the members of the House of Representatives initially claimed to be leaders, just as in England when the Lords ruled. The party organisation was very loose. This lasted until 1824. In some communities, where modern

development first took place, the party machine was in the making even before the eighteen-twenties.

But it was the election of Andrew Jackson as president, the candidate of the farmers of the West, that overturned the old traditions.

Formal party leadership by leading members of Congress came to an end soon after 1840, when the great parliamentarians, John Calhoun and Daniel Webster, retired from political life because Congress had lost almost all of its power to the party machine in the open country.

That the plebiscitary 'machine' developed so early in America was due to the fact that there, and only there, the head of the executive and — this is what mattered — the chief of office-patronage was a President elected by plebiscite and, as a result of the 'separation of powers', he was almost independent of parliament in the exercise of his office. A real spoils of official patronage thus beckoned as the reward for victory in the presidential election.

The spoils system

The 'spoils system', which Andrew Jackson had now systematically elevated to a principle, was the consequence of this situation.

What does this spoils system — the allocation of all federal offices to the followers of the victorious candidate — mean for the party formations of today? It means that quite unprincipled parties stand opposite each other, pure job-hunting organisations, which make their changing programmes for the individual election campaign according to the chances of catching votes — changing their platforms to an extent which, despite all analogies, is not found elsewhere.

The parties are completely tailored to the most important election campaign for official patronage: that for the presidency of the Union and for the governorships of the individual states. Programmes and

candidates are selected at the 'national conventions' of the parties without the intervention by congressmen. In other words, they emerge from party conventions that are formally and very democratically convened by delegate assemblies, which in turn owe their mandate to the 'primaries', the party's primary electoral assemblies.

Already in the primaries, delegates are elected in the names of the candidates for the nation's leadership. Within the individual parties, the fiercest battle rages over the question of the 'nomination.'

The President is responsible for appointing 300,000-400,000 civil servants, who are only appointed by him with the approval of senators from the different states. The senators are therefore powerful politicians. The House of Representatives, on the other hand, is relatively powerless politically, because it is deprived of the patronage of civil servants. The cabinet members, mere assistants to the President, can exercise their office independently of the confidence or lack of confidence of the House of Representatives.

The President, who is legitimized by the people, confronts everybody, even Congress. This is a result of 'the separation of powers.'

In America, the spoils system, supported in this fashion, has been technically possible because a young American civilization could tolerate a purely dilettante management. With 300,000-400,000 such party people, who had no qualifications to their credit but the fact that they had served their party well, this state of affairs could not, of course, exist without enormous evils: unparalleled corruption and waste, which only a country with still unlimited economic opportunities could endure.

The political boss

The figure that appears on the scene with this system of the plebiscitary party machine is the 'boss'. Who is the boss? He is a political

capitalist entrepreneur who procures votes for his own account and at his own risk. He may have gained his first connections as a lawyer or pub landlord or owner of similar businesses or, for example, as a lender. From there, he continues to spin his strings until he is able to 'control' a certain number of votes.

Once he has made it this far, he establishes contact with the neighbouring bosses, attracts the attention of those who have already progressed in their career through zeal, skill and, above all, discretion and then climbs the ladder. The boss is indispensable for the organisation of the party and the organization is centralized in his hands. He is very much responsible for procuring the financial means. How does he get them?

Well, partly through membership fees and especially by taxing the salaries of those civil servants who came into office through him and his party. Then through bribes and tips. Anyone who wants to violate one of the numerous laws with impunity needs the connivance of the bosses and must pay them. Otherwise, he will inevitably get into trouble.

But this alone is not enough to accumulate the necessary capital for political enterprises. The boss is indispensable as the direct recipient of money from the big financial magnates. They would not entrust any paid party official or public accountant with any money at all for election purposes. The boss, with his shrewd discretion in money matters, is of course the man for those capitalist circles who finance the election.

The typical boss is an absolutely sober man. He does not strive for social honour; the 'professional' is despised within the 'good society'. He seeks only power, power as a source of money, but also for its own sake. In contrast to the English leader, the American boss works in the dark.

You will not hear him speak in public himself; he suggests to the speakers what they should say in an appropriate manner, but he himself remains silent. As a rule, he accepts no office, except that of senator in the federal senate. Since the senators participate in the patronage of office by virtue of the Constitution, the leading bosses often sit in person in this body. The distribution of offices is carried out, in the first place, according to services done for the party. However, offices are also often awarded in return for monetary bids, and there are also certain fees for individual offices. Hence, a system of selling offices exists, as was often the case in the monarchies of the 17th and 18th centuries, including the Papal States.

The boss has no firm political 'principles'. He is completely unprincipled in attitude and asks merely: What will capture votes? Frequently he is a rather poorly educated man. In his private life, however, he tends to live impeccably and correctly. It is only in his political ethics that he naturally adapts himself to the average ethics of political behaviour, as many of us probably did in the field of economic ethics during the hoarding period.

The fact that he is socially despised as a 'professional' politician does not bother him. That he personally does not attain high federal offices, and does not wish to do so, has the frequent advantage that it is not uncommon for intellectuals, that is notables, from outside the party to be appointed to office when the bosses believe they will have great appeal value at the polls.

Thus, the very structure of these unprincipled parties with their socially despised power-holders has helped capable men to attain the Presidency, men who would never have risen to the top. Of course, the bosses are reluctant to accept an outsider who could jeopardise their sources of money and power. Yet, in the competition for the favour of the voters, the bosses have often had to accept candidates who were seen as opponents of corruption.

Here, then, there exists a strong capitalist party machine, strictly and thoroughly organized from top to bottom, and supported by clubs of extraordinary stability. These clubs, like Tammany Hall, strive exclusively for profit through political control, especially of the municipal government, which is the most important object of booty.

Politics as violence

Anyone who wants to practise politics at all, and anyone who wants to practise politics as a profession, must be aware of these ethical paradoxes and his responsibility for what he himself can become under their pressure. He is, I repeat, engaging with the diabolical powers that lurk in all violence. The great *virtuosi* of acosmic human love and goodness, whether they came from Nazareth or Assisi or from Indian royal castles, did not operate with the political means of violence. Their kingdom was 'not of this world', and yet they acted and still act in this world. The figures of Platon Karataev [a peasant in Tolstoy novel, *War and Peace* (1869) who represents the author's ideal of the simple life] and the saints of Dostoievski are still their most adequate reconstructions.

He who aims at the salvation of his soul and the salvation of other souls does not seek this through politics, which has completely different tasks: those that can only be solved by force.

The genius, or demon, of politics lives in an inner tension with the God of love, as well as with the Christian God in his ecclesiastical form. This tension can erupt, at any time, into irreconcilable conflict.

Randolph Bourne

The Development of the American State (1919)

Randolph Bourne died in 1918 while writing the first draft of this essay. This short extract focus on the birth and development of the American State and its direct derivation from the early English State of which it maintains the basic oligarchic features behind a smoke-screen of democratic principles.

Source: Randolph Bourne, *The State*, 1919.

An analysis of the State would take us back to the beginnings of society, to the complex of religious and personal and herd-impulses which has found expression in so many forms. What we are interested in is the American State as it behaves and as Americans behave towards it in this twentieth century, and to understand that we have to go no further back than the early English monarchy of which our American republic is the direct descendant.

How straight and true is that line of descent almost nobody realizes. Those persons who believe in the sharpest distinction between

democracy and monarchy can scarcely appreciate how a political institution may go through so many transformations and yet remain the same. Yet a swift glance must show us that in all the evolution of the English monarchy, with all its broadenings and its revolutions, and even with its jump across the sea into a colony which became an independent nation and then a powerful State, the same State functions and attitudes have been preserved essentially unchanged.

The changes have been changes of form and not of inner spirit, and the boasted extension of democracy has been not a process by which the State was essentially altered to meet the shifting of classes, the extension of knowledge, the needs of social organization, but a mere elastic expansion by which the old spirit of the State easily absorbed the new and adjusted itself successfully to its exigencies.

Never once has it been seriously shaken. Only once or twice has it been seriously challenged, and each time it has speedily recovered its equilibrium and proceeded with all its attitudes and faiths reenforced by the disturbance.

The modern democratic State, in this light, is therefore no bright and rational creation of a new day, the political form under which great peoples are to live healthfully and freely in a modern world, but the last decrepit scion of an ancient and hoary stock, which has become so exhausted that it scarcely recognizes its own ancestor, does, in fact, repudiate him while it clings tenaciously to the archaic and irrelevant spirit that made that ancestor powerful, and resists the new bottles for the new wine that its health as a modern society so desperately needs.

So sweeping a conclusion might have been doubted concerning the American State had it not been for the war, which has provided a long and beautiful series of examples of the tenacity of the State ideal and its hold on the significant classes of the American nation. War is the health of the State, and it is during war that one best understands the

nature of that institution. If the American democracy during wartime has acted with an almost incredible trueness to form, if it has resurrected with an almost joyful fury the somnolent State, we can only conclude that the tradition from the past has been unbroken, and that the American republic is the direct descendant of the English State.

And what was the nature of this early English State? It was first of all a medieval-absolute monarchy, arising out of the feudal chaos, which had represented the first effort at order after the turbulent assimilation of the invading barbarians by the Christianizing Roman civilization. The feudal lord evolved out of the invading warrior who had seized or been granted land and held it, souls and usufruct thereof, as fief to some higher lord whom he aided in war.

His own serfs and vassals were exchanging faithful service for the protection which the warrior with his organized band could give them. Where one invading chieftain retained his power over his lesser lieutenants a petty kingdom would arise, as in England, and a restless and ambitious king might extend his power over his neighbors and consolidate the petty kingdoms only to fall before the armed power of an invader like William the Conqueror, who would bring the whole realm under his heel.

The modern State begins when a prince secures almost undisputed sway over fairly homogeneous territory and people and strives to fortify his power and maintain the order that will conduce to the safety and influence of his heirs. The State in its inception is pure and undiluted monarchy; it is armed power, culminating in a single head, bent on one primary object, the reducing to subjection, to unconditional and unqualified loyalty of all the people of a certain territory. This is the primary striving of the State, and it is a striving that the State never loses, through all its myriad transformations. When this subjugation was once acquired, the modern State had begun.

[...]

The history of the State, then, is the effort to maintain these personal prerogatives of power, the effort to convert more and more into stable law the rules of order, the conditions of public vengeance, the distinction between classes, the possession of privilege. It was an effort to convert what was at first arbitrary usurpation, a perfectly apparent use of unjustified force, into the taken for granted and the divinely established. The State moves inevitably along the line from military dictatorship to the divine right of Kings. What had to be at first rawly imposed becomes through social habit to seem the necessary, the inevitable.

Clarence Lee Swartz

The State (1927)

The origin of the State is linked to the existence of a surplus in production that some individuals want to appropriate for themselves without making any personal economic effort. Then, a group of people, as a clan or tribe, who behaves in this way represents the antecedent of that form of organization currently known under the name of “State.”

Source: Clarence Lee Swartz, *What is Mutualism?* 1927 (from Chapter 1).

The Rise of the State

In the consideration of any system that may be offered for the eradication of the evils that have grown up in the social and economic life of peoples, it is necessary to consider the beginning of those evils. When men became able to accumulate a surplus — that is, when the question of property arose — then the trouble began; and it has remained with the race to the present time.

The first trouble that arose from property was the attempt of one man (or group of men) to take the product of another's labour.

Since this started, it has been going on, in varying degree, continuously. From sheer violence or stealth, to the present refined means adopted by political institutions, the element of force has always been present, either directly and boldly, or indirectly and invisibly.

From the simple effort of one individual to overcome and rob another, there soon developed the attempt of one clan, tribe, or group to conquer and subjugate another group, thus not merely taking the occasional accumulation of property of a person or persons, but also carrying off and enslaving the persons themselves. From that first primitive act of conquest and subjugation — that first act of “governing” as it is known today — came what we now call the State. And through all the ages the State has retained the same old characteristic: it started in conquest, and that characteristic still dominates; it started, by plundering, and that (compulsory taxation) continues to be one of its chief activities.

The functions of the State, then, were to overcome and subdue persons, secure and maintain dominion over territory, preserve itself against revolt from within and aggression from without, and, in short, to insure its existence. To do this effectively, it has had to rob, not only the subjugated outsider, but its own component parts — under the euphemistic name of taxation; it has had to crush, not merely the invading enemy, but likewise its own subjects, through punishment for treason, when they too strenuously differ from its policies. In other words, it has become the chief aggressor of all history.

The State is symbolic of power; over its special domain, and, as far as its individual subjects are concerned, it is the embodiment of omnipotence, and from power naturally flows privilege. If the State may take, it may give; if it may punish, it may reward; if it may be tyrannical, it may be beneficent. So, in a rough way, its actions may be compensatory. It takes from one and gives to another; it oppresses

one that it may favor another. Hence, under any State, no matter what its form, there are some persons and classes who are given privileges that all are not permitted to enjoy; in fact, and in almost all cases, they are privileges to prey upon the unprivileged persons or classes.

The modern State, with a king at its head, reached its highest development in France in the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715), when he was able to say, "I am the State"; but in England, where the power of the king to rule over the whole country had been recognized earlier, it was first successfully challenged by the great Puritan chieftains, and Charles I lost his head (1649).

Forty years later came the great Revolution — bloodless, at that — and, with the advent of William of Orange, kingly autocracy in England was permanently curbed.

In France, where this centralization of power had come later, it lasted longer, and not until 1793 was the king of France beheaded.

The revolution which purged France did not stop with sweeping away the power of kings, but included killing and driving out the nobility, confiscating their lands and giving these lands to the farmers.

Thus, within a period of some two hundred years, political rulership, in the more advanced States of Western Europe, went from the king to the "people," and economic rulership was transferred from the lords of the land to the employers of labour in the town.

While the condition of the worker has improved, the noble dream of the eighteenth century inventors — that machinery would take up all the burdens of labour and carry them like the genii in the Oriental story — has not yet been realized.

Authority is now more responsible and responsive to the people, but the largest part of the populace is still dominated by it. With its

increasing multiformity, authority has become more and more extended. It is no longer a despotic king, but an even more irresponsible majority, acting through its organ, the State, that wields political power, while the landlord and the capitalist exercise economic domination far greater than the king once arrogated to himself.

The State as Oppressor

As has been seen in tracing its origin, the State arose as an act aggression. Its main function was to conquer its enemies, protect itself from their attacks, and maintain itself. That it might be of service in protecting its subjects individually was a secondary and later consideration. Yet it is true, at the present time, that this latter function is ostensibly the one on which its reason for being largely rests, and which cloaks its character as a despoiler and oppressor with some respectability.

It functions through what have come to be known as laws, and these, as is now patent to everybody, are the sources of the iniquity of the State, because their main purpose has come to be the denial of individual and associative liberty. Government has come to be — in fact, there always has been inherent in it — the institution of the greatest and most devastating form of privilege. It is the source of most of the inequalities of opportunity that now exist between man and man. Without it, none of these could exist.

Hence, intelligent people, who have given the matter thought, see that the way of relief is to limit the powers of the State. It should be shorn of its power for harm; but, so long as it exists *in its present form*, no matter how limited it be, it will still have the power for evil.

Whenever any proposal is made for such limitation, there is always the objection that the protective function of the State will be decreased, to the grave danger of the individual; the criminal is at

once held up as the great menace from which nothing but government can protect the people.

This, Mutualists insistently contend, is a delusion. If the invasive activities of government were absolutely eradicated, it could still act as the protector of the individuals who compose it, or over whom it has jurisdiction. Yet, if it had no invasive powers at all, it could not forcibly provide for its own maintenance. It would therefore become a purely voluntary association, and would have to depend for its existence upon the satisfaction it gave in the service it rendered.

Nefarious Features of Present System

Government, or authoritarian society, may have been suited to conditions where universal warfare was the chief occupation.

And the trouble is that government, the State (from the Latin word *status* — what stays fixed), is, or at least tries to be, precisely what its name implies: stationary, unchangeable, inflexible.

It represents the static rather than the dynamic forces in social life, it insists on the *status quo*, it abhors change, and rests utterly on precedent and tradition.

Industry and commerce, on the other hand, are the dynamic forces in society, developing and constantly changing with astonishing rapidity. From the inability of the State to keep step with the growth and change of industrial conditions, from its persistence in outgrown semi-military political technique in the face of growing extension of voluntary and contractual relations in the industrial and commercial life of the people and from its use of political and military power in dispensing and upholding privileges to people of certain property, business or ideas; in short, from the atavism of the State has resulted the muddle of what is usually called “the present system.”

Condensed and catalogued, the nefarious features of the present system are:

1. It interferes with personal liberty, preventing the non-invasive individual from living his life as he sees fit.
2. It interferes with the freedom of economic life through the monopolies mentioned above, resulting in the two cardinal defects of present economic life: exploitation of the workers, and artificial restriction of production

The latter defect is often forgotten, but it is really more disastrous to the workers than exploitation. It is shown in the constant presence of involuntary idleness (unemployment), strikes and lockouts, lack of mobile and cheap credit, and a growing horde of non-producing parasites and their servants.

It is true that, compared with medieval times, present civilization offers, on the whole, greater freedom in private relations. Slavery and serfdom have gone with feudalism.

In religion, art and science, liberty has increased. Free speech and the right to criticize political institutions exist, at least in principle. Civil rights have been extended. Compared with the workers of 100 years ago, the producers of today do have more leisure, they do work shorter hours, their standards of living are better. Whatever progress has been made in economic life — development of technical science, intensified division of labor, worldwide distribution of commodities, and immensely increased production — is all seen to be, in the final analysis, the result of the gradual liberation of man from the fetters of static institutions. Every step of progress meant a law broken and a rule disobeyed. As man made himself more free, in using his productive powers, from the laws and binding restrictions of authority, representing superstition, tradition, and privilege, to that degree did he prosper and succeed economically. And the cause of the present

iniquity is not too much liberty, but incomplete liberty; the lack of equal liberty in economic life.

Governments delegate utilization of credit, access to natural resources, use of patents, and other privileges to some, while denying the same liberty to others. Abolition of privilege would be equivalent to equal liberty and would eventually eliminate exploitation.

In spite of the obvious fact that State-created monopolies are still strongly entrenched, it is also true that voluntary and contractual relations have, in many ways, supplanted authoritarian regulation by the feudal lord and his successor, constitutional authority. Wherever there has been an extension of economic freedom — i.e., the right of private contract — the power of authority and of its beneficiaries has been correspondingly limited. And this is really the sum and substance of history; the growing limitation of authority and the increase of voluntary organization of social life; substitution of contract for status. A clear realization of this process will show the logical way of progress. Disaster has always been predicted of any proposed curtailment of authority; in reality, improved conditions and prosperity always have resulted. So no fear need be entertained that society will go to destruction if invasive institutions are more and more curbed.

However, let no one think for a moment that the present system is tottering. The social reformer who thinks “Capitalism” is going to fall soon is cruelly misled. Capitalism in modern industrial countries is strongly entrenched.

It is a going concern; going badly, it is true, but going never the less. On the whole, it is probably better than anything experienced heretofore. But it is changeable and actually changing all the time. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, with some temporary reverses, the continuous onslaught of proud manhood and womanhood against vested authority and feudal privilege is wearing away the preroga-

tives and shams of the colossus called the "State," and of its supporters and beneficiaries, the industrial and financial Lords.

Franz Oppenheimer

The State (1929)

In this short extract, Oppenheimer list many authors and theories that explain and justify the coming into existence of the State. None of them is considered fully valid by him.

To explain the emergence of the State, Oppenheimer introduces the distinction between political and economic means. The State, that is the State rulers, is the organisation that uses political means in order to appropriate other's people labour and, consequently, the goods that are the result of that labour (the economic means).

This is a very interesting and fruitful view, capable of explaining many State realities of the past and the present.

Source: Franz Oppenheimer, *Der Staat*, Third revised edition, 1929.

The theories about the State

This treatise speaks only of the historical State. Not of the animal states, which are the province of zoology and animal psychology, nor

of the so-called 'states' of prehistoric times, which are the subject of prehistory and ethnology. Wilhelm Wundt says of this 'tribal organisation': "It is not in the least an imperfect, as yet undeveloped state order, but something quite different."

Furthermore, this treatise does not speak of 'the' States: these are the subject of historiography, but of 'the' State: it aims to trace it as a general social phenomenon in its emergence and development up to the modern constitutional State; and it wants to try to gain a well-founded prediction of its future development. In other words, it looks at the State from the point of view of the sociologist. Not from that of the philosopher: for the philosopher is only interested in the State as it should be. But the State as it was and is, the historical State. Not even from the jurist's point of view: for he is only interested in the external form, whereas the sociologist wants to understand the content, the life of the State society.

For this reason, all theories of constitutional law are excluded from our consideration from the outset. But no less does a quick survey of the actual theories of the State show that we cannot expect any enlightenment from them about the origin, nature and purpose of the State. They represent all shades between the utmost conceivable extremes. If Rousseau makes the State arise from a social contract, and Carey from a band of robbers; if Plato and the Marxists attribute omnipotence to the State, and wish to elevate it to the absolute master of the citizen in all political and economic, and Plato even in sexual relations, while Liberalism reduces it to the impotence of the 'night-watchman State', and anarchism even wants to erase it altogether — then an attempt to arrive at a sufficient conception of the State on the middle line between such mutually exclusive doctrines is hopeless.

This irreconcilable divergence of theories of the State is explained by the fact that none of them originated from a sociological point of view. The State is a universal historical object and can only be recog-

nised in its essence through a broad, universal historical perspective. We must ask what characteristics are essential to the concept of the State as such, and we can only find the answer to this question if we examine all States, past and present, to see what characteristics they all possess. As there are large and small, tightly centralised and loosely co-ordinated, monarchical, aristocratic, plutocratic and democratic States; as their inhabitants belong to all races and colours, are low and high civilised, live chiefly by agriculture or by trades or commerce, it is clear that the essence of the State can rest neither in its extent, nor in the degree of its coercive power over its territory and its inhabitants, nor in its constitution, nor in its level of culture and technique.

Older systems of State philosophy attempted such a comprehensive abstraction and came to the conclusion, still widely taught today, that the essence of the State is that of a protective institution: external border protection and internal legal protection are its *ratio fiendi et essendi* (reason of occurring and reason of being). Thus, Grotius says: "The State is a perfect union of free men who have joined together for the sake of legal protection and utility."

And indeed, the view has a correct core: but it is not complete. It has overlooked an important trait common to all States: every State of the past and history, to which this name is undisputed, every State above all that has become significant in world history in its development to higher levels of power, size and wealth, was or is a class State, i.e. a hierarchy of mutually superior and subordinate strata or classes with different rights and different incomes.

Our discussion will show that this feature is the most important, the decisive, the primary character of the State, from which alone its origin and nature can be recognised. For it will make it clear that the protective function of the State, both internally and externally, must be understood as a secondary duty assumed by the upper classes in the interest of their rights of domination and revenue. The State does

not arise in the interest of the protective function, but conversely the protective function arises in the interest of the already existing State.

Thus, we have already obtained the explanation for the striking fact that the previous theories of the State are so very different from one another. They are all class theories! Such a theory, however, is not the result of the enquiring mind, but of the covetous will; it does not need arguments to fathom the truth, but as weapons in the struggle for material interests; it is not science, but mimicry of science. And that is why we can recognise the essence of State theories from the understanding of the State, but never the essence of the State from the understanding of State theories.

Let us therefore begin with a brief overview of the class theories of the State to establish what the State is not.

The State did not arise from the 'need of union', as Plato thinks; it is not a 'creature of nature', as Aristotle replies; and it does not have, as Ancillon declares, 'the same origin that languages have'. It is quite incorrect when he assumes that 'just as languages were generated and formed by themselves from the need and the ability of man to communicate his thoughts and feelings, so too States have developed from the need and the instinct of sociability'. The State is also not "*un droit gouvernement de plusieurs ménages et de ce qui leur est commun avec puissance souveraine*" [a right of government of several households and of what is common to them, with sovereign power] (Bodin). Nor did the State arise to put an end to the *bellum omnium contra omnes*, as Hobbes and many others after him thought. The State is just as little the result of a *contrat social*, as Grotius, Spinoza, and Locke would have us to believe, long before Rousseau. The State is perhaps 'the means to the higher end of the eternally uniformly continuing formation of the purely human in a nation,' as Fichte claimed; but certainly, the State does not have this end; has not arisen for this end, and is not maintained for this end. Nor is the State 'the absolute,' as portrayed by Schelling, and just as little 'the

reality of the moral idea, the moral spirit as the manifest, self-evident, substantial will, which thinks and knows itself and carries out what it knows,' as Hegel asserts beautifully and clearly.

Nor can we agree with Stahl when he calls the State the 'moral realm of human community' and, 'considered more deeply, a divine institution'. And neither can Marcus Tullius Cicero when he asks: "*quid est enim civitas nisi juris societas?*" [for what is a group of citizens but a society united by right? — Cicero, *De re publica*, 1. 32.] And even less so his successor von Savigny, when he sees in the 'formation of the State a kind of creation of law, the highest level of the creation of law in general' and defines the State itself as 'the physical manifestation of the people'.

Similarly, Bluntschli [Johann Caspar Bluntschli, Swiss jurist and politician, 1808-1881] declares the State to be a "people's person" and thus initiates the series of theorists who declare the State, or society, or some kind of mixture of the two to be a 'superorganism', a view that is just as untenable as Sir Henry Maine's assertion that the State developed from the family through the intermediate members: sex, house and tribe.

The State is also not a 'unit of association', as the jurist Jellinek assumes. The old Boehmer [Justus Henning Boehmer, German jurist, 1674-1749] came quite close to the truth when he said that "*denique regnorum praecipuorum ortus et incrementa perlustrans vim et latrocinia potentiae initia fuisse apparebit*" [In short, the initial rise and growth of the principal kingdoms will appear to have been by force and robbery]. And yet Carey is on the wrong track when he regards the State as founded by a band of robbers who have set themselves up as masters of their fellow citizens. There is a larger or smaller particle of truth in some of these statements, but none of them is exhaustive, and most of them are quite false.

The emergence of the State

A single force drives all life, a single force has developed it upwards from the individual cell, the protein clump floating in the warm ocean of primeval times, to the vertebrate, to man: the drive of 'care for life' (Lippert), forked in 'hunger and love'. From then on, 'philosophy' enters into the play of forces, the causal need of the upwardly mobile, in order to henceforth 'hold together the structure of the human world with hunger and love'. Of course, philosophy, Schopenhauer's 'imagination', is at its root nothing other than a creature of the care of life, which he calls the 'will'; it is an organ of orientation in the world, a weapon in the struggle for existence.

Nevertheless, we will get to know the need for causality as an independent force in social events, as a co-creator in the process of sociological development. First, and in the early stages of human society with tremendous vigour, this instinct was expressed in the often bizarre ideas of 'superstition', which, on the basis of completely logical conclusions from imperfect observations, believed that air and water, earth and fire, animals and plants were filled with an army of benevolent or ungracious spirits. Only very late, only in the bright modern age, which only a few peoples reach, does the younger daughter of the causal instinct, science, emerge as the logical result of more perfect observation of the facts; science, which now has the task of eradicating the broadly rooted superstition, which is present with innumerable threads in the human psyche as a whole.

As the creation of these three main human instincts arising from the primal instinct to care for life: the instinct for self-preservation, the instinct for the preservation of the species and the causal need, society emerges and within it a new, all-dominant tertiary instinct, the actual motor of all social activity: the instinct for social prestige and possibly supreme honour.

This instinct, which the *Iliad* already mentions, can in rare cases, especially at a higher level of society, satisfy itself directly: through

achievements in science, art, civic virtue, even physical prowess in competition. But, as a rule, the instinct cannot reach its final goal without first having seized a certain intermediate goal — and this intermediate goal is wealth, for wealth confers power, or rather, is power. The word has always meant disposal over people, while wealth means disposal over things.

For this reason, socialised man strives for wealth almost alone, for naturally he can also satisfy ‘hunger and love’, and even his causal needs more abundantly and by nobler means, if he is rich. But it is a humiliating and slanderous view of man to believe that his ultimate goal is the acquisition of goods for sumptuous enjoyment. It is only an intermediate goal, only a means to the actual, the much nobler final goal, to social high honour.

But of course, it is the intermediate goal, and that means that almost all politics and almost all economics initially run towards the acquisition of goods, like many railway lines run towards a large junction. And that is why a sociological (and that means a socio-psychological) view of history cannot proceed in any other way than by making use of the economic conception of history for the time being, i.e. by following the methods of the acquisition of goods in their gradual development. It must not forget, however, that these are merely means, not the final goal.

Political and economic means

There are two fundamentally opposite means by which man, set in motion everywhere by the same instinct of the care of life, can obtain the necessary means of satisfaction: Labour and robbery, one's own labour and the forcible appropriation of another's labour. ‘Robbery! Forcible appropriation!’ To us contemporaries of a developed culture, built on the inviolability of property, both words sound like crime and imprisonment; and we cannot get rid of this sound even

when we convince ourselves that under primitive living conditions land and sea robbery are by far the most respected trades, just like the craft of war — which for a very long time is also only organised mass robbery. For this reason, and also in order to have short, clear, sharply contrasting terms for this very important contrast, I have proposed to call one's own labour and the equivalent exchange of one's own labour for that of others the *economic means*, and the unremunerated appropriation of the labour of others the *political means* of satisfying needs.

This is not a new idea: philosophers of history have always felt and tried to formulate the contrast. But none of these formulae shows the idea fully thought through. Nowhere is it clearly recognised and presented that the opposition consists only in the means by which the same end, the acquisition of economic goods of pleasure, is to be achieved. And this is precisely what matters. One can observe in a thinker of Karl Marx's calibre the confusion to which it must lead if the economic end and the economic means are not strictly distinguished. All the errors that ultimately led the great theory so far from the truth are rooted in the very lack of a clear distinction between the end and the means of satisfying economic needs, which led him to characterise slavery as an 'economic category' and violence as an 'economic potency'. Half-truths, which are more dangerous than whole untruths because they are harder to detect and make false conclusions almost impossible to avoid.

Our sharp distinction between the two means to the same end will help us to avoid this confusion. It will be the key to our understanding of the origin, nature and destiny of the State; and, because all world history to date has been nothing other than the history of States, to our understanding of world history. All world history up to the present day, up to us and our proud culture, has and will have, until we have fought our way through to free citizenship, only one content: the struggle between the economic and the political means.

The State is the organisation of the political means. And therefore, a State cannot come into being until the economic means has created a certain stock of objects for the satisfaction of needs which warlike robbery can acquire. That is why the primitive hunters are stateless, and highly performing hunters only succeed in forming states when they find more developed economic organisations in their neighbourhood which they can subjugate. The primitive hunters, however, live in practical anarchy.

Walter Lippmann

The Absolute State (1929)

In this extract Walter Lippmann highlights the passage from Church authority to State sovereignty. The final result is the Absolute State that dominates the lives of all the people living within a certain territory. And, what is important to remark, there is no difference between State rulers that define themselves communists, fascists or democrats.

Source: Walter Lippmann, *A Preface to Morals*, Chapter 5, 1929.

The effects of Patriotism

Modern governments are not merely neutral as between rival churches. They draw to themselves much of the loyalty which once was given to the churches. In fact it has been said with some truth that patriotism has many of the characteristics of an authoritative religion. Certainly it is true that during the last few hundred years there has been transferred to government a considerable part of the devotion which once sustained the churches.

In the older world the priest was a divinely commissioned agent and the prince a divinely tolerated power. But by the Sixteenth Century Melancthon, a friend of Luther's, had denied that the church could make laws binding the conscience. Only the prince, he said, could do that.

Out of this view developed the much misunderstood but essentially modern doctrine of the divine right of kings. In its original historic setting this doctrine was a way of asserting that the civil authority, embodied in the king, derived its power not from the Pope, as God's viceroy on earth, but by direct appointment from God himself. The divine right of kings was a declaration of independence as against the authority of the church. This heresy was challenged not only by the Pope, but by the Presbyterians as well. And it was to combat the Presbyterian preachers who insisted on trying to dictate to the government that King James I wrote his *True Law of Free Monarchy*, asserting the whole doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings.

In the Religious Peace of Augsburg an even more destructive blow was struck at the ancient claim of the church that it is a universal power. It was agreed that the citizen of a state must adopt the religion of his king. *Cuius regio eius religio*. This was not religious liberty as we understand it, but it was a supreme assertion of the civil power. Where once the church had administered religion for the multitude, and had exercised the right to depose an heretical king, it now became the prerogative of the king to determine the religious duties of his subjects. The way was open for the modern absolute state, a conception which would have been entirely incomprehensible to men who lived in the ages of faith.

We must here avoid using words ambiguously. When I speak of the absolute state, I do not refer to the constitutional arrangement of powers within the state. It is of no importance in this connection whether the absolute power of the state is exercised by a king, a landed aristocracy, bankers and manufacturers, professional politi-

cians, soldiers, or a random majority of voters. It does not matter whether the right to govern is hereditary or obtained with the consent of the governed. A state is absolute in the sense which I have in mind when it claims the right to a monopoly of all the force within the community, to make war, to make peace, to conscript life, to tax, to establish and disestablish property, to define crime, to punish disobedience, to control education, to supervise the family, to regulate personal habits, and to censor opinions. The modern state claims all of these powers, and, in the matter of theory, there is no real difference in the size of the claim between communists, fascists, and democrats.

There are lingering traces in the American constitutional system of the older theory that there are inalienable rights which government may not absorb. But these rights are really not inalienable because they can be taken away by constitutional amendment.

There is no theoretical limit upon the power of the ultimate majorities which create civil government. There are only practical limits. They are restrained by inertia, and by prudence, even by good will. But ultimately and theoretically they claim absolute authority as against all foreign states, as against all churches, associations, and persons within their jurisdiction.

The victory of the civil power was not achieved everywhere at the same time. Spasmodically, with occasional setbacks, but in the long run irresistibly, the state has attained supremacy. In the feudal age the monarch was at no time sovereign. The Pope was the universal law-giver, not only in what we should call matters of faith, but in matters of business and politics as well. As late as the beginning of the Seventeenth Century, Pope Paul V insisted that the Doge of the Venetian Republic had no right to arrest a canon of the church on the charge of flagrant immorality. When, nevertheless, the canon was arrested, the Pope laid Venice under an interdict and excommunicated the Doge and the Senate. But the Venetian Government

answered that it was founded on Divine Right; its title to govern did not come from the church. In the end the Pope gave way, and "the reign of the Pope," says Dr. Figgis, "as King of Kings was over." (J. N. Figgis, *Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 1904)

It was as a result of the loss of its civil power that the Roman Church evolved the modern doctrine of infallibility. This claim, as Dr. Figgis points out, is not the culmination but the (implicit) surrender of the notions embodied in the famous papal bull, *Unam Sanctam*. The Pope could no longer claim the political sovereignty of the world; he then asserted supreme rights as the religious teacher of the Catholic communion. "The Pope, from being the Lord of Lords, has become the Doctor of Doctors. From being the mother of states, the Curia has become the authoritative organ of a teaching society."

The Dissolution of a Sovereignty

Thus there has gradually been dissolving the conception that the government of human affairs is a subordinate part of a divine government presided over by God the King. In place of one church which is sovereign over all men, there are now many rival churches, rival states, voluntary associations, and detached individuals. God is no longer believed to be a universal king in the full meaning of the word king, and religious obedience is no longer the central loyalty from which all other obligations are derived.

Religion has become for most modern men one phase in a varied experience; it no longer regulates their civic duties, their economic activities, their family life, and their opinions. It has ceased to have universal dominion, and is now held to be supreme only within its own domain. But there is much uncertainty as to what that domain is. In actual affairs, the religious obligations of modern men are often weaker than their social interests and generally weaker than the fiercer claims of patriotism. The conduct of the churches and of

churchmen during the War demonstrated that fact overwhelmingly. They submitted willingly or unwillingly to the overwhelming force of the civil power.

Against this force many men claim the right of revolution, or at least the right of passive resistance and conscientious objection. Sometimes they base their claims upon a religious precept which they hold sacred. But even in their disobedience to Caesar they are forced to acknowledge that loyalty in the modern world is complex, that it has become divided and uncertain, and that the age of faith which was absolute is gone for them. However reverent they may be when they are in their churches, they no longer feel wholly assured when they listen to the teaching that these are the words of the ministers of an heavenly king.

Ortega y Gasset

The Greatest Danger, the State (1930)

The author identifies in the increasingly intrusive presence of the State in the lives of the individuals the germs of a continuing decadence of societies. This in conjunction with the birth of the mass-man, subordinated to the State to whom he confides, deluding himself, the managing of social life and the solution of all his personal problems.

Source: Ortega y Gasset, *La rebelión de las masas*, Chapter XIII, 1930.

In a right ordering of public affairs, the mass is that part which does not act of itself. Such is its mission. It has come into the world in order to be directed, influenced, represented, organised — even in order to cease being mass, or at least to aspire to this. But it has not come into the world to do all this by itself. It needs to submit its life to a higher court, formed by the excellent minorities. The question as to who these excellent individuals are may be

discussed as much as you like. But that without them, whoever they be, humanity would cease to preserve its essentials, is something about which there should be no doubt, even if Europe has been sticking its head under its wing, in the manner of the ostriches, for a whole century, trying if she can avoid seeing such a plain truth.

For we are not dealing with an opinion based on facts more or less frequent and probable, but on a law of social “physics,” much more immovable than the laws of Newton’s physics. The day when a genuine philosophy reigns again in Europe — the only thing that can save her — it will be realised that the human being is, whether he wants it or not, a being constitutively forced to seek a higher instance. If he succeeds in finding it himself, he is an excellent person; if not, he is a mass-man and needs to receive it from the former.

For the masses to pretend to act for themselves is to rebel against their own destiny, and since that is what they are doing now, I speak of the rebellion of the masses. For, in the end, the only thing that can truly and substantially be called rebellion is that which consists in not accepting one’s own destiny, in rebelling against oneself. Strictly speaking, the rebellion of the archangel Lucifer would have been no less so if, instead of striving to be God — which was not his destiny — he had strived on being the angel the most closed to God, which was not his destiny either. (If Lucifer had been a Russian, like Tolstoy, he would perhaps have preferred the latter form of rebellion, which is no more and no less against God than the other more famous one).

When the mass acts on its own, it does so in only one way, because it has no other: it lynches. It is no accident that Lynch’s law [1] is American, for America is, in a sense, the paradise of the masses. Nor is it surprising that nowadays, when the masses triumph, violence triumphs and becomes the only ratio, the only doctrine. It has been a long time since I called attention to this advance of violence as a normal condition.

Today it has reached a peak, and this is a good symptom, because it means that it will automatically begin to decline. Today violence is already the rhetoric of time. The rhetoricians, the inane, have made it their own. When a human reality has completed its course, has been shipwrecked and has died, the waves spit it out on the shores of rhetoric, where, like a corpse, it remains for a long time. Rhetoric is the cemetery of human realities or, at best, a Home for the Aged. Reality is survived by its name, which, though only a word, is, in the end, nothing less than a word, and always retains some of its magical power.

But even if it is not impossible that the prestige of violence as a cynically established norm has begun to wane, we will continue under its regime, albeit in a different form.

I am referring to the greatest danger threatening European civilisation today. Like all the other dangers that threaten this civilisation, this one was born of civilisation itself. Moreover, it is one of her glories: it is the contemporary State. We find ourselves, then, with a replica of what was said in the previous chapter about science: the fecundity of its principles pushes it towards a fabulous progress; but this, inexorably, imposes specialisation, and specialisation threatens to stifle science.

The same is true of the State.

Think back to what the State was at the end of the 18th century in all the European nations. A quite small thing! The early capitalism and its industrial organisations, where technique, the new technique, the rationalised technique, triumphed for the first time, had produced a first growth of society. A new social class appeared, greater in number and power than the pre-existing ones: the bourgeoisie. This bourgeoisie possessed, first and foremost, one thing: talent, practical talent. It knew how to organise, discipline, give continuity and articulation to the effort. In the midst of it, like an ocean, the 'State ship' sailed its hazardous course.

The State ship is a metaphor reinvented by the bourgeoisie, which felt itself oceanic, omnipotent and pregnant with storms. That ship was something irrelevant or little more: it had hardly any soldiers, hardly any bureaucrats, hardly any money. It had been built in the Middle Ages by a class of men very different from the bourgeoisie: the nobles, people admirable for their courage, for their gift of command, for their sense of responsibility. Without them the nations of Europe would not exist. But with all these virtues of the heart, the nobles were, and always have been, lacking in virtues of the head. They relied on other organs.

Of very limited intelligence, sentimental, instinctive, intuitive; in short, 'irrational'. That is why they could not develop any technique, which requires rationalisation. They did not invent gunpowder. They got beaten. Unable to invent new weapons, they let the bourgeois — taking it from the East or elsewhere — use gunpowder, and thereby automatically win the battle over the noble warrior, the 'knight', stupidly covered with iron, who could hardly move in battle, and to whom it had not occurred that the eternal secret of warfare does not consist so much in the means of defence as in those of attack; a secret which Napoleon was to rediscover.

As the State was a technique — of public order and administration — the *ancien regime* reached the end of the 18th century with a very weak State, harassed on all sides by a widespread social revolt. The disproportion between the power of the State and the power of society was such that, if we compare the situation with that of the time of Charlemagne, the 18th century State appears to be a degeneration. The Carolingian State was, of course, much less wealthy than that of Louis XVI, but, on the other hand, the surrounding society had no power at all. The huge gap between social power and State power made possible the revolution, or better, the revolutions (up to 1848).

But with the revolution, the bourgeoisie seized public power and applied its undeniable virtues to the State, and in little more than a generation created a powerful State, which put an end to revolutions. Since 1848, that is, since the beginning of the second generation of bourgeois governments, there have been no real revolutions in Europe. And certainly not because there were no motives for them, but because there were no means. Public power was levelled with social power. Goodbye for ever to revolutions! The only thing now possible in Europe is their opposite: the *coup d'état*. And everything that could later be called a revolution was nothing more than a *coup d'état* in disguise.

In our time, the State has become a formidable machine that functions prodigiously, with a marvellous efficiency due to the quantity and precision of its means. It is planted in the midst of society, and all it takes is to touch a button for setting in motion its enormous levers and operate with lightning speed on any part of the social body.

The contemporary State is the most visible and notorious product of civilisation. And it is very interesting, it is revealing, to note the attitude that the mass-man adopts towards it. He sees it, he admires it, he knows that it is there, securing his life; but he is not aware that it is a human creation invented by certain men and sustained by certain virtues and assumptions that existed in men yesterday and that may evaporate tomorrow. On the other hand, the mass-man sees in the State an anonymous power, and because he feels himself to be anonymous — a vulgar man — he believes that the State is his own thing. Suppose that a difficulty, a conflict or a problem arises in the public life of any country: the man of the masses will tend to demand that the State should immediately take it over, that it should take direct charge of solving it with its gigantic and unassailable means.

This is the greatest danger threatening civilisation today: the statification-nationalization of life, the interventionism of the State, the

absorption of all social spontaneity by the State; that is to say, the annulment of the historical spontaneity which ultimately sustains, nourishes and drives human destinies. When the masses feel some misfortune or, simply, some strong appetite, the permanent and sure possibility of obtaining everything — without effort, struggle, doubt or risk — is a great temptation for them, by just touching a button and making the portentous machine work. The masses say to themselves: *L'Etat, c'est moi*, "The State is me," which is a complete mistake.

The State is the mass only in the sense that it can be said of two men that they are identical, because neither of them is called John. The contemporary State and the mass coincide only in being anonymous. But the fact is that the mass-man really believes that he is the State, and will tend more and more to make it work under any pretext, to crush with it any creative minority which disturbs it in any order: in politics, in ideas, in industry.

The result of this tendency will be fatal. Social spontaneity will be broken up over and over again by the intervention of the State; no new seed will be able to bear fruit. Society will have to live for the State, man for the machine of government. And since in the end it is nothing but a machine whose existence and maintenance depend on the surrounding vitality that sustains it, the State, after sucking out the very marrow of society, will be left bloodless, a skeleton, dead with that rusty death of the machine, more gruesome than the death of a living organism.

This was the lamentable fate of ancient civilisation. There is no doubt that the imperial State created by the Julii and the Claudii was an admirable machine, incomparably superior as an artifact to the old republican State of the patrician families. But, by a curious coincidence, no sooner had it reached its full development than the social body began to decay. Already in the time of the Antonines (second century) the State overbears society with its anti-vital supremacy.

Society begins to be enslaved, to be unable to live except in the service of the State. The whole of life becomes bureaucratised. What happens? The bureaucratisation of life leads to its absolute decline — in all areas. Wealth decreases and women have few children. Then the State, in order to provide for its own needs, forces the bureaucratisation of human existence even further. This further bureaucratisation leads to the militarisation of society.

The State's most urgent need is its apparatus of war, its army. The State is, first and foremost, a producer of security (the security, be it remembered, from which the mass-man is born). Hence, above all, an army. The Severi, of African origin, militarised the world. Vain task! Misery increased, women were less and less fertile. There was even a shortage of soldiers. After the time of the Severi, the army had to be recruited from among foreigners.

What is the paradoxical and tragic process of statism? Society, in order to live better, creates the State as a tool. Then the State takes over, and society has to start living for the State. But, after all, the State is still composed of the people of that society. But soon these do not suffice to support the State, and foreigners had to be called in: first, Dalmatians, then Germans.

The foreigners become masters of the State, and the remnants of society, the original people, have to live as slaves to them, slaves to people with whom they have nothing in common. This is what State interventionism leads to: the people become the meat and dough that feed the mere artefact and machine that is the State. The skeleton eats up the flesh around it. The scaffolding becomes the owner and tenant of the house.

When this is known, it is a little shocking to hear Mussolini proclaim with exemplary smugness, as a prodigious discovery now made in Italy, the formula: *Tutto nello Stato, niente al di fuori dello Stato, nulla contro lo Stato* [Everything in the State, nothing outside the State, nothing against the State]. This alone would suffice to reveal

in Fascism a typical movement of mass-men. Mussolini found himself faced with a State admirably constructed — not by him, but precisely by the forces and ideas he was fighting against: by liberal democracy.

He merely uses it with no restraint. And without entering now into a detailed examination of his work, it is indisputable that the results obtained up to the present cannot be compared with those obtained in political and administrative working by the liberal State. If it has achieved anything, it is so minute, so little visible, and so lacking in substance, that it hardly balances the accumulation of abnormal powers which enable him to make use of that machine to its full extent.

Statism is the highest form taken by violence and direct action when these are set up as norms. Through and by means of the State, an anonymous machine, the masses act for themselves.

The European nations are facing a period of great difficulties in their internal life, with extremely severe problems of economics, law and public order. How can we not fear that, under the rule of the masses, the State will endeavour to crush the independence of the individual and of the group, and thus definitely spoil the harvest of the future?

A concrete example of this mechanism can be found in one of the most alarming phenomena of the last thirty years: the enormous increase in police forces in all countries. Social growth has inevitably rendered it necessary. However accustomed we may be to it, the terrible paradox should not escape our minds that the population of a great modern city, in order to move about peaceably and attend to its business, necessarily requires a police force to regulate the circulation.

But it is naïve for the party of “law and order” to think that these “forces of public authority”, created to preserve order, will always be content to impose the order people want. What is inevitable is that

they will end up defining and deciding for themselves the order they will impose — which will, of course, be the one that suits them best.

It might be well to take advantage of our dealing on this matter to observe the different reaction to a public need manifested by different types of society. When, around 1800, the new industry began to create a type of man — the industrial worker — more criminally inclined than traditional types, France hastened to create a large police force.

Around 1810, for the same reasons, there was an increase in crime in England, and then the English realised that they had no police force. The Conservatives were in power, so what were they going to do, create a police force? Nothing of the sort. They preferred to put up with crime as far as they could. “People accept to let disorder alone, considering it the price they pay for liberty.” “In Paris — wrote John William Ward — they have an admirable Police; but they pay dearly for its advantages. I would rather see half a dozen men cut throats every three or four years in Ratcliffe Road, than be subjected to house-visits, espionage, and all the machinations of Fouché.” [2] These are two different ideas of the State. The Englishman wants the State to have limits. [3]

Notes

[1] With the expression “Lynch’s law” reference is made to a punishment performed by a group of people upon individuals thought to have committed actions considered as crimes. It became a common phrase as early as 1782 following the use by a prominent Virginian named Charles Lynch to describe his actions in suppressing a suspected Loyalist uprising in 1780 during the American Revolutionary War.

[2] Joseph Fouché (1759-1820) was Minister of Police under Napoleon.

[3] The situation has changed in the course of time. In 1829, the then Home Secretary Robert Peel introduced the *Metropolitan Police Act*, and the *Metropolitan Police* was founded on 29 September 1829. In 2024 there were approximately 170,500 police officers in the United Kingdom, compared with around 155,000 in 2003 (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/303963/uk-police-officer-numbers/>).

Erich Mühsam

The Capitalist State (1932)

The author sweeps away any ambiguity and pretence: there is no substantial difference between socialism and capitalism since both, in their common formulations and understanding, accept the existence of the State. In both cases the workers are subordinate wage-earners, kept away from managing the production of which they are the essential element.

Source: Extract from, Erich Mühsam, *Das Weltbild des Anarchismus*, 1932. Published the following year under the general title, *Die Befreiung der Gesellschaft vom Staat: Was ist kommunistischer Anarchismus?*, Berlin, Fanal, 1933.

State and society are two different things. Society is not an agglomeration of all the various organisations and associations within which people organise their communal affairs and among which the State exists alongside other forms of organisation, and the State is not

one of several possible forms of organisation in which society can embody itself.

It is quite clear that where society exists, there is no room for the State. And where the State exists, it is like a spear in the flesh of society; it does not allow the people to develop and breathe but, on the contrary, divides the individuals into classes and thereby prevents them from becoming a society.

A centralised entity cannot be a federalist one at the same time. An authoritarian administrative system means government, bureaucracy, domination, and these are the characteristics of the State. A community built on equality and reciprocity is, within the limits of the spatial interconnectedness of people, a nation, and viewed as a general form of human life, a society. State and society are opposing concepts; one excludes the other.

To speak of a "State composed of classes" is the same as to speak of "wood composed of wood." The State is nothing else, can be nothing else but the centralised executive body of a class detached from the people for the domination of a people deprived of its rights and reduced to be a dominated class.

The State administrative procedure thus divides human society into social classes by keeping the land and the means of production created by man as the property of the privileged class. It regulates the admission to the use of property by the class of the dispossessed, which comprises almost the whole of the people, according to the principles of the inviolability of the privilege of property. It preserves the character of labour output as the reification of labour force.

The State is created exclusively for this purpose, it has never served any other purpose, it could never be used for any other purpose.

Only where the right of the master is opposed to the right of the slave does the existence of the State make sense, does it find a function. Only with the emergence of private property as a form for the

exploitation of people could the State appear. With the development of capitalism, which made the principles of material exploitation by the owners the centre of people's entire lives, the State constantly enlarged and tightened the network of laws, supervisory and coercive measures through which the proletariat is kept in bondage to the privileged class.

[...]

It has been shown that the general conditions determine the behaviour of people, but that these conditions arise, to a considerable extent, from the deliberate actions of people themselves, so that people's behaviour also shapes the social conditions. In general, it can be said that similar conditions result in similar behaviour, and that similar behaviour therefore also causes similar conditions.

If capitalism, in order to strengthen its rule over the people, has established a centralised State administration, which, with a constant increase in pressure from the authorities, has permanently increased the power of capital and retroactively caused a constant extension of State powers to the detriment of the workers and to the benefit of the privileged, this means that the State directed from above is the only suitable form of organisation for maintaining and promoting capitalist economic management. At the same time, however, it means that capitalism and the centralist state are inevitably connected and that every centralist State must develop capitalism or recreate it wherever it disappears.

Therefore, if certain interpretations of Marxist doctrine seek to convince us that the essence of capitalism is conditioned by the disposal of the means of production by private exploiters, but that their management by the State may already be interpreted as a characteristic of socialism, we cannot object strongly enough to such a falsification and reversal of the basic socialist idea.

State capitalism, even if one wants to call it *State socialism*, has nothing whatsoever to do with actual socialism; on the contrary, it is the most hostile form of capitalist enslavement to the spirit of community, mutuality and self-responsibility, without which there can be no socialism.

It makes no difference at all whether the State is conquered by the proletariat in order to prepare it for socialist living conditions through gradual transformation, or whether, in place of the private capitalist State destroyed by revolution, another State is created which determines the duties of the working people who, once again, are deprived of controlling and using the products of their labour.

The explanation that the State will wither away once it has implemented socialist economic structures to the degree that no residues of capitalism remain, is worthless. It is a meaningless concession to the natural socialist insight that there cannot be social equality within a State.

A State does not wither away but consolidates itself by extending the foundations on which it rests. The foundations of the State are the capitalist class relations, and it makes no difference whether the class antagonisms originate in the private control of a few over the earth and the means of labour or are brought about by the transfer of the same control to a selected clique of power mongers sanctioned by the State.

Even if there is a certain moral satisfaction in knowing that the right to exploitation has been removed from greedy private hands, the important thing is that all exploitation be eradicated, not that it be depersonalised.

For the worker, it is of no relevance whether his labour benefits a joint-stock company that pays dividends to people who have nothing whatsoever to do with his work and who might not even know what

is being produced, or whether the State collects the product of his labour.

The effect for him is quite the same: the product of his labour does not belong to him, it is withdrawn from his disposal, and the only compensation he receives is a wage.

The wage system is the hallmark of exploitation and, in that respect, the transformation of private capitalism into State capitalism does not introduce any change whatsoever.

The assertion that the confiscation of labour power by the State, even if the economy appears to be exploitative in character, establishes the socialist order since the product of labour serves communal purposes, falsifies the basic idea of socialism.

The capitalists make the same claim, that they produce things that serve the common good and that they convert most of the profit into more production that increases the common good. However, the self-determination of the workers over the use of their labour is lacking here as well as there.

Capitalist labour, whether it is demanded by a private person or by a State, never serves the common good. For wherever there is a division between those who decide and those who work, there can be no question of a common good.

In fact, under State capitalism, the State acquires more power over the workforce than private capitalists ever could, since the State has a monopoly on all work-related decisions.

In any kind of capitalist economy, supplying the market with the most basic goods only serves the position of those in power. Wherever there is a conflict between the privilege of control and the needs of the people, the people lose out — in State capitalism as much as in private capitalism.

Privilege must be eradicated. This can only happen if self-management of the workers replaces control of labour from above. Self-management is nothing other than the self-responsibility of people with equal rights, following the principles of mutuality. It is federative organization instead of centralist organization.

[...]

So, we are faced with this fact: capitalism needs the State insofar as the State prevents independent decisions by working people in their own affairs. In order to fulfil this role, the State has been endowed with far-reaching powers.

The laws of the State serve to protect capitalist institutions and are designed in such a way that, on paper, they must be followed by the members of both social classes. With the development from individualistic capitalism into corporate forms of exploitation extending beyond the boundaries of the State, some of these laws have gradually proved too narrow for the members of the propertied class. They therefore strive to loosen the powers of the State with respect to themselves, to better dominate the class of the dispossessed, which can be more effectively controlled as a result of recent technological developments.

The State is of course content to increase its power over the majority of the people, but resists losing its power to control the allocation of privileges to the propertied class. This resistance will last until the entire State structure has adapted to the demands of capitalism developed internationally in the corporatist form. It is this transformation that produces the form of the fascist State.

The centralist socialists, however, take the side of the State in its endeavour not to allow anything of its omnipotence to be taken away. At the same time, they attack it because it gives in to the demands of the propertied class every step of the way. Since we are dealing here

with a model case of capitalist phenomena, the economic conditions really do determine consciousness.

The socialists believe that the ruthless display of power by the authorities against the poor has its origin in the weakness of the State towards the rich, and not in the nature of State power itself.

They turn against the authorities not because they are authorities, but because they want a different kind of authority, one made up of people of their own opinion, of people who, as leaders of their parties or trade unions, have become accustomed to centralised rule, to issuing regulations, to demanding discipline and obedience, to subjugating people and at the same time making them believe that they are being governed for their own benefit, not that of the rulers.

Accustomed to authority and drill, to centralised control and surrendering their will to superiors, brought up to believe in the State and trust in leaders, the State socialists will be model citizens of State capitalism.

But this State capitalism will lack all the characteristics of socialism. There will no equality nor justice, no self-responsibility nor mutual support, no solidarity among people nor self-administration in social co-operation.

An all-powerful bureaucracy will suppress from above every independent movement of the people and will be the expression of a State that bears as little resemblance to a real society as all earlier State formations. It will carry from the outset, all the seeds of a class-divided exploitative economy.

For what makes the State a State, and what essentially makes all States the same, regardless of any superficial differences, remains in any socialist State as well: the replacement of the direct connection between people by the transfer of power to some so that they can rule over others.

The absence of power in social organisation is the essential characteristic of anarchy, or, to give this negating statement an affirmative form: instead of fighting for any form of power, anarchism fights for the socially organised self-determination and self-organisation of people.

Power is understood to mean any utilisation or granting of sovereign authority that separates people into governing and governed groups.

The exact form of government is irrelevant. Monarchy, democracy, dictatorship as types of State are only different possibilities in the process of centralised human domination.

When democracy [1] claims that it grants the people as a whole participation in public administration with equal voting rights for all, it must be remembered that equal voting rights have nothing to do with equal rights. The choice of representatives implies that those who vote do not participate in the administration but delegate the power to decide to people who, in turn, become their rulers.

Where there are privileges of property, universal suffrage can never create true equality. Nor can true equality be created where self-determination is replaced by awarding privileges of power. Power always rests on economic dominance. If economic dominance is abolished without power being simultaneously abolished, those in power will soon seek to defend their position by means of economic superiority.

Lawmakers, no matter how temporary their position, feel elevated above those who must accept their decisions. This applies to presidents, ministers, and members of parliament alike.

Even if they do not come from an upper class (with different needs and goals), their administrative role will separate them from the people they administer. This can already be seen in the centrally organised workers' associations. [2]

Here an official leadership is endowed with the prerogative to determine the guidelines for the behaviour and obligations of the others. The result is power and authority.

This further creates a fundamental separation of interests with the result that the head of the organisation leads a life of its own in relation to the members and that the administration of the organisation becomes an end in itself and always takes its needs more seriously than the tasks for which the organisation was created.

Notes

[1] On democracy as an authoritarian form of political administration, see the classic text by J. L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (1952).

[2] A classic analysis in this regard is offered by Roberto Michels, *The Sociology of the Political Party* (1925).

Albert Jay Nock

Our Enemy, the State

(1935)

In this extract the author offers one of the best analyses of the origins and role of the State. Here Nock presents his thesis of the economic vs. political means. The society is the area of voluntary economic exchanges while the State is a superimposed phenomenon characterized by compulsory political practices devised and introduced by some individuals in order to appropriate the wealth produced by others. The only problem faced by the State rulers is to make these impositions and appropriations to appear as necessary and beneficial. And this has been achieved by the manipulation and indoctrination of an uncounted number of previous generations to such an extent as to convince the present mass-man to believe the unbelievable.

Source: Albert Nock, *Our Enemy, the State*, 1935.

THE ORIGINS OF STATE AND CLASS (from Chapter II)

As far back as one can follow the run of civilization, it presents two fundamentally different types of political organization. This difference is not one of degree, but of kind. It does not do to take the one type as merely marking a lower order of civilization and the other a higher; they are commonly so taken, but erroneously. Still less does it do to classify both as species of the same genus — to classify both under the generic name of “government,” though this also, until very lately, has always been done, and has always led to confusion and misunderstanding.

A good example of this error and its effects is supplied by Thomas Paine. At the outset of his pamphlet called *Common Sense*, Paine draws a distinction between society and government. While society in any state is a blessing, he says, “government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state, an intolerable one.” In another place, he speaks of government as “a mode rendered necessary by the inability of moral virtue to govern the world.” He proceeds then to show how and why government comes into being. Its origin is in the common understanding and common agreement of society; and “the design and end of government,” he says, is “freedom and security.” Teleologically, government implements the common desire of society, first, for freedom, and second, for security. Beyond this it does not go; it contemplates no positive intervention upon the individual, but only a negative intervention. It would seem that in Paine’s view the code of government should be that of the legendary king Pausole, who prescribed but two laws for his subjects, the first being, *Hurt no man*, and the second, *Then do as you please*; and that the whole business of government should be the purely negative one of seeing that this code is carried out.

So far, Paine is sound as he is simple. He goes on, however, to attack the British political organization in terms that are logically inconclusive. There should be no complaint of this, for he was writing as a

pamphleteer, a special pleader with an *ad captandum* argument to make, and as everyone knows, he did it most successfully. Nevertheless, the point remains that when he talks about the British system he is talking about a type of political organization essentially different from the type that he has just been describing; different in origin, in intention, in primary function, in the order of interest that it reflects. It did not originate in the common understanding and agreement of society; it originated in conquest and confiscation. Its intention, far from contemplating "freedom and security," contemplated nothing of the kind. It contemplated primarily the continuous economic exploitation of one class by another, and it concerned itself with only so much freedom and security as was consistent with this primary intention; and this was, in fact, very little. Its primary function or exercise was not by way of Paine's purely negative interventions upon the individual, but by way of innumerable and most onerous positive interventions, all of which were for the purpose of maintaining the stratification of society into an owning and exploiting class, and a propertyless dependent class. The order of interest that it reflected was not social, but purely anti-social; and those who administered it, judged by the common standard of ethics, or even the common standard of law as applied to private persons, were indistinguishable from a professional-criminal class.

Clearly, then, we have two distinct types of political organization to take into account; and clearly, too, when their origins are considered, it is impossible to make out that the one is a mere perversion of the other. Therefore, when we include both types under a general term like *government*, we get into logical difficulties; difficulties of which most writers on the subject have been more or less vaguely aware, but which, until within the last half-century, none of them has tried to resolve.

Mr. Jefferson, for example, remarked that the hunting tribes of Indians, with which he had a good deal to do in his early days, had a highly organized and admirable social order, but were "without

government." Commenting on this, he wrote Madison that "it is a problem not clear in my mind that [this] condition is not the best," but he suspected that it was "inconsistent with any great degree of population." Schoolcraft observes that the Chippewas, though living in a highly-organized social order, had no "regular" government. Herbert Spencer, speaking of the Bechuanas, Araucanians and Koranna Hottentots, says they have no "definite" government; while Parkman, in his introduction to the *Conspiracy of Pontiac*, reports the same phenomenon, and is frankly puzzled by its apparent anomalies.

Paine's theory of government agrees exactly with the theory set forth by Mr. Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence. The doctrine of natural rights, which is explicit in the Declaration, is implicit in *Common Sense*; and Paine's view of the "design and end of government" is precisely the Declaration's view, that "to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men;" and further, Paine's view of the origin of government is that it "derives its just powers from the consent of the governed." Now, if we apply Paine's formulas or the Declaration's formulas, it is abundantly clear that the Virginian Indians had government; Mr. Jefferson's own observation show that they had it. Their political organization, simple as it was, answered its purpose. Their code-apparatus sufficed for assuring freedom and security to the individual, and for dealing with such trespasses as in that state of society the individual might encounter — fraud, theft, assault, adultery, murder. The same is as clearly true of the various peoples cited by Parkman, Schoolcraft and Spencer. Assuredly, if the language of the Declaration amounts to anything, all these peoples had government; and all these reporters make it appear as a government quite competent to its purpose.

Therefore when Mr. Jefferson says his Indians were "without government," he must be taken to mean that they did not have a type of government like the one he knew, and when Schoolcraft and Spencer speak of "regular" and "definite" government, their qualifying words must be taken in the same way. This type of govern-

ment, nevertheless, has always existed and still exists, answering perfectly to Paine's formulas and the Declaration's formulas; though it is a type which we also, most of us, have seldom had the chance to observe. It may not be put down as the mark of an inferior race, for institutional simplicity is in itself by no means a mark of backwardness or inferiority; and it has been sufficiently shown that in certain essential respects the peoples who have this type of government are, by comparison, in a position to say a good deal for themselves on the score of a civilized character. Mr. Jefferson's own testimony on this point is worth notice, and so is Parkman's. This type, however, even though documented by the Declaration, is fundamentally so different from the type that has always prevailed in history, and is still prevailing in the world at the moment, that for the sake of clearness the two types should be set apart by name, as they are by nature. They are so different in theory that drawing a sharp distinction between them is now probably the most important duty that civilization owes to its own safety. Hence it is by no means either an arbitrary or academic proceeding to give the one type the name of *government*, and to call the second type simply *the State*.

CONQUEST AND CONFISCATION

Aristotle, confusing the idea of the State with the idea of government, thought the State originated out of the natural grouping of the family. Other Greek philosophers, labouring under the same confusion, somewhat anticipated Rousseau in finding its origin in the social nature and disposition of the individual; while an opposing school, which held that the individual is naturally anti-social, more or less anticipated Hobbes by finding it in an enforced compromise among the anti-social tendencies of individuals. Another view, implicit in the doctrine of Adam Smith, is that the State originated in the association of certain individuals who showed a marked superiority in the economic virtues of diligence, prudence and thrift. The

idealist philosophers, variously applying Kant's transcendentalism to the problem, came to still different conclusions; and one or two other views, rather less plausible, perhaps, than any of the foregoing, have been advanced.

The root-trouble with all these views is not precisely that they are conjectural, but that they are based on incompetent observation. They miss the invariable characteristic marks that the subject presents; as, for example, until quite lately, all views of the origin of malaria missed the invariable ministrations of the mosquito, or as opinions about the bubonic plague missed the invariable mark of the rat-parasite. It is only within the last half-century that the historical method has been applied to the problem of the State. This method runs back the phenomenon of the State to its first appearance in documented history, observing its invariable characteristic marks, and drawing inferences as indicated. There are so many clear intimations of this method in earlier writers — one finds them as far back as Strabo — that one wonders why its systematic application was so long deferred; but in all such cases, as with malaria and typhus, when the characteristic mark is once determined, it is so obvious that one always wonders why it was so long unnoticed. Perhaps in the case of the State, the best one can say is that the cooperation of the *Zeitgeist* was necessary, and that it could be had no sooner.

The positive testimony of history is that the State invariably had its origin in conquest and confiscation. No primitive State known to history originated in any other manner. On the negative side, it has been proved beyond peradventure that no primitive State could possibly have had any other origins. Moreover, the sole invariable characteristic of the State is the economic exploitation of one class by another. In this sense, every State known to history is a class State. Oppenheimer defines the State in respect of its origin as an institution "forced on a defeated group by a conquering group, with a view only to systematizing the domination of the conquered by the conquerors, and safeguarding itself against insurrection from within

and attack from without. This domination had no other final purpose than the economic exploitation of the conquered group by the victorious group."

An American statesman, John Jay, accomplished the respectable feat of compressing the whole doctrine of conquest into a single sentence. "Nations in general," he said, "will go to war whenever there is a prospect of getting something by it." Any considerable economic accumulation, or any considerable body of natural resources, is an incentive to conquest. The primitive technique was that of raiding the coveted possessions, appropriating them entire, and either exterminating the possessors, or dispersing them beyond convenient reach. Very early, however, it was seen to be in general more profitable to reduce the possessors to dependence, and use them as labour-motors; and the primitive technique was accordingly modified. Under special circumstances, where this exploitation was either impracticable or unprofitable, the primitive technique is even now occasionally revived, as by the Spaniards in South America, or by ourselves against the Indians. But these circumstances are exceptional; the modified technique has been in use almost from the beginning, and everywhere its first appearance marks the origin of the State. Citing Ranke's observations on the technique of the raiding herdsmen, the Hyksos, who established their State in Egypt about B.C. 2000, Gumplowicz remarks that Ranke's words very well sum up the political history of mankind.

Indeed, the modified technique never varies. "Everywhere we see a militant group of fierce men forcing the frontier of some more peaceable people, settling down upon them and establishing the State, with themselves as an aristocracy. In Mesopotamia, irruption succeeds irruption, State succeeds State, Babylonians, Amoritans, Assyrians, Arabs, Medes, Persians, Macedonians, Parthians, Mongols, Seldshuks, Tatars, Turks; in the Nile valley, Hyksos, Nubians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Turks; in Greece, the Doric States are specific examples; in Italy, Romans, Ostrogoths,

Lombards, Franks, Germans; in Spain, Carthaginians, Visigoths, Arabs; in Gaul, Romans, Franks, Burgundians, Normans; in Britain, Saxons, Normans." Everywhere we find the political organization proceeding from the same origin, and presenting the same mark of intention, namely: the economic exploitation of a defeated group by a conquering group.

Everywhere, that is, with but the one significant exception. Wherever economic exploitation has been for any reason either impracticable or unprofitable, the State has never come into existence; government has existed, but the State, never. The American hunting tribes, for example, whose organization so puzzled our observers, never formed a State, for there is no way to reduce a hunter to economic dependence and make him hunt for you. Conquest and confiscation were no doubt practicable, but no economic gain would be got by it, for confiscation would give the aggressors but little beyond what they already had; the most that could come of it would be the satisfaction of some sort of feud. For like reasons primitive peasants never formed a State. The economic accumulations of their neighbours were too slight and too perishable to be interesting; and especially with the abundance of free land about, the enslavement of their neighbours would be impracticable, if only for the police-problems involved.

It may now be easily seen how great the difference is between the institution of government, as understood by Paine and the Declaration of Independence, and the institution of the State. Government may quite conceivably have originated as Paine thought it did, or Aristotle, or Hobbes, or Rousseau; whereas the State not only never did originate in any of those ways, but never could have done so. The nature and intention of government, as adduced by Parkman, Schoolcraft and Spencer, are social. Based on the idea of natural rights, government secures those rights to the individual by strictly negative intervention, making justice costless and easy of access; and beyond that it does not go. The State, on the other hand, both in its

genesis and by its primary intention is purely antisocial. It is not based on the idea of natural rights, but on the idea that the individual has no rights except those that the State may provisionally grant him. It has always made justice costly and difficult of access, and has invariably held itself above justice and common morality whenever it could advantage itself by so doing. So far from encouraging a wholesome development of social power, it has invariably, as Madison said, turned every contingency into a resource for depleting social power and enhancing State power. As Dr. Sigmund Freud has observed, it can not even be said that the State has ever shown any disposition to suppress crime, but only to safeguard its own monopoly of crime. In Russia and Germany, for example, we have lately seen the State moving with great alacrity against infringement of its monopoly by private persons, while at the same time exercising that monopoly with unconscionable ruthlessness. Taking the State wherever found, striking into its history at any point, one sees no way to differentiate the activities of its founders, administrators and beneficiaries from those of a professional criminal class.

CONVERTING SOCIAL POWER INTO STATE POWER

Such are the antecedents of the institution which is everywhere now so busily converting social power by wholesale into State power. The recognition of them goes a long way towards resolving most, if not all, of the apparent anomalies which the conduct of the modern State exhibits. It is of great help, for example, in accounting for the open and notorious fact that the State always moves slowly and grudgingly towards any purpose that accrues to society's advantage, but moves rapidly and with alacrity towards one that accrues to its own advantage; nor does it ever move towards social purposes on its own initiative, but only under heavy pressure, while its motion towards anti-social purposes is self-sprung.

Englishmen of the last century remarked this fact with justifiable anxiety, as they watched the rapid depletion of social power by the British State. One of them was Herbert Spencer, who published a series of essays which were subsequently put together in a volume called *The Man versus the State*. With our public affairs in the shape they are, it is rather remarkable that no American publicist has improved the chance to reproduce these essays *verbatim*, merely substituting illustrations drawn from American history for those which Spencer draws from English history. If this were properly done, it would make one of the most pertinent and useful works that could be produced at this time.

These essays are devoted to examining the several aspects of the contemporary growth of State power in England. In the essay called *Over-legislation*, Spencer remarks the fact so notoriously common in our experience, that when State power is applied to social purposes, its action is invariably "slow, stupid, extravagant, unadaptive, corrupt and obstruct." He devotes several paragraphs to each count, assembling a complete array of proof. When he ends, discussion ends; there is simply nothing to be said. He shows further that the State does not even fulfil efficiently what he calls its "unquestionable duties" to society; it does not efficiently adjudge and defend the individual's elemental rights. This being so — and with us this too is a matter of notoriously common experience — Spencer sees no reason to expect that State power will be more efficiently applied to secondary social purposes. "Had we, in short, proved its efficiency as judge and defender, instead of having found it treacherous, cruel, and anxiously to be shunned, there would be some encouragement to hope other benefits at its hands."

Yet, he remarks, it is just this monstrously extravagant hope that society is continually indulging; and indulging in the face of daily evidence that it is illusory. He points to the anomaly which we have all noticed as so regularly presented by newspapers. Take up one, says Spencer, and you will probably find a leading editorial

“exposing the corruption, negligence or mismanagement of some State department. Cast your eye down the next column, and it is not unlikely that you will read proposals for an extension of State supervision. . . . Thus while every day chronicles a failure, there every day reappears the belief that it needs but an Act of Parliament and a staff of officers to effect any end desired. Nowhere is the perennial faith of mankind better seen.”

It is unnecessary to say that the reasons which Spencer gives for the anti-social behaviour of the State are abundantly valid, but we may now see how powerfully they are reinforced by the findings of the historical method; a method which had not been applied when Spencer wrote. These findings being what they are, it is manifest that the conduct which Spencer complains of is strictly historical. When the town-dwelling merchants of the eighteenth century displaced the landholding nobility in control of the State's mechanism, they did not change the State's character; they merely adapted its mechanism to their own special interests, and strengthened it immeasurably. The merchant-State remained an anti-social institution, a pure class-State, like the State of the nobility; its intention and function remained unchanged, save for the adaptations necessary to suit the new order of interests that it was thenceforth to serve. Therefore in its flagrant disservice of social purposes, for which Spencer arraigns it, the State was acting strictly in character.

Spencer does not discuss what he calls “the perennial faith of mankind” in State action, but contents himself with elaborating the sententious observation of Guizot, that “a belief in the sovereign power of political machinery” is nothing less than “a gross delusion.” This faith is chiefly the effect of the immense prestige which the State has diligently built up for itself in the century or more since the doctrine of *jure divino* rulership gave way. We need not consider the various instruments that the State employs in building up its prestige; most of them are well known, and their uses well understood. There is one, however, which is in a sense peculiar to

the republican State. Republicanism permits the individual to persuade himself that the State is his creation, that State action is his action, that when it expresses itself it expresses him, and when it is glorified he is glorified. The republican State encourages this persuasion with all its power, aware that it is the most efficient instrument for enhancing its own prestige. Lincoln's phrase, "of the people, by the people, for the people" was probably the most effective single stroke of propaganda ever made in behalf of republican State prestige.

Thus the individual's sense of his own importance inclines him strongly to resent the suggestion that the State is by nature antisocial. He looks on its failures and misfeasances with somewhat the eye of a parent, giving it the benefit of a special code of ethics. Moreover, he has always the expectation that the State will learn by its mistakes, and do better. Granting that its technique with social purposes is blundering, wasteful and vicious — even admitting, with the public official whom Spencer cites, that wherever the State is, there is villainy — he sees no reason why, with an increase of experience and responsibility, the State should not improve.

Something like this appears to be the basic assumption of collectivism. Let but the State confiscate all social power, and its interests will become identical with those of society. Granting that the State is of anti-social origin, and that it has borne a uniformly anti-social character throughout its history, let it but extinguish social power completely, and its character will change; it will merge with society, and thereby become society's efficient and disinterested organ. The historic State, in short, will disappear, and government only will remain. It is an attractive idea; the hope of its being somehow translated into practice is what, only so few years ago, made "the Russian experiment" so irresistibly fascinating to generous spirits who felt themselves hopelessly State-ridden. A closer examination of the State's activities, however, will show that this idea, attractive though it be, goes to pieces against the iron law of fundamental economics,

that *man tends always to satisfy his needs and desires with the least possible exertion*. Let us see how this is so.

ECONOMIC MEANS VS. POLITICAL MEANS

There are two methods, or means, and only two, whereby man's needs and desires can be satisfied. One is the production and exchange of wealth; this is the *economic means*. The other is the uncompensated appropriation of wealth produced by others; this is the *political means*. The primitive exercise of the political means was, as we have seen, by conquest, confiscation, expropriation, and the introduction of a slave economy. The conqueror parcelled out the conquered territory among beneficiaries, who thenceforth satisfied their needs and desires by exploiting the labour of the enslaved inhabitants. The feudal-State, and the merchant-State, wherever found, merely took over and developed successively the heritage of character, intention and apparatus of exploitation which the primitive State transmitted to them; they are in essence merely higher integrations of the primitive State.

The State, then, whether primitive, feudal or, merchant, is *the organization of the political means*. Now since man tends always to satisfy his needs and desires with the least possible exertion, he will employ the political means whenever he can — exclusively, if possible; otherwise, in association with the economic means. He will, at the present time, that is, have recourse to the State's modern apparatus of exploitation; the apparatus of tariffs, concessions, rent-monopoly, and the like. It is a matter of the commonest observation that this is his first instinct. So long, therefore, as the organization of the political means is available — so long as the highly-centralized bureaucratic State stands as primarily a distributor of economic advantage, an arbiter of exploitation, so long will that instinct effectively declare itself. A proletarian State would merely, like the merchant-State shift the incidence of exploitation, and there is no

historic ground for the presumption that a collectivist State would be in any essential respect unlike its predecessors; as we are beginning to see, “the Russian experiment” has amounted to the erection of a highly-centralized bureaucratic State upon the ruins of another, leaving the entire apparatus of exploitation intact and ready for use. Hence, in view of the law of fundamental economics just cited, the expectation that collectivism will appreciably alter the essential character of the State appears illusory.

Thus the findings arrived at by the historical method amply support the immense body of practical considerations brought forward by Spencer against the State’s inroads upon social power. When Spencer concludes that “in State-organizations, corruption is unavoidable,” the historical method abundantly shows cause why, in the nature of things, this should be expected — *vilescit origine tali* [it is ignoble given the origin]. When Freud comments on the shocking disparity between State ethics and private ethics — and his observations on this point are most profound and searching — the historical method at once supplies the best of reasons why that disparity should be looked for.

When Ortega y Gasset says that “Statism is the higher form taken by violence and direct action, when these are set up as standards;” the historical method enables us to perceive at once that his definition is precisely that which one would make *a priori*.

The historical method, moreover, establishes the important fact that, as in the case of tabetic or parasitic diseases, the depletion of social power by the State can not be checked after a certain point of progress is passed. History does not show an instance where, once beyond this point, this depletion has not ended in complete and permanent collapse. In some cases, disintegration is slow and painful. Death set its mark on Rome at the end of the second century, but she dragged out a pitiable existence for some time after the Antonines. Athens, on the other hand, collapses quickly. Some

authorities think that Europe is dangerously near that point, if not already past it; but contemporary conjecture is probably without much value. That point may have been reached in America, and it may not; again, certainty is unattainable — plausible arguments may be made either way. Of two things, however, we may be certain: the first is, that the rate of America's approach to that point is being prodigiously accelerated; and the second is, that there is no evidence of any disposition to retard it, or any intelligent apprehension of the danger which that acceleration betokens.

POLITICS AND OTHER FETICHES (from Chapter V)

It is a commonplace that the persistence of an institution is due solely to the state of mind that prevails towards it, the set of terms in which men habitually think about. So long, and only so long, as those terms are favourable, the institution lives and maintains its power; and when for any reason men generally cease thinking in those terms, it weakens and becomes inert. At one time, a certain set of terms regarding man's place in nature gave organized Christianity the power largely to control men's conscience, and direct their conduct; and this power has dwindled to the point of disappearance, for no other reason than that men generally stopped thinking in those terms. The persistence of our unstable and iniquitous economic system is not due to the power of accumulated capital, the force of propaganda, or to any force or combination of forces commonly alleged as its cause. It is due solely to a certain set of terms in which men think of the opportunity to work; they regard this opportunity as something to be given. Nowhere is there any other idea about it than that the opportunity to apply labour and capital to natural resources for the production of wealth is not in any sense a right, but a concession. This is all that keeps our system alive. When men cease to think in those terms, the system will disappear, and not before.

It seems pretty clear that changes in the terms of thought affecting an institution are but little advanced by direct means. They are brought about in obscure and circuitous ways, and assisted by trains of circumstance which before the fact would appear quite unrelated, and their erosive or solvent action is therefore quite unpredictable. A direct drive at effecting these changes comes as a rule to nothing or more often than not turns out to be retarding. They are so largely the work of those unimpassioned and imperturbable agencies for which Prince de Bismarck had such vast respect — he called them the *imponderabilia* — that any effort which disregards them, or thrust them violently aside, will in the long-run find them stepping in to abort its fruit.

Thus it is that what we are attempting to do in this rapid survey of the historical progress of certain ideas, is to trace the genesis of any attitude of mind, a set of terms in which now practically everyone thinks of the State; and then to consider the conclusion towards which this psychical phenomenon unmistakably points. Instead of recognizing the State as “the common enemy of all well-disposed, industrious and decent men,” the run of mankind, with rare exceptions, regard it not only as a final and indispensable entity, but also as, in the main, beneficent. The mass-man, ignorant of his history, regards its character and intentions as social rather than anti-social; and in that faith he is willing to put at its disposal an indefinite credit of knavery, mendacity and chicanery; upon which its administrators may draw at will. Instead of looking upon the State’s progressive absorption of social power with the repugnance and resentment that he would naturally feel towards the activities of a professional-criminal organization, he tends rather to encourage and glorify it, in the belief that he is somehow identified with the State, and that therefore, in consenting to its indefinite aggrandizement, he consents to something in which he has a share — he is, *pro tanto*, aggrandizing himself. Professor Ortega y Gasset analyzes this state of mind extremely well. The mass-man, he says, confronting the

phenomenon of the State, "sees it, admires it, knows that *there it is* . . . Furthermore, the mass-man sees in the State an anonymous power, and feeling himself, like it, anonymous, he believes that the State is something of his own. Suppose that in the public life of a country some difficulty, conflict, or problem, presents itself, the mass-man will tend to demand that the State intervene immediately and undertake a solution directly with its immense and unassailable resources . . . When the mass suffers any ill-fortune, or simply feels some strong appetite, its great temptation is that permanent sure possibility of obtaining everything, without effort, struggle, doubt, or risk, merely by touching a button and setting the mighty machine in motion."

It is the genesis of this attitude, this state of mind, and the conclusions which inexorably follow from its predominance, that we are attempting to get at through our present survey. These conclusions may perhaps be briefly forecast here, in order that the reader who is for any reason indisposed to entertain them may take warning of them at this point, and close the book.

The unquestioning, determined, even truculent maintenance of the attitude which Professor Ortega y Gasset so admirably describes, is obviously the life and strength of the State; and obviously too, it is now so inveterate and so wide-spread — one may freely call it universal — that no direct effort could overcome its inveteracy or modify it, and least of all hope to enlighten it. This attitude can only be sapped and mined by uncountable generations of experience, in a course marked by recurrent calamity of a most appalling character. When once the predominance of this attitude in any given civilization has become inveterate, as so plainly it has become in the civilization of America, all that can be done is to leave it to work its own way out to its appointed end. The philosophic historian may content himself with printing out and clearly elucidating its consequences, as Professor Ortega y Gasset has done, aware that after this there is no more that one can do. "The result of this tendency," he says, "will be fatal. Spontaneous social action will be broken up over and over

again by State intervention; no new seed will be able to fructify. Society will have to live *for* the State, man *for* the governmental machine. And as after all it is only a machine, whose existence and maintenance depend on the vital supports around it, the State, after sucking out the very marrow of society, will be left bloodless, a skeleton, dead with that rusty death of machinery, more gruesome than the death of a living organism. Such was the lamentable fate of ancient civilization.”

Rudolf Rocker

The State (1937)

A powerful indictment of the State in general and of the dictatorial States in particular.

Source: Rudolf Rocker, *Nationalism and Culture*, Book 2, Chapter 12, 1937.

The history of the state is the history of human oppression and intellectual disfranchisement. It is the story of the unlimited lust for power of small minorities which could be satisfied only by the enslavement and exploitation of the people. The deeper the state with its countless agencies penetrates into the sphere of activity of social life, the more its leaders succeed in changing men into mindless automatons of their will, the more inevitably will the world become a vast prison in which at last there will be no breath of freedom. The conditions in Italy, Hungary, Poland, Austria, Russia and Germany speak too eloquent a language for us to be longer deceived about the inevitable consequences of such an “evolution.” That along

this pathway there lies no rosy future for men is clear to all who have eyes to see and ears to hear. What is today arising on the social horizon of Europe and the world is the dictatorship of darkness which believes that the whole of society can be geared to the wheels of a machine whose steady drive smothers everything organic and elevates the soullessness of mechanics to a principle. Let us not deceive ourselves: *It is not the form of the state, it is the state itself which creates the evil and continually nourishes and fosters it.* The more the government crowds out the social element in human life or forces it under its rule, the more rapidly society dissolves into its separate parts; which then lose all inner connection and either rush thoughtlessly into idiotic collisions over conflicting interests or drift helplessly with the stream, not caring whither they are borne.

The further this state of things progresses, the harder it will be to gather men again into a new social community and to persuade them to a renewal of social life. The delusive belief in a dictatorship spreading over Europe like a pestilence is only the ripe fruit of an unthinking belief in the state, which has for decades been implanted in men. Not the *government of men* but the *administration of things* is the great problem set for our age, and it can never be solved within the frame of the present state organization. It is not so much *how* we are governed, but *that* we are governed at all; for this is a mark of our immaturity and prevents us from taking our affairs into our own hands. We purchase the "protection" of the state with our freedom even to stay alive and do not realize that it is this "protection" which makes a hell of our life, while only freedom can endow it with dignity and strength.

There are today only too many who have recognized the evils of dictatorship as such, but who comfort themselves with the fatalistic belief that it is indispensable as a transition stage, provided, that is, that we have in mind the so-called "proletarian dictatorship," which, we are told, is to lead to socialism. Were not the perils by which the young communist state in Russia was threatened on every side a

moral justification for the dictatorship? And must one not concede that the dictatorship would yield place to a condition of greater freedom as soon as these perils were overcome and the "proletarian state" had been consolidated internally?

Since then almost twenty years have gone by in that country. And Russia is today the strongest military state in Europe and is bound to France and other states by a strong alliance for mutual security. The Bolshevik state has not only been recognized by all the other powers, it is also represented today in all the bodies of international diplomacy and is exposed to no greater dangers from without than is every other great power in Europe. But the internal political conditions in Russia have not changed; they have grown worse from year to year and have made any hope for the future a mockery. With every year the number of the political victims has become greater. Among them are to be found thousands who for the last fifteen years have been dragged from prison to prison, or have been put to death, not because they have rebelled against the existing system with weapons in their hands, but merely because they were unable to accept the doctrines prescribed by the state and were of a different opinion from the ruling powers as to the solution of the social problem.

This situation cannot be explained by the pressure of external conditions, as so many have naïvely persuaded themselves. It is the logical result of an out and out anti-libertarian attitude which has not the slightest understanding or sympathy for the rights and convictions of men. It is the logic of the totalitarian state, which concedes to the individual only so much justification for his existence as makes him of service to the political machine. A system which could stigmatize freedom as a "bourgeois prejudice" could only lead to such an outcome. In its course it had to raise to a fundamental principle of state the suppression of all free expression of opinion and to make the scaffold and the jail the cornerstone of its existence. More than that: it had to proceed further along this disastrous course than any reactionary system of the past. Its leaders did not content themselves

with rendering their revolutionary and socialistic opponents harmless, with dragging them before the bar or burying them alive; they also denied to their victims sincerity of opinion and purity of character, and shrank from no means of picturing them to the world as scoundrels and purchased tools of reaction.

The men and women who sat in the prisons of tsarist Russia were regarded by the liberty-loving world as martyrs to their opinions. Even the prison wardens of tsarism did not have the effrontery to attack their integrity or to question their sincerity. The victims of the proletarian dictatorship, however, were shamelessly besmirched and slandered by their oppressors and held up to the world as the scum of society. And hundreds of thousands of blind fanatics in every country, with their poor brains tuned only to the rhythm of the Moscow waltz, having lost all capacity to think for themselves, or perhaps never having possessed it, babble back, without thinking, whatever the Russian autocrats have dictated to them.

We have here to do with a reaction that goes deeper and is more disastrous in its consequences than any political reaction of the past. For the reaction of today is not embodied in special systems of government that have grown out of the methods of violence employed by small minorities. The reaction of today is the blind faith of broad masses which proclaims as unconditionally good even the most shameful violation of human rights so long as it is perpetrated by one particular side, and condemns uncritically whatever is damned by that side as false and heretical. Belief in the political infallibility of the dictator today replaces the belief in the religious infallibility of the Catholic Pope and leads morally to the same results. It is possible to struggle against the force of reactionary ideas as long as one can appeal to reason and to human experience. Against the blind fanaticism of unthinking parrots who condemn any honest conviction in advance, all reason is powerless. Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin are merely the symbols of this blind faith which ruthlessly condemns everything that opposes its power.

Emmanuel Mounier

The history of the States, the history of people's martyrdom (1937)

In Mounier's spiritual vision and religious practice, evil is identified with the State. As Mounier himself affirms quite clearly with reference to State power: "There is no abuse of power, there is power that abuses by its very nature." Once this aspect has been clarified, the end of illusions could indeed represent the necessary step to restore to the individual his role and prerogatives as an autonomous human being, directly responsible for his own life and development.

Source: Emmanuel Mounier, *Anarchie et Personnalisme*, in *Communisme, anarchie et personnalisme*, Seuil, 1966.

Although it is difficult for us to follow the ideological formulas of the anarchist critique of power, if we do it, we will find an analysis full of detailed insights and wisdom which are very close to working-class experience.

Criticism of the State takes first place. An old tradition. The atheist Sylvain Maréchal, in the *Manifeste des Égaux*, was already crying

out in 1796: "Disappear at last, revolting distinction of rulers and ruled!"

The Saint-Simonian School had taken up Utopia and placed it in the right atmosphere, which sustained it throughout the nineteenth century and still keeps it alive today in the least extremist circles. For centuries, politicians had been accumulating disorder and ruin, while discussing about their principles.

In the meantime, a method of organising ideas and things was enjoying unflinching success: scientific and industrial technology.

Why not make it a universal instrument? Tomorrow the governments of men would be replaced by the organisation of things, just as metaphysics would be replaced by the system of sciences and human exertion by the machine.

At that time the process was believed to be certain, and anarchism embraced this belief, which gave seriousness to its aspirations. Authoritarian power, thought the anarchists, is the old machine that clogs up the whole factory. It exists only because of the shortcomings of the existing economic order, which it compensates for to a greater or lesser extent.

A perfect economic order would render it useless: "The producer is the negation of the ruler; organisation is incompatible with domination." (Proudhon, *Idée générale de la révolution au XIXème siècle*, 1851)

The "purely economic and invisible unity" of society (Proudhon, *Les confessions d'un révolutionnaire*, 1849) saves the human being from oppression, just as, for the Protestant Reformers, the invisible and purely spiritual Church was to deliver people from ecclesiastical powers.

Perhaps the anarchist conception could have overcome its errors if it

had gone all the way in its critique instead of limiting itself to utopia in the economic field.

The lust for power, which the anarchist fought continuously, he saw as an evil rather external to the human being, which he could rid himself of by returning to a kind of innocence that was no longer the wild and pastoral innocence of the good Rousseau, but a learned and civilised innocence, that of a nature with complex endeavours, finally freed from its fetters.

At that time, it has to be said, the industrial surge was emerging from the heavy constraints of the old corporatism and awakening only images of freedom. If one was a socialist, he attributed to individuals what the reality of the facts seemed to produce in a necessary way.

It was left to a later phase to reveal the tyranny that the economy was also infallibly producing, and to give politics a new purpose: to protect the individual against his own works.

By attacking this source of tyranny in the economy, the anarchist conception could have renewed its areas of intervention. And even if it has not done so, let us be grateful to the anarchists for having pushed the critique of the failings of politics further than any other.

This criticism is less confusing than it appears at first glance. In its opposition to the powers that be, the search for true *authority* was never conducted.

Otherwise, what meaning would have taken the opposition that has been made by anarchist critics, since Proudhon, between *State* and *society*, designating with the term society everything that spontaneously organises itself in the common consciousness and in collective forces, — the psychological and economic fabric of the community. While the State evokes a kind of 'sub-function' subordinate to society and occupying at best, if it does not invade social spaces, a very small place in the innumerable concerns of the human beings.

For the anarchists, society, with all its initiatives, plays the role of a spiritual authority. They didn't say the word, because 'authority' had an irreducibly pejorative connotation for them, but they thought about it [1].

So much so that their own laws, even the strictest ones, do not seem to be a burden to them. It is sufficient that they are 'natural' laws, linking us to the reality of the universe without the intervention of extraneous wills. A strange deviation from the principle, to which we shall return!

But however crude the naturalism that expresses the demands of the anarchists may appear, it would be unfair not to see in it an effort to remove value from what appears, in this case the inflation of politics which in fact stifles the real problems, and to seek solid ground on which to base the human being and his future.

This 'society' is not a mere abstraction. The anarchists have read Kropotkin and learned that the human being lived thousands of years before States and Empires. Their Bible and their legendary chronicle is this fascinating and resplendent history of which *La science moderne et l'anarchie* (Kropotkin, 1913) speaks, ranging from free primitive societies to village communities, and then to urban communes, producer associations and fraternal unions.

It was shattered at the end of the Middle Ages by the conspiracy of the lord, the military leader, the Roman judge, the priest, the merchant and the king, and has been spreading ever since, like a subterranean fire, in those *jacqueries* that underlie revolutions, and which from time to time shake individuals from their political slumber, without ever having led them to give up their youthful strength to make way for the lost city.

The vestiges of this misunderstood spontaneity remain the blood and life of nations. The law that pretentiously believes it is giving them form and being has no reality other than what it can retain of pre-

existing customs, disfigured by everything it has superimposed to protect property, castes and the machinery of government.

Ancient intrusive force, the law 'carries oppression' from century to century, guaranteeing it against its own failings, against the ups and downs of life. Look: does it happen that the law offers simple and calm directives of justice? No. In it we find as many conflicting paths as there are diverging interests. Proudhon, following in the footsteps of Kropotkin and Godwin, made it the target of his irony: a 'papyrus formation' suffocating the fertile soil of human ingenuity, a spider's web stretched by the powerful and the rich.

Anarchists too have their own tradition, the oldest in humanity: it is only on a very short historical scale, after all, that they can be considered revolutionaries.

But this came about as a result of the birth of evil, and the evil is the State.

One word sums up its essence. In its scholarly form: alienation; in its popular translation: parasitism. It's the same process as in any form of power: a minority takes over everyone's business, puts the majority on the anvil, and strikes.

As soon as its organs are constituted, the State begins to withdraw into itself. The mechanism of 'transcendence' takes hold of it. It decrees right and wrong according to its own interests, which are detached from those of society. It can no longer tolerate an immediate human-to-human relationship, and becomes intrusive, exclusive, and soon harassing and inquisitive. Expensive, moreover, adds Proudhon showing the figures, and sterilely expensive, except for his cronies.

It should be noted that the State and capitalism were born at the same time, in the fifteenth century, evolved hand in hand, fought the same wars, and, to top it off, introduced centralisation, created posi-

tions, generated influences, and 'all this is bourgeois and goes to the bourgeois' (Proudhon, *La Fédération et l'Unité en Italie*, 1862).

Externally, the State knows only the law of its own force (small countries are only virtuous because of their weakness); absolute and unlimited by definition, everything in its nature is annexationist [2], unlike the federal system, which has no strength for conquest.

Of the natural sentiment of patriotism, a purely local feeling and, moreover, a purely instinctive and animal one, the State, by injecting politics, economics and religion into it, has made it into a kind of monstrous passion that drives against civilisation.

None of this is very original. It is when they extend this common critique to the forms of the State that would seem to be exempt from such defects — democracy and revolutionary governments — that anarchists break new ground. And it is these warnings that it is most opportune today to reawaken.

There is no role to be assigned to the State: this is what anarchists continually repeat against democrats and centralising socialists

Giving the State a part of freedom in order to guarantee the rest is to assume that freedom is divisible: the rest is security, if you like, but it is no longer freedom.

— *But what if we take its place, if we turn the tide, if we use this marvellous machine, honed by five centuries of experience, in the opposite direction to the way it used to work?*

— The State cannot be overthrown; it must be shattered. There is no abuse of power, there is power that abuses by its very nature. Exploiting and governing mean the same thing. If you get on the machine, the machine will take possession of you.

— *But if I change the form, if I turn it into a democracy, a people's democracy?*

— It's not a question of *form*, but of principle. “*Democratic government and natural religion* are two contradictions, unless one prefers to see in them two mystifications.” (Proudhon, *Idée générale de la révolution au XIXème siècle*, 1851).

The principle of the State remains the same in all forms of the State. A bourgeois republican is hurt by the form of oligarchic royalty, he is not hurt by the principle, since he has nothing more urgent than to establish his oligarchic republic. Napoleon's companions were sincerely wounded in their 'democratic' feelings when they saw him marry a Habsburg princess.

How can we make States change their nature, when it is by that nature that they are States? Let's leave aside the utopia of a good, just and virtuous State. There is no example in history of an institution being turned against its very idea.

The politician who betrays in the name of power claims that 'he was forced' to act this way, speaks of 'historical necessities of power', and he is a thousand times right. But what was he doing in such a dishonourable place?

Everything that anarchists say about the State has a rationality. There are always unsystematic individuals among them, but even these do not allow themselves to be fooled by appearances. They warn us against a final temptation to be avoided: that of believing that the State is a necessary evil, that sort of fear present in history that has led all revolutions to reconstitute tyranny.

Notes

[1] See, however, in this regard Mikhail Bakunin, *On Authority*, in *Dieu et l'État (God and the State)* 1871:

“I bow before the authority of special men because it is imposed on me by my own reason. I am conscious of my own inability to grasp, in all its detail, and positive development, any very large portion of human knowledge. The greatest intelligence would not be equal to a comprehension of the whole. Thence results, for science as well as for industry, the necessity of the division and association of labour. I receive and I give — such is human life. Each directs and is directed in his turn. Therefore, there is no fixed and constant authority, but a continual exchange of mutual, temporary, and, above all, voluntary authority and subordination.”

[2] The birth and development of Nation States in Europe were characterised by the drive for territorial enlargement, then by the phase of colonialism and imperialism (last decades of the 19th century) and eventually by total wars for the *lebensraum* (first half of the 20th century). And the time of State territorial dominance is not over yet.

Luigi Sturzo

The Totalitarian State (1938)

Luigi Sturzo (1871-1959) was a Catholic priest and one of the founders of the Popular Party (1919) in Italy. The essay presented here was first published in Spanish in 1935, then in English in 1936, and finally, in an updated version, in French in 1938.

The analysis of the totalitarian State is impressive for its clarity and lucidity. More generally, this essay helps to focus and reflect on the anti-human nature of that form of organisation known as the 'Nation State'.

The idea of the State belongs to modern history. In the Middle Ages, people did not speak of the State, but of kingdoms and kings, empires and emperors, lords and vassals, cities and republics. If people wanted to specify the nature of the power, they spoke of secular power, to distinguish it from or oppose it to spiritual power. Peoples were called nations; classes, corporations or guilds; the social way of life was called community or *universitas*.

Each social group had its life, its freedoms, its privileges and immunities; the social whole had its movement like a living world of monads, in a kind of pre-established harmony *à la Leibniz*, where, admittedly, the harmony was pre-established but not always effectively established. The legal basis of this medieval world was contractual, private and personal in character. Even the relationship between the people or nation and the king or emperor was known as a contract, the object of which was the mutual bond of fidelity and loyalty; the king was bound to respect the common laws and the privileges of individuals and groups, and these owed loyalty and support to the person of the king.

The idea of the State as an entity of public law, placed above the community, did not exist at that time. It was not until the Renaissance and the Reformation and Counter-Reformation that the idea of the State took shape and hold in people's minds.

In England, where the sense of the concrete prevails over the habits of abstract thought and where, better than elsewhere, the vestiges of the past are nurtured, they speak much less of the State and much more of the Crown, Parliament or, more commonly, the 'House of Commons' or the 'House of Lords', the Empire and the 'Commonwealth', as if a little of the soul of the Middle Ages still remained. It is only when they speak of 'Church and State' that the word 'State' is commonly used; but the expression 'Church and State' is completely modern.

In the Middle Ages people spoke rather of kingdom and priesthood, or papacy and empire, secular power and spiritual power.

Like all words created by the lack of what they express, the word 'State' originated in Italy to express the idea of 'stability', at the precise moment of the Renaissance when, in the existing small principalities, duchies and marquisates, or even pseudo-republics (with the exception of Venice), what was lacking was precisely the stability of power, the certainty of borders and the security of independence.

But as people speak of '*lucus a non lucendo*' to indicate something of which the qualities are the opposite of what its name suggests, so they speak of a 'State' in Italy.

Everything had to be done at a time when the old republics were falling, the peoples were in turmoil, the Spanish and the French were waging war in Lombardy, Rome, Naples and Sicily. The idea of power as force, to be used against the mighty Church, jealous neighbours, invading foreigners, or rebellious subjects, emerged as the only means likely to ensure stability for both the State and its ruler, particularly if the latter was a usurper, which was often the case. The identification of the State with the prince represented the first manifestation of the idea of the State and found its theorist in Machiavelli.

In politics, he invented 'effective truth' [*verità effettuale*], later called 'reason of State', just as in the last century the term '*realpolitik*' or realist politics was invented. The meaning is identical. The end sought by the ruler is the subordination of the subjects to his own commands. The means are of little importance; the better if they are honest; if they are not, provided they are useful, they should not be excluded. Religion is useful for imposing constraint on peoples; so is morality for the general welfare; but above morality and religion there is politics, understood as the art of dominating, of remaining strong and extending one's power. Machiavelli takes no pleasure in crime, but if crime leads to success, Machiavelli admires its effects.

Then as now, many agree with Machiavelli, but they are careful not to admit it; on the contrary, they take care to mask their immoral attitude under the (often transparent) veils of historical fatality, of pretending to go for the lesser evil, of promoting national advantage and even religious utility. Machiavelli did not disguise his thoughts behind these hypocritical veils, and he established as corner stone of his theory the triumph of the useful, conceived as the overriding claim of the State.

The leap from Machiavelli to Luther is barely noticeable. Luther placed all power, including ecclesiastical power, in the hands of the prince, who thus remained free from the checks and balances of both the Church and the people. Machiavelli had subordinated the ends of religion to the ends of the State, personified by the prince. Luther went further: by virtue of the theory of self-will, he detached morality from faith and left all morality and religious organisation in the hands of secular authority. The German princes were delighted to have all the powers in their hands, especially as the ecclesiastical powers were, at that time, very extensive and very profitable from a fiscal point of view. All the Reformed princes took advantage of this opportunity. The others, the princes who remained loyal to Rome, while respecting (to a certain extent) the authority of the Pope, took such liberties in matters of ecclesiastical law and the tax system that, all in all, they were simply competing with the Protestant princes. That was the spirit of the times.

The experience of almost a century of Machiavellianism, on the one hand, and of reformed and even unreformed Caesaropapism, on the other, created the need to give to these tendencies a theoretical framework, which neither Machiavellian empiricism nor Luther's self-will could satisfy.

The theory of 'sovereignty' made its systematic appearance with Jean Bodin's "Six Books of The Republic" (*Six Livres de La République*, 1577). For him, sovereignty is 'the absolute and perpetual power of a republic'; something that has an existence of its own and provides the basis for the State. It is the power to impose the law without being subject to its obligations, contrary to what was believed in the Middle Ages that the law was superior to power and that its precepts were binding on sovereigns and peoples alike.

We must not believe that the doctrine of sovereignty (whether we call it that or in some other way) did not tempt the legists and canon-

ists of the Middle Ages and that kings and emperors, before Machiavelli and Luther, did not believe themselves to be above the law. It is one thing for a theory to spread and adapt to the historical conditions and atmosphere of the time, but quite another for it to become the interpretation accepted by the majority and the basis of social life.

In modern times, the theory of sovereignty became widespread, although Monarchs and Calvinists, Dominicans and Jesuits, from different points of view, had opposed it when it first appeared. But in the second half of the seventeenth century, it was more or less accepted by everyone. Sovereignty took on a divine character and became the divine right of kings. Bossuet, as a theologian, expressed the theory in Gallican form. Protestant and Anglican theologians supported it in its dual absolutism, civil and religious. Rome opposed both sides in order to safeguard the rights of the Church, thus implicitly making itself the guardian of the rights of the people, when almost everyone had forgotten them.

It was then that 'jusnaturalism' came into being. It built society on abstract nature rather than on God. Moreover, there was already a certain tendency towards pantheistic naturalism. The absolutism of kings was becoming secularised, so to speak. The divine right of the kings, repudiated by Catholic doctrine, found no adequate expression in naturalist culture. 'Jusnaturalism' arrived in time to transform it. The men who lived in the pre-social, almost animal age, were not capable of forming a society and making laws for themselves. So they delegated their sovereignty to a chief (or had it delegated to him by force) in a total and irrevocable manner. In this way, the absolute sovereignty of monarchs is safeguarded, even though it emanates from the sovereignty of the people. In this respect Hobbes is the authority.

But the other 'jusnaturalist' current, based on the idea of good and happy pre-social human nature, did not see in this total and

irrevocable cession of popular sovereignty any essential rationality or political advantages. On the contrary, this current saw it as a usurpation by monarchs of the sovereign rights of the people, which, according to Rousseau, are inalienable and indivisible. Between the two, a middle ground emerged, that of the absolute sovereignty of the people, which was to be delegated to representatives who could be dismissed or re-elected for fixed periods.

It was not a type of government that was original. It was well known in Antiquity and the Middle Ages that power could be in the hands of a single person (monarchy), a few people (oligarchy) or the people (democracy). What gave the exact idea of the new political concept was above all the 'unlimited' nature of power: sovereignty with no limits other than itself.

Monarchical sovereignty by divine right was limited by the personal relationship between the monarch and God; if the monarch, believing himself to be almost a god, overturned this relationship, no one could prevent this transposition, which was not difficult for him.

Sovereignty by natural law was to find its limits in the natural law; but, since the king was the sole interpreter of this law, the people (from whom sovereignty was derived by virtue of a single, irrevocable act) had no means of calling the sovereign to a less arbitrary interpretation.

Popular sovereignty, as conceived by Rousseau, had no limits outside the collective will, which made law in itself. Whether this was resolved into the law of the majority or the law of the representatives or delegates, according to the different practical forms adopted in the organisation of democracy, this in no way detracted from the absolute character of a sovereignty with no limits other than the collective will.

As in every concept of government based on sovereignty, '*latebat anguis in herba*' [the snake hid in the grass — Virgil]: sovereignty by

divine right according to Bossuet's conception, or sovereignty by natural right according to Hobbes, or popular sovereignty according to Rousseau, all in their 'unlimitedness' presupposed, favoured and consolidated the extra-personal, objective and dominating entity: the State.

In saying this, we are not attacking the idea of the State. To conceive and express collective things, we need to transform them into formal and abstract ideas, even if it means returning to concrete things and recognising them, by means of these ideas, in their reality and their effective unity. But, while the ideas of community, *universitas*, *res publica*, kingdom, maintain the prevalence of the idea of 'society', that is to say: association of several people with a common purpose (similarly, Church, *Ecclesia*: assembly, meeting, originally having the meaning of society), the idea of State escapes the conception of society and attaches itself rather to the objective conception of a stable, sovereign and powerful reality; this is why people speak of sovereignty and even power.

Little by little, the State became a principle and an end: the origin of all rights and the aim of all public activity. The *raison d'État* took on the following meaning: to subordinate everything to the greatness of the State. Botero's efforts to 'catholicise' the *raison d'État* served only to cast a shadow over Catholicism; as if by accepting the Catholic *raison d'État*, the intention had been to justify for religious ends the political, worldly, utilitarian and, in essence, immoral means that Catholic sovereigns were wont to employ.

Everyone strove to conceive of the State as a reality above human beings and sovereignty as a superior will achieving the goals of the State. When Louis XIV said: 'I am the State', his intention was not to place himself above the State, but to sum up in his person the sum of the State's interests and to make them known through his will. This is why Harold Laski rightly wrote in the *Daily Herald*, on the 450th

anniversary of Luther's birth, that without Luther, Louis XIV would not have been possible.

In the final analysis, the idea of the State cannot be the last; it evokes yet another substantial reality that completes it. At the time of the divine right of the kings, the idea of God existed behind the State, and this idea implied — at least indirectly — that of the people. The clergy tried to emphasise one idea or the other, but did not always succeed, as happened to the Gallican and Josephist clergy.

The *Encyclopédie* put behind the State the ideas of nature and humanity: ideas that were, moreover, generous, nature and humanity being creatures of God. However, detached from God, these ideas remained abstract and devoid of any real consistency.

In the quest for a point of reference, three ideologies developed and guided politics from the nineteenth century to the present day.

The first is that of Hegel: the State is simply the manifestation of the Spirit, its most perfect manifestation; the State is in itself ethics-right-power. A kind of divine incarnation, where the idea of power is identified with the idea of God.

But which State in the Germany of Hegel's time could seriously have called itself a 'creature of the absolute spirit of the world and the will to power'? With the exception of Prussia, all the other States and small principalities could be regarded as manifestations of the mediocrity of their tyrants and the intrigues and chatter of their courts. It was not until the Napoleonic Wars that the national spirit of which Fichte was the philosopher and prophet emerged in Germany. According to him, it is only in the nation that the eternal manifests itself; its greatness is a moral greatness that aspires to the reign of the spirit. The nation State, as the development of the entire culture of a people, is for Fichte the 'self-representation of God'.

With Fichte we follow the line of Hegel's ideology, but the State has become the nation. When Bismarck achieved the unity of Germany,

Belgium had regained a personality of her own, Italy, shortly afterwards, had achieved its unity, and the Balkan peoples were gradually gaining their independence. The principle of nationality, that of independence and that of unity had thus given its political basis to the idea of nation-power-culture, of which the State was the juridical and military instrument.

In France the idea of nation, as opposed to the 'humanitarianism' of the *Encyclopédie*, developed less through theories than through the rise of the Third State or bourgeoisie, through military conscription and the Napoleonic wars, through democracy and the reactionary Bonapartist and clerical upheavals. France never repudiated the idea of the State, because the State coincided with the nation; and behind the State, depending on the circumstances, France sometimes placed the people, sometimes the nation. But the people and the nation did not need a myth to sustain them; the idea of fatherland was very old in the people of France and a stable feeling kept it alive. It took Maurrassian nationalism to bring some Frenchmen to the extreme limit of a positivist mysticism.

England never lost its pragmatic common sense, even when its philosophers introduced the gospel of Hegel and Fichte's exalted ideas. Theoretically and often practically, what prevailed was an utilitarianism mingled with a moralism that was not merely apparent. On the seas, the British flag and, in the colonies, the crown, were enough; at home, everyone felt free and in control, without relying on the State, without having to forge the myth of the nation-divinity. The nation was even more alive in its history and empire than in its theory.

At the same time as the affirmation of the national idea was growing, another current was developing everywhere, denying the State and the nation and putting the class in their place: the socialist current, elevated to the status of a theory by Karl Marx. This theory advocated the advent of the proletarian class which, through the establish-

ment of a collectivist economy, would destroy the bourgeois State and the militaristic nation. Historical materialism replaced the historical process of the Hegelian idea; class struggle replaced national dynamism; the economy as organised labour replaced the State as power. The socialist-Marxist movement broke down the unity of national sentiments and prepared the ground for internationalism in every nation.

Here, then, are three Germans — Hegel, Fichte and Marx — who summed up the European effort of the nineteenth century to give meaning, content and an absolute and almost divine purpose to the State, the nation and the class.

In the course of the nineteenth century, two systems developed with regard to the conception of the national State: the liberal system and the authoritarian system. The first was conservative or democratic; the second absolutist or paternalistic. Obviously, these qualifications indicating the different nuances should not be taken literally: far from establishing absolute types, they only serve to designate predominant tendencies.

What interests us in our investigation is the fact that behind the appeal of French-style democracy, as well as behind the authoritarianism of Bismarck or Wilhelm, there is always the national State. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was the only one which, because of the dissimilar and divergent nationalities of which it was composed, could not be considered a true national State, and it harboured within itself the seeds of its disintegration.

Wherever it existed, the national State had certain predominant features: an ever-increasing centralism, a militarism based on conscription and standing armies, and the State school as a means of creating national conformism (a national moral unity). In France, these features were a legacy of the Revolution and the Napoleonic

Empire; in Germany, a legacy of Prussia and Frederick; in Italy, a means of defending its recent political unification and imitating France; in Spain, an attempt to overcome dynastic and autonomist particularism and, on the other hand, the influence of the Church; in Austria, a demand from the House of Habsburg and the predominance of German and Magyar elites within the State. The other European countries lived in the same atmosphere, even if they did not have similar needs.

Liberal economic systems and working class internationalism should have developed the cosmopolitan sense much more vigorously, as opposed to nationalism. The ease of trade, the existence of a scientific community, the spread of the press and the organisation of work did not fail to give impetus to this tendency. But free trade was a phase that was quickly overtaken by protective tariffs, which were at first timid, then very broad, to the advantage of what was called the national economy. The periodical press soon lost its free and individual character, and became a more or less capitalist enterprise, or was linked to industrial enterprises. The Workers' International was always undermined by local particularism, with the exception of the extremist and pseudo-anarchist section, which lacked men and resources. And if the various socialisms denied the State as bourgeois, they would not have rejected a national State, provided it was proletarian.

Although the Church made no secret, at that time, of its preference for authoritarian States, it did not fail, from a religious point of view, to fight against political centralisation, which implicitly limited its authority and mission; against compulsory conscription and the arms race, which entailed the danger of war; and above all against the State school, which presented itself as a fearsome monopoly and a means of de-Christianising the people in the name of the State. The Church redoubled the intensity of its struggle against liberalism, for theoretical reasons and in view of the practical positions it had to

defend; but the main struggle was, above all, that against the national State, in which she was defeated.

The Great War [the First World War] was a violent test of the political concepts and systems of the nineteenth century. Empires fell, forms of government were changed, but despite all the upheavals of the war and the post-war period, the essential factors of the national State survived: centralisation, militarism, State schools and customs tariffs. Weimar Germany had reduced its army to the minimum agreed in the treaties, but militarism remained intact and even developed clandestinely, until it came into the open. From the Baltic to the Balkans, the militaristic madness has taken hold of the whole world, and even where there are no regular armies, we see only the stirring of armed squads, the evolution of militarised youths, the turbulence of black and red and blue and yellow and green political militias.

In order to overcome their inherent weakness, the newly created States imitated the centralisation of the large States, which in turn never ceased to create new ministries, multiply their administrative departments and increase their central bureaucracies, as well as the size of their budgets. Even more than in the pre-war period, schools became an object of political conquest. Tariffs were raised to insane levels, even in England which was the last country to abandon free trade.

In short, whatever the particular circumstances, in the sixteen years from 1917 to 1933 Europe experienced, among many other painful events, a Bolshevik Russia, a Fascist Italy and a Nazi Germany: three great totalitarian States of different character, but all three national in character and founded on administrative and political centralisation, militarism, the monopolisation of education and a closed economy.

What are the substantial differences and similarities between these totalitarian States and the national States that still exist? If we refer to the four essential common factors, it is possible to identify the differences:

a) Administrative centralisation in the totalitarian State is pushed to the extreme: suppression of all municipal and provincial autonomy and of any other public or semi-public bodies, charities, cultural associations, universities.

Centralisation, in the totalitarian State, invades the political terrain that is matter of controversies in the nationalist States that still exist under the banner of democracy. Executive power has become, in law and in fact, the supreme synthesis of all powers, even those belonging to the head of State (in Russia and Germany, the head of State and the head of Government are the same person). The independence of the legislative and judicial bodies has completely disappeared; and finally, the government itself has been reduced to a body subordinate to the head, who has become a dictator under the brilliant titles of Duce, Marshal or Führer.

They control a State police operating in conjunction with a very powerful espionage organisation, going far beyond anything that Napoleon himself had invented. The Russian GPU and the Italian OVRA are well known for their terrible reputations; recently the German Gestapo was born.

To put into action the mechanism of absolute, unlimited and personal central power, it was necessary to eliminate all political, civil and organisational freedom, both individual and collective, of groups and parties.

Suitable means: a single party (there is something illogical about putting these two words together), a dominant armed faction, whether Communist, Fascist or National Socialist. All other parties suppressed, all independent movements canceled, all opponents

exiled. The aristocratic and bourgeois classes have been eliminated in Russia; the same for the opposition parties in Italy. Even the different races in Germany have been outlawed; a marriage to a Jew becomes a political crime and a lineage tainted by a single Jewish ancestor is a cause of civil incapacity for the descendant.

A whole category of citizens without rights, a class of *ilotes*, has being created. The violence of the struggle has led to the establishment of special courts, concentration camps and internment zones; the prisons are overflowing, hundreds of thousands of people are exiled; there are countless deportees; a huge number of people have been arbitrarily eliminated and their fate is unknown.

And these are not exceptional measures taken during a period of revolutionary crisis. The totalitarian State does not accept that it can have opponents. For twenty years, the Soviets have done nothing but shoot people, condemn millions to hard labour or deport them to Siberia. In the same way, Italy continues to operate the Supreme Court for the Defence of the State and the institution of expulsion. Germany came last, and its cleansing of 30 June 1934 was a typical episode in the terrorist methods used by modern dictatorships to hold on to power at all costs, against friends and foes alike.

In short, administrative and political centralisation in totalitarian States is an inescapable and vital exigency, necessarily linked to the suppression of all autonomy, of civil and political liberties and of the *habeas corpus*. It is also connected to the most sophisticated systems of police and espionage, to violent and bloody repression, to the elimination of adversaries and dissidents, to intolerance of all disagreement and to the external and internal imposition of political conformity.

b) All this is possible when the dictatorial power has the upper hand over the army and the navy and manages to militarise the country. Even so-called democratic States are militarised, in the sense that they have military conscription, strong armies and powerful navies.

But normally, they are only technical bodies having no connection with politics, remaining aloof from parties and collaborating with any cabinet as far as the interests of national defence are concerned. There have been many cases in the past where army chiefs have shown political tendencies; the Boulangiste movement and the Dreyfus Affair in France, and the various *pronunciamientos* in Spain are well known. But these were all part of the free play of opposing political and social forces.

In totalitarian States, the situation is different. The party is militarised; it places itself above the army, or the army allies itself with the government and the two forces combine or merge. The youth is militarised from both the moral and disciplinary points of view; collective life is conceived as a military life; ambitions for *revanche*, that is revenge or domination, internal and external struggles, and civil wars shake the whole of society. In Italy, at the age of 6, you join the *figli della lupa* (Sons of the She-wolf) and then successively the 'Balilla', the 'Young Italians', the 'Militiamen' and so on until the age of 54. The party is a militia; teachers and professors have military ranks and military uniforms.

The teaching of how to use the arms continues throughout life; the homicidal weapon is man's constant companion; military parades and exercises take up a large part of the activity of young people and adults alike. Germany today is armed to the teeth, not only to assert her parity in law and in fact with other nations, but as a result of a mystical and morbid exaltation of the strength and destiny of the Teutonic Nordic race. Every German is a soldier.

Russia equates the task of defending the State with that of defending the revolution and Bolshevik ideology and spreading it throughout the world. Communism is the word of salvation for the Russians, just as Fascism is for the Italians and National Socialism for the Germans. A word of salvation to be given to the world by propa-

ganda and force, just as Mohammed, with the Koran and the scimitar, subjugated the peoples to his new Gospel.

c) To achieve this, what is needed is a rigorously monopolised State education system. For more than a century, the monopoly of education has been, and still is, the most important task for a national State. Napoleon was the first to organise — from universities to primary schools — education for the benefit of the State, i.e. schools with the State as their immediate goal. However, attempts have almost always been made to reconcile the monopoly of education with freedom of thought, even in political matters. Generally speaking, the struggle (whether open or veiled) was waged particularly against the Church, and the Church fought for the greatest possible freedom of education.

The totalitarian State, by its very nature, is bound to go beyond the limits it has hitherto observed. Everyone must believe in the new State and learn to love it. Not a single opposing idea, not a single dissenting voice. From primary school to university, it is not enough to practise conformity of feeling; complete intellectual and moral submission, the confident enthusiasm, the mystical ardour of a religion are needed.

Communism, or Fascism, or Nazism, is and must be a religion. To create this state of mind, school alone is not enough. Complementary means must be added: the official book, the standardised State-run newspaper, the cinema, the radio, sport, school associations, prizes, all of which are not only controlled, but directed towards one end: the cult of the totalitarian State, under the banner of the nation, the race or the class.

In order to win unanimous consent, to stimulate this collective spirit of exaltation, the whole of social life is continually mobilised in parades, festivals, processions, plebiscites and sporting exercises that capture the imagination, the spirit and the feeling of the population.

The cult of the State, the class or the race would be too generic; there is the need for the man, the hero, the demigod. Lenin now has an imposing mausoleum and, for the Russians, he has become a secular Mohammed. Mussolini and Hitler, still alive, are protected by a swarm of policemen and bodyguards. They act and speak in such a way as to strike the senses and the imagination of the crowds; their persons are sacred; their words are like the words of prophets.

Hitler passes between two compact hedges of guards marching at quite a distance from him, so that only he emerges in their midst; and he assumes a dreamy face with his eyes raised to the sky, his hands open and stretched out in front, like a redeemer. Mussolini had invented an almost magical rite; invoked by the crowd for a more or less long time: 'Duce! Duce! Duce!'; then in voices that became more and more urgent and powerful, until they reach a paroxysm, and then become murmurs again, gradually rising once more to quivering calls: 'Duce! Duce! Duce!', he finally shows himself to the crowd in a round of applause.

d) All of this requires, on the one hand, enormous expenditure and financing and, on the other hand, demands an economic regime that is more and more rigorously controlled. Just as all moral energies must converge to build the power of the State, so too must all economic forces. The democratic States have adopted an intermediate system that helps national industries through the protection of customs tariffs while giving complete freedom to private initiative.

The totalitarian State either enslaves private capital to its own ends (as in Germany), or tries to maintain a certain political balance between the classes (as in Italy), or the State itself becomes capitalist (as in Russia). The totalitarian State never leaves economic freedom to either capitalists or workers. Free trade unions are not allowed. There are only State unions and State corporations, with no freedom of movement, controlled and organised throughout the country by the State and for the State. This give rise to the beginnings of a

command economy, the first step towards autarky, in view of a radical transformation of the economic system.

The question of which of these two systems, the command economy or the closed system, is more advantageous, is a problem intimately connected with each particular State regime, and cannot therefore be solved in the abstract. Bolshevism presented itself simultaneously as a communist regime, from the economic point of view, and a totalitarian regime, from the political point of view. Fascism proceeded by degrees and by means of experiments, both in politics and in the State-run economy, cloaked in a hitherto apparent and verbal corporatism. Germany, in the midst of a debt-ridden financial crisis, introduced totalitarianism and State socialism at the same time.

These aspects of the totalitarian State lead us to touch on two problems of vital interest to our civilisation:

(a) The first is that of freedom, considered not only as a set of political rights and as the citizen's participation in the life of his country, but above all as the autonomy of the individual, as the security of personal rights, as the guarantee of each person's activity, whether temporal or spiritual. Totalitarian States suppress political freedom and diminish personal freedom, through State interference in the areas of thought, morality and religion.

(b) This fact implies the very serious problem of the supremacy of the spiritual over the temporal, of ethical ends over political goals and, for us Christians, that of the aims of religion, of the supernatural, over the proper objectives of the State. The solution to this problem was given in 1926 by Pius XI, then developed in the Encyclical *Non abbiamo bisogno* ["We do not need"] of 29 June 1931 and finally in the Encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* ["With deep anxiety"] of 14 March 1937 (against the persecutions in Germany), and finally with regard to the totalitarian fascist State,

when in a public consistory the Pope declared that "the State is not the end of man, but that man is the end of the State." (Among the erroneous propositions pointed out by the Congregation for Seminaries and Universities in its letter of 13 April 1938, the eighth wrong proposition declares: "every human being exists only through the State and for the State. All that he possesses by right derives solely from a concession of the State").

Whether relations between Church and State are legally regulated, as they have been in Italy since 11 February 1929, or whether they are full of turmoil and struggle, as they are in Germany despite the Concordat of 1933, or whether they are completely abolished, as they are in Russia, all this belongs to the historical-political phenomenology that began nineteen centuries ago with the arrival of Jesus Christ and the massacre of the Innocents.

Apart from this, the incompatibility between Christianity and the totalitarian State is already obvious, if we refer to the historical postulates of the conception of the State, which has always tilted towards a social-political monism to the detriment of the human person and the reasons of the spirit. But this incompatibility is even more obvious in the logical premises of 'totalitarianism', which translate practically into the mystical exaltation of a superhuman principle: the absolute character given to class, nation or race.

Such a state of affairs leads us to the upheaval of Christian civilisation, because it removes from the relations of justice (according to a sound conception of private and public, domestic and international law) the foundation of natural morality and posits, in its place, the principle of the intrinsic morality of the State or the 'ethnicity' of the State. According to this ideology, individuals are no longer considered as citizens or persons, but only as members of the herd, as units of an iron community whose moral acts are integrated into the ends of the State. The individual is lost, absorbed into the pancollectivity, designated by the symbolic names of nation, class or race.

All morality entails the need for religion; subjective morality divinises the individual; naturalistic morality divinises the totem and the magic cult; State morality divinises the State and the ideas which, within the State, have become almost 'hypostasised', such as race, nation and class. Only Christian morality makes us participants in the divinity of Christ.

Ever since Machiavelli and Luther, the State has been moving steadily towards divinisation. Today, the totalitarian State is the clearest and most explicit form of the pantheistic State.

Bertrand de Jouvenel

On State Power

(1945)

In this extract from his magisterial essay on power, the author clarifies very well the fact that the States do not originate at all from human sociability but from the desire of some human beings to conquer territories and dominate other human beings. In other words, the State is “essentially the result of the success of a ‘band of brigands’ superimposed on small individual societies.”

Source: Bertrand de Jouvenel, *Du Pouvoir. Histoire Naturelle de sa Croissance*, Livre troisième: De la nature du pouvoir, 1945.

COMMAND AS A CAUSE

It is a mistake with far-reaching consequences to postulate, as so many authors do, that the great political formation, the State, results naturally from human sociability. This would seem to be self-evident, since this is undoubtedly the principle of society, a fact of nature. But this natural society is *small*. And you cannot go from a small society to a *large* one by the same process. A coagulating factor

is needed here, which in the vast majority of cases is not the instinct to associate, but the instinct to dominate. It is to the instinct to dominate that the large group owes its existence.

The Nation did not first give rise to its leaders, for the good reason that, until leaders appeared, there was not, either in fact or in feelings, a Nation. So, let's not have the binding and coordinating energy explained to us by some ectoplasm sprung from the depths of the human group. On the contrary, in the history of great ensembles, that dominating energy is a primary cause, and we cannot go beyond that reality.

As if to prove the point, the energy most often comes from outside.

THE FIRST ASPECT OF COMMAND

The principle behind the formation of vast aggregates is none other than conquest. This is sometimes the work of one of the component societies within the whole, but frequently of a warrior band from afar. In the first case, a city commands many cities; in the second, a small group of people commands many peoples. Whatever distinction must be made when moving into the realm of concrete history, there can be no doubt that the notions of capital and nobility owe part of their psychological content to these ancient phenomena.

The instruments chosen by Fate to carry out this 'synthetic activity', as Auguste Comte calls it, are amongst the most ferocious. Thus, the modern States of Western Europe must acknowledge as their founders those Germanic tribes of whom Tacitus, despite his favourable prejudice as over-civilised man for the barbarian, painted a frightening portrait. The Franks, from whom the French take their name, should not be thought of as anything better than the Goths, whose plundering and devastating wanderings Ammianus Marcellinus describes in gripping pages.

The Normans who founded the kingdom of Sicily, those adventurers who were companions of William the Bastard, are too close to us to be mistaken about their real character.

It is a very familiar image, that of the greedy horde setting sail from the shores of Saint-Valéry-sur-Somme and who, on reaching London, will have the country carved up among themselves by a victorious bandit chief, seated on a throne of stone.

Without doubt, they are not, strictly speaking, the unifiers of territories, but they have supplanted others who had done the work of unification and who were very much like themselves.

The Romans, those illustrious unifiers, were no different in their early days. Saint Augustine had no illusions about this:

Justice being taken away, then, what are kingdoms but great robberies? For what are robberies themselves, but little kingdoms? The band itself is made up of men; it is ruled by the authority of a prince, it is knit together by the pact of the confederacy; the booty is divided by the law agreed on. If perverse men join it, this evil increases to such a degree that it seizes places where it establishes the seat of its domination, takes possession of cities, and subdues peoples. Then it assumes the name of a kingdom, because the reality is now manifestly conferred on it, not by the removal of covetousness, but by the addition of impunity. (*The City of God*, Book IV, Chapter IV)

COMMAND FOR ITS OWN SAKE

Thus the 'State' is essentially the result of the success of a 'band of brigands' superimposed on small individual societies, a band which, itself organised into a society as fraternal and just as will please this band of thieves, behaves like pure Power towards the vanquished, the submissive.

This power has no claim to legitimacy. It pursues no just end; its only concern is to exploit the defeated, the subjugated, the subjects, for its own profit. It lives off the dominated populations.

When William divided England into sixty thousand fiefdoms of knights, this meant exactly that sixty thousand human groups would each have to support one of the conquerors with their labour. This was the only justification, in the eyes of the conquerors, for the existence of the subjugated populations. If they could not be made useful in this way, there would be no reason to let them live. And it is remarkable that in places where more civilised conquerors would not do so, they would end up unintentionally exterminating populations that were useless to them, as in North America and Australia. The natives survived better under the domination of the Spaniards, who enslaved them.

History, as implacable witness, shows no instance of a spontaneous relationship between the victors, who were members of the State, and their vanquished, other than that of exploitation.

When the Turks settled in Europe, they lived off the tribute (*Kharadj*) paid by non-Muslims, those whose different dress showed that they were not part of the conquerors. It was a sort of an annual ransom, like the price demanded for letting live those who could very well have been killed.

The Romans didn't see things any differently. They went to war for immediate profits, precious metals and slaves: a triumph was all the more acclaimed because more treasures were carried, and the consul was followed by more raided victims. Relations with the provinces were essentially based on the collection of tributes. The Romans regarded the conquest of Macedonia as the moment when it became possible to live entirely off 'provincial' taxes, i.e. those paid by the subjugated peoples.

Even democratic Athens considered it unworthy of a citizen to pay taxes. It was the tributes of the 'allies' that filled the coffers, and the most popular rulers endeared themselves by increasing these charges. Cleon raised them from six hundred to nine hundred talents, Alcibiades to one thousand two hundred.

Everywhere, the great whole, the 'State', appears to us to be characterised by the parasitic domination of a small society over an aggregate of other societies.

And whether the internal regime of the small society is republican as in Rome, democratic as in Athens, egalitarian as in Sparta, the relationship of the victors with the subjugated society offers us the same exact image of command for its sake and for its fruits.

Jacques Maritain

Man and the State (1951)

In this extract the French Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain is not critical of the State *per se* but of the fact that the State has made itself the absolute sovereign of the political body (society). In doing so, it has turned upside down the relationship between human beings and the State entity, making the former simple tools at the service of the latter.

This happened, according to Maritain, during the French Revolution when power shifted from the King to the Nation and the Nation was seen as a superior sovereign person (the Nation State).

This short text is part of a book that systematizes six lectures given by Maritain in December 1949 in the USA under the auspices of the Charles R. Walgreen Foundation for the Study of American Institutions.

Source: Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State*, 1951.

THE PEOPLE AND THE STATE

The State is not the supreme incarnation of the Idea, as Hegel believed; the State is not a kind of collective superman; the State is but an agency entitled to use power and coercion, and made up of experts or specialists in public order and welfare, an instrument in the service of man. Putting man at the service of that instrument is political perversion. The human person as an individual is for the body politic and the body politic is for the human person as a person. But man is by no means for the State. The State is for man.

When we say that the State is the superior part in the body politic, this means that it is superior to the other organs or collective parts of this body, but it does not mean that it is superior to the body politic itself. The part as such is inferior to the whole. The State is inferior to the body politic as a whole, and is at the service of the body politic as a whole. Is the State even the *head* of the body politic? Hardly, for in the human being the head is an instrument of such spiritual powers as the intellect and the will, which the whole body has to serve; whereas the functions exercised by the State are for the body politic, and not the body politic for them.

The theory which I have just summarized, and which regards the State as a part or an instrument of the body politic, subordinate to it and endowed with topmost authority not by its own right and for its own sake, but only by virtue and to the extent of the requirements of the common good, can be described as an “instrumentalist” theory, founding the genuinely *political* notion of the State. But we are confronted with quite another notion, the *despotic* notion of the State, based on a “substantialist” or “absolutist” theory. According to this theory the State is a subject of right, i.e., a moral person, and consequently a whole; as a result it is either superimposed on the body politic or made to absorb the body politic entirely, and it enjoys supreme power by virtue of its own natural, inalienable right and for its own final sake.

Of course there is for everything great and powerful an instinctive tendency — and a special temptation — to grow beyond its own limits. Power tends to increase power, the power machine tends ceaselessly to extend itself; the supreme legal and administrative machine tends toward bureaucratic self-sufficiency; it would like to consider itself an end, not a means. Those who specialize in the affairs of the whole have a propensity to take themselves for the whole; the general staffs to take themselves for the whole army, the Church authorities for the whole Church; the State for the whole body politic. By the same token, the State tends to ascribe to itself a peculiar common good — its own self-preservation and growth — distinct both from the public order and welfare which are its immediate end, and from the common good which is its final end. All these misfortunes are but instances of “natural” excess or abuse

But there has been something much more specific and serious in the development of the *substantialist* or *absolutist* theory of the State. This development can be understood only in the perspective of modern history and as a sequel to the structures and conceptions peculiar to the Mediaeval Empire, to the absolute monarchy of the French classical age, and the absolute government of the Stuart kings in England. Remarkably enough, the very word *State* only appeared in the course of modern history; the notion of the State was implicitly involved in the ancient concept of city (*polis*, *civitas*) which meant essentially body politic, and still more in the Roman concept of the Empire: it was never explicitly brought out in Antiquity. According to a historical pattern unfortunately most recurrent, both the normal development of the State — which was in itself a sound and genuine progress — and the development of the spurious-absolutist-juridical and philosophical conception of the State took place at the same time.

An adequate explanation of that historical process would require a long and thorough analysis. Here I merely suggest that in the Middle Ages the authority of the Emperor, and in early modern

times the authority of the absolute King, descended from above on the body politic, upon which it was superimposed. For centuries, political authority was the privilege of a superior “social race” which had a right — and believed it to be an innate or immediately God-given and inalienable right — to supreme power over, and leadership as well as moral guidance of, the body politic — made up, it was assumed, of people under age who were able to make requests, remonstrances, or riots, not to govern themselves. So, in the “baroque age,” while the reality of the State and the sense of the State progressively took shape as great juridical achievements, the concept of the State emerged more or less confusedly as the concept of a whole — sometimes identified with the person of the king — which was superimposed on or which enveloped the body politic and enjoyed power from above by virtue of its own natural and inalienable right, — that is to say, which possessed sovereignty. For in the genuine sense of this word — which depends on the historical formation of the concept of sovereignty, prior to jurists’ various definitions — sovereignty implies not only actual possession of and right to supreme power, but a right which is *natural and inalienable*, to a supreme power which is supreme *separate from* and *above* its subjects.

At the time of the French Revolution that very concept of the State considered as a whole unto itself was preserved, but it shifted from the King to the Nation, mistakenly identified with the body politic; hence Nation, Body Politic and State were identified. And the very concept of sovereignty — as a *natural* or *innate* and *inalienable* right to supreme *transcendent* power — was preserved, but shifted from the King to the Nation. At the same time, by virtue of a voluntarist theory of law and political society, which had its acme in eighteenth century philosophy, the State was made into a person (a so-called moral person) and a subject of right, in such a way that the attribute of absolute sovereignty, ascribed to the Nation, was inevitably, as a matter of fact, to be claimed and exercised by the State.

Thus it is that in modern times the despotic or absolutist notion of the State was largely accepted among democratic tenets by the theorists of democracy — pending the advent of Hegel, the prophet and theologian of the totalitarian, divinized State. In England, John Austin's theories only tended to tame and civilize somewhat the old Hobbesian Leviathan. This process of acceptance was favored by a symbolical property which genuinely belongs to the State, namely, the fact that, just as we say twenty head of cattle meaning twenty animals, in the same way the topmost part in the body politic naturally *represents* the political whole. Nay more, the notion of the latter is raised to a higher degree of abstraction and symbolization, and the consciousness of the political society is raised to a more completely individualized idea of itself in the idea of the State. In the absolutist notion of the State, that symbol has been made a reality, it has been hypostasized. According to this notion the State is a metaphysical monad, a person; it is a whole unto itself, *the* very political whole in its supreme degree of unity and individuality. So it absorbs in itself the body politic from which it emanates, as well as all the individual or particular wills which, according to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, have engendered the General Will in order mystically to die and resurge in its unity. And it enjoys absolute sovereignty as an essential property and right.

That concept of the State, enforced in human history, has forced democracies into intolerable self-contradictions, in their domestic life and above all in international life. For this concept is no part of the authentic tenets of democracy, it does not belong to the real democratic inspiration and philosophy, it belongs to a spurious ideological heritage which has preyed upon democracy like a parasite. During the reign of individualist or "liberal" democracy the State, made into an absolute, displayed a tendency to substitute itself for the people, and so to leave the people estranged from political life to a certain extent; it also was able to launch the wars between nations which disturbed the XIXth Century. Nevertheless, after the Napoleonic era

the worst implications of this process of State absolutization were restrained by the democratic philosophy and political practices which then prevailed. It is with the advent of the totalitarian regimes and philosophies that those worst implications were released. The State made into an absolute revealed its true face. Our epoch has had the privilege of contemplating the State totalitarianism of Race with German Nazism, of Nation with Italian Fascism, of Economic Community with Russian Communism.

The point which needs emphasis is this. For democracies today the most urgent endeavor is to develop social justice and improve world economic management, and to defend themselves against totalitarian threats from the outside and totalitarian expansion in the world; but the pursuit of these objectives will inevitably involve the risk of having too many functions of social life controlled by the State from above, and we shall be inevitably bound to accept this risk, as long as our notion of the State has not been restated on true and genuine democratic foundations, and as long as the body politic has not renewed its own structures and consciousness, so that the people become more effectively equipped for the exercise of freedom, and the State may be made an actual instrument for the common good of all. Then only will that very topmost agency, which is made by modern civilization more and more necessary to the human person in his political, social, moral, even intellectual and scientific progress, cease to be at the same time a threat to the freedoms of the human person as well as of intelligence and science. Then only will the highest functions of the State — to ensure the law and facilitate the free development of the body politic — be restored, and the sense of the State be regained by the citizens. Then only will the State achieve its true dignity, which comes not from power and prestige, but from the exercise of justice.

Murray Rothbard

The Anatomy of the State (1965)

The main aim of the author is to destroy illusions spread by the State apparatus in order to justify its continued existence, and he does so with the usual clarity and brilliance.

Source: Murray Rothbard, *The Anatomy of the State*, first appeared in *Rampart Journal of Individualist Thought*, Vol. 1, No 2 - Summer 1965.

What the State Is Not

The State is almost universally considered an institution of social service. Some theorists venerate the State as the apotheosis of society; others regard it as an amiable, though often inefficient, organisation for achieving social ends; but almost all regard it as a necessary means for achieving the goals of mankind, a means to be ranged against the “private sector” and often winning in this competition of resources.

With the rise of democracy, the identification of the State with society has been redoubled, until it is common to hear sentiments expressed which violate virtually every tenet of reason and common sense: such as “we are the government.” The useful collective term “we” has enabled an ideological camouflage to be thrown over the reality of political life. If “we are the government,” then anything a government does to an individual is not only just and untyrannical; it is also “voluntary” on the part of the individual concerned. If the government has incurred a huge public debt which must be paid by taxing one group for the benefit of another, this reality of burden is obscured by saying that “we owe it to ourselves”; if the government conscripts a man, or throws him into jail for dissident opinion, then he is “doing it to himself” and therefore nothing untoward has occurred. Under this reasoning, any Jews murdered by the Nazi government were *not* murdered; instead, they must have “committed suicide,” since *they were* the government (which was democratically chosen), and therefore anything the government did to them was voluntary on their part. One would not think it necessary to belabour this point, and yet the overwhelming bulk of the people hold this fallacy to a greater or less degree.

We must therefore emphasise that “we” are *not* the government; the government is *not* “us”. The government does not in any accurate sense “represents the majority of the people” but even if it did, even if 70 per cent of the people decided to murder the remaining 30 per cent, this would still be murder, and would not be voluntary suicide on the part of the slaughtered minority. No organicist metaphor, no irrelevant bromide that “we are all part of one another,” must be permitted to obscure this basic fact.

If, then, the State is not “us,” if it is not “the human family” getting together to decide mutual problems, if it is not a lodge meeting or country club, what is it?

Briefly, the State is that organisation in society which attempts to maintain a monopoly of the use of force and violence in a given territorial area; in particular, it is the only organisation in society that obtains its revenue not by voluntary contribution or payment for services rendered, but by coercion.

While other individuals or institutions obtain their income by production of goods and services, and by the peaceful and voluntary sale of these goods and services to others, the State obtains its revenue by the use of compulsion; that is, by the use and the threat of the jailhouse and the bayonet.

Having used force and violence to obtain its revenue, the State generally goes on to regulate and dictate the other actions of its individual subjects. One would think that simple observation of all States through history and over the globe would be proof enough of this assertion; but the miasma of myth has lain so long over State activity that elaboration is necessary.

What the State Is

Man is born naked into the world, and needing to use his mind to learn how to take the resources given him by nature, and to transform them (for example, by investment in “capital”) into shapes and forms and places where the resources can be used for the satisfaction of his wants and the advancement of his standard of living. The only way by which man can do this is by the use of his mind and energy to transform resources (“production”) and to exchange these products for products created by others. Man has found that, through the process of voluntary, mutual exchange, the productivity, and hence the living standards of all participants in exchange may increase enormously. The only “natural” course for man to survive and to attain wealth, therefore, is by using his mind and energy to engage in

the production-and-exchange process. He does this, first, by finding natural resources, and then by transforming them (by “mixing his labour” with them, as Locke puts it), to make them his individual *property*, and then by exchanging this property for the similarly obtained property of others. The social path dictated by the requirements of man’s nature, therefore, is the path of “property rights” and the “free market” of gift or exchange of such rights. Through this path, men have learned how to avoid the “jungle” methods of fighting over scarce resources so that A can only acquire them at the expense of B and, instead, to multiply those resources enormously in peaceful and harmonious production and exchange.

The great German sociologist Franz Oppenheimer pointed out that there are two mutually exclusive ways of acquiring wealth; one, the above way of production and exchange, he called the “economic means.” The other way is simpler in that it does not require productivity; it is the way of seizure of another’s goods or services by the use of force and violence. This is the method of one-sided confiscation, of theft of the property of others. This is the method which Oppenheimer termed “the political means” to wealth. It should be clear that the peaceful use of one’s reason and energy in production is the “natural” path for man, the means for his survival and prosperity on this earth. It should be equally clear that the coercive, exploitative means is contrary to natural law; it is parasitic, for instead of adding to production, it subtracts from it. The “political means” siphons production off to a parasitic and destructive individual or group; and this siphoning not only subtracts from the number producing, it also lowers the producer’s incentive to produce beyond his own subsistence. In the long run, the robber destroys his own subsistence by dwindling or eliminating the source of his own supply. But not only that; even in the short run, the predator is acting contrary to his own true nature as a man.

We are now in a position to answer more fully the question: what is the *State*?

The State, in the words of Oppenheimer, is the “organisation of the political means”; it is the systematisation of the predatory process over a given territory.

For crime, at best, is sporadic and uncertain; the parasitism is ephemeral, and the coercive, parasitic lifeline may be cut off at any time by the resistance of the victims. The State provides a legal, orderly, systematic channel for the predation of private property; it renders certain, secure, and relatively “peaceful” the lifeline of the parasitic caste in society. Since production must always precede predation, the free market is anterior to the State. The State has never been created by a “social contract”; it has always been born in conquest and exploitation. The classic paradigm was a conquering tribe pausing in its time-honoured method of looting and murdering a conquered tribe, to realise that the time-span of plunder would be longer and more secure, and the situation more pleasant, if the conquered tribe were allowed to live and produce, with the conquerors settling among them as rulers exacting a steady annual tribute.

One method of the birth of a State may be illustrated as follows. In the hills of southern “Ruritania,” a bandit group manages to obtain physical control over the territory, and finally the bandit chieftain proclaims himself “King of the sovereign and independent government of South Ruritania,” and, if he and his men have the force to maintain this rule for a while, lo and behold! a new State has joined the “family of nations,” and the former bandit leaders have been transformed into the lawful nobility of the realm.

How the State Preserves Itself

Once a State has been established, the problem of the ruling group or “caste” is how to maintain their rule. While force is their *modus operandi*, their basic and long-run problem is ideological. For in

order to continue in office, *any* government (not simply a “democratic” government) must have the support of the majority of its subjects. This support, it must be noted, need not be active enthusiasm; it may well be passive resignation as if to an inevitable law of nature. But support in the sense of acceptance of some sort it must be; else the minority of State rulers would eventually be outweighed by the active resistance of the majority of the public. Since predation must be supported out of the surplus of production, it is necessarily true that the class constituting the State — the full-time bureaucracy (and nobility) — must be a rather small minority in the land, although it may of course purchase allies among important groups in the population. Therefore, the chief task of the rulers is always to secure the active or resigned acceptance of the majority of the citizens.

Of course, one method of securing support is through the creation of vested economic interests. Therefore, the King alone cannot rule; he must have a sizeable group of followers who enjoy the pre-requisites of rule, for example, the members of the State apparatus, such as the full-time bureaucracy or the established nobility (1). But this still secures only a minority of eager supporters, and even the essential purchasing of support by subsidies and other grants of privilege still does not obtain the consent of the majority.

For this essential acceptance, the majority must be persuaded by *ideology* that their government is good, wise, and, at least, inevitable, and certainly better than any other conceivable alternative. Promoting this ideology among the people is the vital social task of the “intellectuals.” For the masses of men do not create their own ideas, or indeed think through these ideas independently; they follow passively the ideas adopted and disseminated by the body of intellectuals. The intellectuals are therefore the “opinion-moulders” in society. And since it is precisely a moulding of opinion that the State most desperately needs, the basis for age-old alliance between the State and the intellectuals becomes clear.

It is evident that the State needs the intellectuals; it is not so evident why intellectuals need the State. Put simply, we may state that the intellectual's livelihood in the free market is never too secure; for the intellectual must depend on the values and choices of the masses of his fellow-men, and it is precisely characteristic of the masses that they are generally uninterested in intellectual matters. The State, on the other hand, is willing to offer the intellectuals a secure and permanent berth in the State apparatus; and thus a secure income and the panoply of prestige. For the intellectuals will be handsomely rewarded for the important function they perform for the State rulers, of which group they now become a part.

The alliance between the State and the intellectuals was symbolised in the eager desire of professors at the University of Berlin, in the nineteenth century, to form the "intellectual bodyguard of the House of Hohenzollern." In the present day, let us note the revealing comment of an eminent Marxist scholar concerning Professor Wittfogel's critical study of ancient Oriental despotism. "The civilisation which Professor Wittfogel is so bitterly attacking was one which could make poets and scholars into officials." (Joseph Needham, *Review of Karl A. Wittfogel, Oriental Despotism*, Science and Society, 1958).

Of innumerable examples, we may cite the recent development of the "science" of strategy, in the service of the government's main violence-wielding arm, the military. A venerable institution [the *American Historical Association*], furthermore, is the official or "court" historian [in the person of Conyers Read, president of the Association for the year 1949–1950], dedicated to purveying the rulers' views of their own and their predecessors' actions.

Many and varied have been the arguments by which the State and its intellectuals have induced their subjects to support their rule. Basically, the strands of argument may be summed up as follows: (a) the State rulers are great and wise men (they "rule by divine right," they

are the “aristocracy” of men, they are the “scientific experts”), much greater and wiser than the good but rather simple subjects, and (b) rule by the extant government is inevitable, absolutely necessary, and far better than the indescribable evils that would ensue upon its downfall.

The union of Church and State was one of the oldest and most successful of these ideological devices. The ruler was either anointed by God or, in the case of the absolute rule of many Oriental despotisms, was himself God; hence, any resistance to his rule would be blasphemy. The States’ priestcraft performed the basic intellectual function of obtaining popular support and even worship for the rulers.

Another successful device was to instil fear of any alternative systems of rule or nonrule. The present rulers, it was maintained, supply to the citizens an essential service for which they should be most grateful: protection against sporadic criminals and marauders. For the State, to preserve its own monopoly of predation, did indeed see to it that private and unsystematic crime was kept to a minimum; the State has always been jealous of its own preserve. Especially has the State been successful in recent centuries in instilling fear of *other* State rulers.

Since the land area of the globe has been parcelled out among particular States, one of the basic doctrines of the State was to identify itself with the territory it governed. Since most men tend to love their homeland, the identification of that land and its people with the State was a means of making natural patriotism work to the State’s advantage. If “Ruritania” was being attacked by “Waldavia,” the first task of the State and its intellectuals was to convince the people of Ruritania that the attack was really upon *them*, and not simply upon the ruling caste. In this way, a war between *rulers* was converted into a war between *peoples*, with each people coming to the defence of its rulers in the erroneous belief that the rulers were defending *them*.

This device of “nationalism” has only been successful, in Western civilisation, in recent centuries; it was not too long ago that the mass of subjects regarded wars as irrelevant battles between various sets of nobles.

Many and subtle are the ideological weapons that the State has wielded through the centuries. One excellent weapon has been tradition. The longer that the rule of a State has been able to preserve itself, the more powerful this weapon; for then, the X- Dynasty or the Y-State has the seeming weight of centuries of tradition behind it (2). Worship of one’s ancestors then becomes a none too subtle means of worship of one’s ancient rulers.

The greatest danger to the State is independent intellectual criticism; there is no better way to stifle that criticism than to attack any isolated voice, any raiser of new doubts, as a profane violator of the wisdom of his ancestors. Another potent ideological force is to deprecate the *individual* and exalt the collectivity of society. For since any given rule implies majority acceptance, any ideological danger to that rule can only start from one or a few independently-thinking individuals. The new idea, much less the new critical idea, must needs begin as a small minority opinion; therefore, the State must nip the view in the bud by ridiculing any view that defies the opinions of the mass. “Listen only to your brothers” or “adjust to society” thus become ideological weapons for crushing individual dissent. By such measures, the masses will never learn of the non-existence of their Emperor’s clothes (3).

It is also important for the State to make its rule seem inevitable; even if its reign is disliked, it will then be met with passive resignation, as witness the familiar coupling of “death and taxes.” One method is to induce historiographical determinism, as opposed to individual freedom of will. If the X-Dynasty rules us, this is because the Inexorable Laws of history (or the Divine Will, or the Absolute, or the Material Productive Forces) have so decreed, and

nothing any puny individuals may do can change this inevitable decree.

It is also important for the State to inculcate in its subjects an aversion to any “conspiracy theory of history”; for a search for “conspiracies” means a search for motives, and an attribution of responsibility for historical misdeeds. If, however, any tyranny imposed by the State, or venality, or aggressive war, was caused *not* by the State rulers but by mysterious and arcane “social forces,” or by the imperfect state of the world, or, if in some way, *everyone* was responsible (“We Are All Murderers,” proclaims one slogan), then there is no point to the people becoming indignant, or rising up against such misdeeds. Furthermore, an attack on “conspiracy theories” means that the subjects will become more gullible in believing the “general welfare” reasons that are always put forth by the State for engaging in any of its despotic actions. A “conspiracy theory” can unsettle the system by causing the public to doubt the State’s ideological propaganda.

Another tried and true method for bending subjects to the State’s will is inducing guilt. Any increase in private well-being can be attacked as “unconscionable greed,” “materialism,” or “excessive affluence”; profit-making can be attacked as “exploitation” and “usury”; mutually beneficial exchanges denounced as “selfishness,” and somehow with the conclusion always being drawn that more resources should be siphoned from the private to the “public sector.” The induced guilt makes the public more ready to do just that. For while individual persons tend to indulge in “selfish greed,” the failure of the State’s rulers to engage in exchanges is supposed to signify *their* devotion to higher and nobler causes — parasitic predation being apparently morally and esthetically lofty as compared to peaceful and productive work.

In the present more secular age, the Divine right of the State has been supplemented by the invocation of a new god, Science. State

rule is now proclaimed as being ultra-scientific, as constituting planning by experts. But while “reason” is invoked more than in previous centuries, this is not the true reason of the individual and his exercise of free will; it is still collectivist and determinist, still implying holistic aggregates and coercive manipulation of passive subjects by their rulers.

The increasing use of scientific jargon has permitted the State’s intellectuals to weave obscurantist apologia for State rule that would have only met with derision by the populace of a simpler age. A robber who justified his theft by saying that he really helped his victims, by his spending giving a boost to retail trade, would find few converts; but when this theory is clothed in Keynesian equations and impressive references to the “multiplier effect,” it unfortunately carries more conviction. And so the assault on common sense proceeds, each age performing the task in its own ways.

Thus, ideological support being vital to the State, it must unceasingly try to impress the public with its “legitimacy,” to distinguish its activities from those of mere brigands. The unremitting determination of its assaults on common sense is no accident, for as Mencken vividly maintained:

“The average man, whatever his errors otherwise, at least sees clearly that government is something lying outside him and outside the generality of his fellow men — that it is a separate, independent, and hostile power, only partly under his control, and capable of doing him great harm. Is it a fact of no significance that robbing the government is everywhere regarded as a crime of less magnitude than robbing an individual, or even a corporation? ... What lies behind all this, I believe, is a deep sense of the fundamental antagonism between the government and the people it governs. It is apprehended, not as a committee of citizens chosen to carry on the communal business of the whole population, but as a separate and autonomous corporation, mainly devoted to exploiting the population for the benefit of its own

members.... When a private citizen is robbed, a worthy man is deprived of the fruits of his industry and thrift; when the government is robbed, the worst that happens is that certain rogues and loafers have less money to play with than they had before. The notion that they have earned that money is never entertained; to most sensible men it would seem ludicrous.” (H. L. Mencken, *More of the Same*, 1925).

[...]

What the State Fears

What the State fears above all, of course, is any fundamental threat to its own power and its own existence. The death of a State can come about in two major ways: (a) through conquest by another State, or (b) through revolutionary overthrow by its own subjects – in short, by war or revolution. War and revolution, as the two basic threats, invariably arouse in the State rulers their maximum efforts and maximum propaganda among the people. As stated above, any way must always be used to mobilise the people to come to the State’s defence in the belief that they are defending themselves. The fallacy of that idea becomes evident when conscription is wielded against those who refuse to “defend” themselves and are therefore forced into joining the State’s military band. Needless to add, no “defence” is permitted them against this act of “their own” State.

In war, State power is pushed to its ultimate, and, under the slogans of “defence” and “emergency,” it can impose a tyranny upon the public such as might be openly resisted in time of peace. War thus provides many benefits to a State, and indeed every modern war has brought to the warring peoples a permanent legacy of increased State burdens upon society. War, moreover, provides to a State tempting opportunities for conquest of land areas over which it may exercise its monopoly of force. Randolph Bourne was certainly correct when he wrote that “War is the health of the State,” (Ran-

dolph Bourne, *The State*, 1919) but to any particular State a war may spell either health or grave injury.

We may test the hypothesis that the State is largely interested in protecting *itself* rather than its subjects by asking: which category of crimes does the State pursue and punish most intensely – those against private citizens or those against *itself*? The gravest crimes in the State's lexicon are almost invariably not invasions of private person or property, but dangers to its *own* contentment, for example, treason, desertion of a soldier to the enemy, failure to register for the draft, subversion and subversive conspiracy, assassination of rulers, and such economic crimes against the State as counterfeiting its money, or evasion of its income tax. Or compare the degree of zeal devoted to pursuing the man who assaults a policeman, with the attention that the State pays to the assault of an ordinary citizen. Yet, curiously, the State's openly assigned priority to its *own* defence against the public strikes few people as inconsistent with its presumed *raison d'être* (4).

How States Relate to One Another

Since the territorial area of the earth is divided among different States, inter-State relations must occupy much of a State's time and energy. The natural tendency of a State is to expand its power, and, externally, such expansion takes place by conquest of a territorial area. Unless a territory is stateless or uninhabited, any such expansion involves an inherent conflict of interest between one set of State rulers and another. Only one set of rulers can obtain a monopoly of coercion over any given territorial area at any one time: complete power over a territory by State X can only be obtained by the expulsion of State Y. War, while risky, will be an ever-present tendency of States, punctuated by periods of peace, and by shifting alliances and coalitions between States.

We have seen that the “internal” or “domestic” attempt to limit the State, in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, reached its most notable form in constitutionalism. Its “external,” or “foreign affairs,” counterpart was the development of “international law,” especially such forms as the “laws of war” and “neutrals’ rights”(5).

Parts of international law were originally purely private, growing out of the need of merchants and traders everywhere to protect their property and adjudicate disputes. Examples are admiralty law and the law merchant. But even the governmental rules emerged voluntarily, and were not imposed by any international Super-State.

The object of the “laws of war” was to limit inter-State destruction *to the State apparatus itself*, thereby preserving the innocent “civilian” public from the slaughter and devastation of war. The object of the development of neutrals’ rights was to preserve private civilian international commerce, even with “enemy” countries, from seizure by one of the warring parties. The overriding aim, then, was to limit the extent of any war, and particularly to limit its destructive impact on the private citizens of the neutral and even the warring countries.

The jurist F. J. P. Veale charmingly describes such “civilised warfare” as it briefly flourished in fifteenth-century Italy:

“... the rich burghers and merchants of medieval Italy were too busy making money and enjoying life to undertake the hardships and dangers of soldiering themselves. So they adopted the practice of hiring mercenaries to do their fighting for them, and, being thrifty, businesslike folk, they dismissed these mercenaries immediately after their services could be dispensed with. Wars were, therefore, fought by armies hired for each campaign. . . . For the first time, soldiering became a reasonable and comparatively harmless profession. The generals of that period manoeuvred against each other, often with consummate skill, but when one had won the advantage, his opponent generally either retreated or surrendered. It was a

recognised rule that a town could only be sacked if it offered resistance. Immunity could always be purchased by paying a ransom.... As one natural consequence, no town ever resisted, it being obvious that a government too weak to defend its citizens had forfeited their allegiance. Civilians had little to fear from the dangers of war which were the concern only of professional soldiers.” (F. J. P. Veale, *Advance to Barbarism*, 1953)

The well-nigh absolute separation of the private civilian from the State’s wars in eighteenth-century Europe is highlighted by Nef:

“Even postal communications were not successfully restricted for long in wartime. Letters circulated without censorship, with a freedom that astonishes the twentieth-century mind. . . . The subjects of two warring nations talked to each other if they met, and when they could not meet, corresponded, not as enemies but as friends. The modern notion hardly existed that learned subjects of any enemy country are partly accountable for the belligerent acts of their rulers. Nor had the warring rulers any firm disposition to stop communications with subjects of the enemy. The old inquisitorial practices of espionage in connection with religious worship and belief were disappearing, and no comparable inquisition in connection with political or economic communications was even contemplated. Passports were originally created to provide safe-conduct in time of war. During most of the eighteenth century it seldom occurred to Europeans to abandon their travels in a foreign country which their own was fighting.” (John U. Nef, *War and Human Progress*, 1950)

And trade being increasingly recognised as beneficial to both parties, eighteenth-century warfare also countenanced a considerable amount of trading with the enemy.

How far States have transcended rules of civilised warfare in this century needs no elaboration here. In the modern era of total war combined with the technology of total destruction, the very idea of keeping war limited to the State apparatus seems even more quaint and obsolete than the original Constitution of the United States.

When States are not at war, agreements are often necessary to keep frictions at a minimum. One doctrine that has gained curiously wide acceptance is the alleged “sanctity of treaties.” This concept is treated as the counterpart of the “sanctity of contract.” But a treaty and a genuine contract have nothing in common. A contract transfers, in a precise manner, titles to private property. Since a government does not, in any proper sense, “own” its territorial area, any agreements that it concludes do not confer titles to property. If, for example, Mr. Jones sells or gives his land to Mr. Smith, Jones’s heir cannot legitimately descend upon Smith’s heir and claim the land as rightfully his. The property title has already been transferred. Old Jones’s contract is automatically binding upon young Jones, because the former had already transferred the property; young Jones, therefore, has no property claim. Young Jones can only claim that which he has inherited from old Jones, and old Jones can only bequeath property which he still owns. But if, at a certain date, the government of, say, Ruritania, is coerced or even bribed by the government of Waldavia into giving up some of its territory, it is absurd to claim that the governments or inhabitants of the two countries are forever barred from a claim to reunification of Ruritania on the grounds of the sanctity of a treaty. Neither the people nor the land of northwest Ruritania are owned by either of the two governments. As a corollary, one government can certainly not bind, by the dead hand of the past, a later government through treaty. A revolutionary government which overthrew the king of Ruritania could, similarly, hardly be called to account for the king’s actions or debts, for a government is not, as is a child, a true “heir” to its predecessor’s property.

History as a Race Between State Power and Social Power

Just as the two basic and mutually exclusive inter-relations between men are peaceful cooperation or coercive exploitation, production or predation, so the history of mankind, particularly its economic history, may be considered as a contest between these two principles. On the one hand, there is creative productivity, peaceful exchange and cooperation; on the other, coercive dictation and predation over those social relations.

Albert Jay Nock happily termed these contesting forces: "Social power" and "State power." (Albert J. Nock, *Our Enemy the State*, 1935). Social power is man's power over nature, his cooperative transformation of nature's resources and insight into nature's laws, for the benefit of all participating individuals. Social power is the *power over nature*, the living standards achieved by men in mutual exchange. State power, as we have seen, is the coercive and parasitic seizure of this production – a draining of the fruits of society for the benefit of non-productive (actually anti-productive) rulers.

While social power is over nature, State power is *power over man*. Through history, man's productive and creative forces have, time and again, carved out new ways of transforming nature for man's benefit. These have been the times when social power has spurted ahead of State power, and when the degree of State encroachment over society has considerably lessened. But always, after a greater or smaller time lag, the State has moved into these new areas, to cripple and confiscate social power once more (6). If the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries were, in many countries of the West, times of accelerating social power, and a corollary increase in freedom, peace, and material welfare, the twentieth century has been primarily an age in which State power has been catching up with a consequent reversion to slavery, war, and destruction.

In this century, the human race faces, once again, the virulent reign of the State — of the State now armed with the fruits of man's creative powers, confiscated and perverted to its own aims. The last few centuries were times when men tried to place constitutional and other limits on the State, only to find that such limits, as with all other attempts, have failed. Of all the numerous forms that governments have taken over the centuries, of all the concepts and institutions that have been tried, none has succeeded in keeping the State in check.

The problem of the State is evidently as far from solution as ever. Perhaps new paths of inquiry must be explored, if the successful, final solution of the State question is ever to be attained (7).

Notes by the author

(1) "Whenever a ruler makes himself dictator . . . all those who are corrupted by burning ambition or extraordinary avarice, these gather around him and support him in order to have a share in the booty and to constitute themselves petty chiefs under the big tyrant." (Étienne de La Boétie, *Discours de la servitude volontaire*, 1576).

(2) "The essential reason for obedience is that it has become a habit of the species ... Power is for us a fact of nature. From the earliest days of recorded history it has always presided over human destinies ... the authorities which ruled [societies] in former times did not disappear without privilege nor without bequeathing to their successors their privilege, nor without leaving in men's minds imprints which are cumulative in their effect. The succession of governments, which, in the course of centuries, rule the same society may be looked on as one underlying government which takes on continuous accretions." (Bertrand de Jouvenel, *On Power*, 1948).

(3) "All [government] can see in an original idea is potential change, and hence an invasion of its prerogatives. The most dangerous man, to any government, is the man who is able to think things out for himself, without regard to the prevailing superstitions and taboos. Almost inevitably he comes to the conclusion that the government he lives under is dishonest, insane and intolerable, and so, if he is romantic, he tries to change it. And even if he is not a romantic personally he is very apt to spread discontent among those who are." (H. L. Mencken, *Its Inner Nature*, 1919).

(4) As Mencken puts it in his inimitable fashion:

"This gang ('the exploiters constituting the government') is well nigh immune to punishment. Its worst extortions, even when they are baldly for private profit, carry no certain penalties under our laws. Since the first days of the Republic, less than a few dozen of its members have been impeached, and only a few obscure understrappers have ever been put into prison. The number of men sitting at Atlanta and Leavenworth for revolting against the extortions of the government is always ten times as great as the number of government officials condemned for oppressing the taxpayers to their own gain." (H. L. Mencken, *More of the Same*, 1925).

(5) This is to be distinguished from modern international law, with its stress on maximising the extent of war through such concepts as "collective security."

(6) Amidst the flux of expansion or contraction, the State always makes sure that it seizes and retains certain crucial "command posts" of the economy and society. Among these command posts are a monopoly of violence, monopoly of the ultimate judicial power, the channels of communication and transportation (post office, roads, rivers, air routes), irrigated water in Oriental despotisms, and education — to mould the opinions of its future citizens. In the modern economy, money is the critical command post.

(7) Certainly, one indispensable ingredient of such a solution must be the sundering of the alliance of intellectual and State, through the creation of centers of intellectual inquiry and education, which will be independent of State power. Christopher Dawson notes that the great intellectual movements of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment were achieved by working outside of, and sometimes against, the entrenched universities. These academia of the new ideas were established by independent patrons. (See Christopher Dawson, *The Crisis of Western Education*, 1961).

Jean- François Revel

The Modern State as a Totalitarian Entity (1976)

A masterful portrait of the main features of the modern State and a premonition of the future risks (totalitarianism at home and imperialism abroad) that this political form of organization might reserve for all of us.

Jean-François Revel, *La Tentation Totalitaire*, Chapitre 13: L'État Narcisse, 1976.

Today, all the old political, religious, family and geographical units in which humans used to group themselves — tribes, cities, provinces, churches — have merged into States, even if they sometimes straddle their borders or challenge their authority. The State, for its part, tends to suppress diversity within the territory it controls, where it sees only a mosaic of particularisms that rebel against its unifying authority and run counter to “national cohesion.” Outwardly, it tends to oppose other States, even when it is temporarily their ally, and to think of the world in terms of rivalries, since it is a tool created

for rivalry. Its law and weight exacerbate what we might call border consciousness. At the same time, it makes the society within the borders increasingly homogeneous, and the separation between this society and the outside world, between “us” and “them,” increasingly marked.

This is why so many governments strive to isolate their populations from the rest of humanity, by prohibiting or carefully dosing their contacts with foreigners, the ingress and egress of people, and above all of ideas. (In this area, after a while, there’s not much left to get out.) They prevent the free flow of information, concerning both the country itself and other countries and world affairs. Day after day, censorship and propaganda reconstruct a national and international paranoia, so that nothing, or almost nothing, penetrates that is not favourable to the government and does not appear to demonstrate the soundness of its views and the fruitfulness of its actions.

The dream of every State — that no one, at least among those subject to its authority, should be able to verify its claims and judge its works — has become a reality on almost the entire surface of the planet. The flood and speed of information that media theorists have been talking about since 1960 affect only thirty or so nations among the world’s one hundred and forty States. Everywhere else, there is undoubtedly a surge and speed, but of something quite different from information. Rather, the media are extensions of political power, cages where the mind is domesticated.

This isolation of human groups from one another is facilitated by a parallel operation, namely the encouragement of popular nationalism, chauvinistic vanity, xenophobia and susceptibility. The unfathomable under-information of the people, due to the almost universal preponderance of State propaganda, both triggers and justifies a collective megalomania that is all the easier to cultivate as it removes any possible point of comparison with foreign countries — and all the more useful to social tranquillity as it relieves the boredom of popula-

tions for whom the parading of the grandeur of the State is generally the only show in town.

Nationalism is exploited by rulers to distract minds from criticism, to divert them from the domestic situation and to fascinate them with ambitious foreign policy objectives, which serve as a new pretext to legitimise the omnipotence of the executive powers. We know that the main concern of contemporary governments is to procure weapons. Every year, global military spending, including that in the poorest countries, is equivalent to twice the amount spent on education, three times the amount spent on health and twenty times the amount spent by rich countries on aid to the Third World.

The normal relationship between Nations and States, whereby the latter would be instruments at the service of the former and of the men who inhabit them, has been completely reversed. In almost all cases, it is nations and people who have been forcibly placed at the service of the States, which have become autonomous bodies or apparatuses, pursuing nothing other than the contemplation of their own functioning and the growth of their own power.

States generally see this search for power only in others. Coming from themselves, they experience it as a natural desire for independence, a simple resistance to the imperialist encroachments of others.

But there is only a difference in degree between “power” and “independence.” A “power” or “superpower” is a State that has the means for global diplomacy. An “independent” State is one that only has the means to counteract, in a perceptible — often purely symbolic, but psychologically effective — way, the planetary policy of the super-powers. “Independence” is the super grandeur of the weak. In principle, it is no different from the super-power’s policy of hegemony, and is driven by the same motives and the same statist-nationalist culture.

It consists in practicing what is known in soccer as anti-gambling, i.e. taking the ball out of play as often as possible and multiplying useless passes between players. The team that plays anti-game limits its ambition to preventing the game from progressing normally, as it is unable to score goals of its own. But if they were strong enough, they would go over to the offensive and try, like everyone else, to win the championship or the cup.

Since the diplomacy of national States is itself a competitive sport, the policy of “independence” on the part of average or weak States does not represent progress in civilization, or the beginnings of a change of system, which would lead to a more synoptic and universalist vision of the interests of the human race, but a position of retreat, a substitute for a hegemony beyond their reach, which they condemn not in principle, but because it belongs to others.

[...]

Since 1945, at the same time as the rhetoric of international cooperation was developing, and organizations were flourishing that were supposed to deal with major issues in the interests of all mankind, we have witnessed the increasing fragmentation of the world into ever harder, ever more hermetically sealed cells. And while we have witnessed the spread of both the ideology of democracy and the parody of its practice, what in fact has occurred is the advent of history's most remarkable horde of new rulers who are freebooters in their origins and authoritarian in their practice.

The stronger the Nation-State has grown, asserting itself in the international context as a sacred authority, accountable to no one for the way it treats that portion of humanity that happens to be under its control, the less the masters of these Nation-States were truly chosen and controlled by the peoples in whose name they speak.

This indictment of the State can be summed up in a few propositions.

By provoking and nurturing nationalist sentiment, the State substitutes, to varying degrees, false problems for real ones.

The boundaries of the State almost never corresponds to the real cultural and economic divisions of human societies.

The State stimulates what is least critical and most pathological in the human being, in the service of pseudo-national interests, which are not always so.

It diverts the bulk of wealth into armaments.

It provides an ideological and passionate basis for despotism, as well as a stage for the political stardom of demagogues. (The conditions under which State power is acquired and maintained in most countries do not offer a sufficient guarantee of the intellectual competence and sense of responsibility of its leaders).

It is an incentive to corruption, because it pushes those who occupy it (in most cases it is indeed an occupation of the State, in the sense of the occupation of a conquered country) as much into venality and profiteering as into the abuse of political power. This can be seen in both developed and underdeveloped countries, whether capitalist or socialist.

The State can only achieve its full potential at the cost of either total censorship or massive information amputation, making human groups increasingly opaque to each other and to themselves.

The increasingly egocentric national State is therefore incompatible with modes of action adapted to the global nature of the most important problems facing humanity today.

Being, by vocation, increasingly centralizing, the State leaves minorities who feel, rightly or wrongly, oppressed, with little other option

than to revolt and found new national States, thus accelerating the fragmentation of the world day by day, with the risk of prolonging this fragmentation *ad infinitum*.

Theoretically a simple tool of the collective will, the State has gone from being a means to an end, increasingly taking itself for an end, and, in the pursuit of its own interest. By doing so it tends inexorably towards a limit constituted by totalitarianism at home and imperialism abroad.

Eugène Enriquez

Power and the Modern State

(1983)

The author analyses the different forms of State dominion in modern society and the picture that emerges is one of severe desolation.

Source: Passages from Eugène Enriquez, *De la horde à l'État*, 1983.

There is hardly a State in the world that does not attempt to base its legitimacy on the will of the People and the desire it expresses. We have seen how difficult it is to establish this will, because of the merciless struggle going on in all societies that can no longer find a principle of legitimacy outside themselves. God is dead, the sacred is gone, and if we are not to live in a life-and-death struggle and a purely profane world, new *sacreds* must emerge: money, labour, industrial organisation, on the one hand, which will bring order to civil society and regulate its passions; the State, on the other, which will give the people the *physical body* (the bureaucratic apparatus) and the *mystical body* (the idea of nation and fatherland) which, if lacking, would lead to the definitive division of the people into antag-

onistic categories and classes. The State is therefore presented as the indispensable body where the many differences, instead of competing, will tend to combine their efforts.

In all cases, the modern State in its developed forms will emerge as a necessity, since it must give the people-group an image in which it can recognise itself and to which it can adhere. Unlike the pre-Revolutionary States, it is therefore obliged to take *control* of the activities of all its members and to penetrate the entire social fabric.

Types of Political Regime

A. Liberal Democratic States

These are States structured around social conflict within civil society and its harmonious resolution through social progress, economic growth and competition on free markets.

The ideology which governs the organisation of social relations is that of freedom in all areas.

Economic freedom, first of all, which implies competition between nations and companies within the same nation, competition between members of the same organisation to reach the most prestigious positions of responsibility, emulation between the different services or autonomous departments of the same company in order to prove their efficiency and indispensability, selection of the elites through an educational system designed and functioning for the brightest pupils.

Political freedom, which implies the multiplicity of political parties, able to express the range of possible opinions, however extreme, and able to accede, according to the rule of alternation, to the direction of the State, on the basis of the vote of the electors, under peaceful and

regulated conditions; freedom of expression again, encouraging on the one hand the multiplicity and variety of discourse (from the coffeehouse to the most sophisticated newspapers), and, on the other, the proliferation of organisations that speak for specific social categories (workers' unions, farmers' unions, employers' unions, consumer protection organisations, local residents' organisations, etc.).

Freedom of *creation*, which requires the development of information, education and culture and the proliferation of literary and artistic genres as well as the media capable of disseminating and transmitting them.

These various freedoms enable individuals and groups to compete, discuss, negotiate and consult on the different markets available to them: the market for goods and services, the labour market, the market for ideas, the art market. These markets, governed by the law of supply and demand, tend to self-regulate without anyone having any power of arbitration. The 'invisible hand' of the market and the phantom 'auctioneer' allow prices and talents to find their equilibrium points. Generalised conflict is the father of social progress and harmonious living, with everyone making rational decisions and doing their utmost to win the votes of consumers (economic market), voters (political market), or aesthetes (market of ideas).

This image of liberal democracy, while not inaccurate, is somewhat idealised.

Economic freedom means entry into the world of unbridled exploitation for millions of people who have nothing to sell but their manual or intellectual labour, not necessarily to the highest bidder but to whoever will have them.

Political freedom leads to the formation of major parties which claim to speak on behalf of the people or, when they are less hypocritical, on behalf of certain social categories, but which function as appa-

tuses of power where original opinions are hardly welcome and which prevent any individual who does not go through their demands from having any chance of being heard by the population.

As for *freedom of expression and creation*, we are all too aware of the difficulties that workers' unions and associations have had to overcome for having the right to exist and to defend their constituents, and for innovative artists to find a "medium" willing to serve as a forum or loudspeaker. These phenomena are all too familiar (and are only becoming more so) to need any further elaboration.

Conflict is not always a 'nurturing conflict' leading to the best balance. It is in fact a struggle for power, through symbolic violence and real violence, with domination at all times, subtle and insidious.

[...]

Liberal democracy can give rise to a multitude of antagonistic 'gangs' or 'mafias' that settle their problems in blood rather than through courteous debate. At that point, if the State does not want to succumb or be taken over by one of these gangs, it must give itself the means to take control of a situation that is beyond its control. It will strengthen not only its government apparatus but also its police and military apparatus. Gradually, the liberal State will give way to a more directly authoritarian State.

B. States of Programmed Democracy

The shortcomings and serious drawbacks of liberal democracy (increased or maintained inequalities, progress in profitable sectors and constant deterioration in unprofitable sectors, i.e. public facilities, exasperation of struggles by different categories of people, dissolution of the social connections) give rise to a desire in the population for a more lively, better controlled democracy, in which the State

takes charge of economic and social development (Alain Touraine) and plays a massive role in social regulation.

The Welfare State emerged after the Great Depression in 1929 precisely to offset the harmful consequences of 'capitalist' anarchy. It found new *raison d'être* with the period of reconstruction that followed the Second World War.

Its main features are well known: the maintenance of freedoms, and in particular economic freedom, accompanied by planned intervention in the economic sphere (subsidies to specific sectors of activity, contracts with certain companies, majority shareholding in leading-edge companies, nationalisation of economic sectors considered to be the driving force behind the economy as a whole) and in the social sphere (social security, aid to disadvantaged groups, proliferation of social assistance services).

Such intervention required a considerable increase in State resources, achieved by raising taxes and attempting to conquer or control foreign markets. To carry out such a programme, new institutions and administrative organisations were set up.

They tend to proliferate and increase in size. Gradually, the citizens lose interest in public affairs, as the State is responsible for solving problems. They place their hopes in State decisions and wait, quietly or angrily, for decisions to be taken in line with their wishes. Since all social categories operate in the same way and none is prepared to lose any of its previous prerogatives and acquired rights, the State is besieged with contradictory demands that it is hard pressed to satisfy. The risk, in trying to alienate no-one, is that it ends up dissatisfying everyone. Bureaucratisation and inefficiency are often the lot of such regimes.

Such a description (however pertinent it may be) is not enough. It leaves aside the essential reason for the relative failure of such regimes: the fact that they are based on a contradiction that is most of

the time unperceived or misperceived by the leaders as well as the citizens, and which undermines the whole social edifice.

The basic contradiction is the need, on the one hand, for a *common collective will* (a shared ideology) capable of mobilising individuals around a project for society that is sufficiently precise to arouse fervour and sufficiently vague to allow human desires to nestle in it, requiring from citizens imagination, suggestions, creations if not enthusiasm, feelings of solidarity (a fraternity lived strongly and lovingly). On the other hand, it requires a *plethoric State organisation* made indispensable by the diversity of the State's economic and social tasks, obsessed by the will to unify desires, to fit them into registered bodies, to harmonise them from the outset, and by the belief in the similarity of all men (motivated by the wish to do good and to set up a happy community).

[...]

This contradiction is insoluble and cannot be overcome. All the more so because it is based on a further contradiction: from the moment when a common conscious project and a group carrying this project are revealed, another project and another group, capable of formulating and carrying it, is necessarily built in opposition to the former. Instead of the multiplicity of parties defending a variety of interests and specific socio-professional categories that constituted liberal democracy, a bipolar system will emerge (two parties or two groups of parties: majority-opposition, right-left, conservatives-labour, democrats-republicans). The problem of alternation tends to become the central problem of this type of State.

We can see the consequences of this new contradiction: how can you generate enthusiasm, a common ideology, and want the whole people with you, when about half of the people recognise themselves around a perfectly antagonistic project (a project which may be purely defensive but which nonetheless exists), and do not spare

their criticisms, their attacks on the State (or even their attempts to destabilise it), considered as the spokesperson or property of a half of the people increasingly perceived as an immense internal enemy.

C. Despotic States

The creation of a centralised State with a large administration and a repressive police and military apparatus ready to intervene, if necessary, driven by a common ideology, was also intended to promote the economic and social development of this new national entity. In fact, it is only this second aim that will be proclaimed: the explicit aim of the State (and the ideology it proclaims) is only to lift the masses out of the misery in which they currently find themselves and to encourage the country to join the group of developing countries.

The mission of the State (and of its leaders) can only be proclaimed in terms of giving precedence to *economic values* (the only values that allow all citizens to be put to work and the professional conscience to be internalised) over the old affective and relational values. It cannot be (at least in an obvious way) to seal political union: that would be to admit that the union has not been made, that the nation is non-existent, that the clans remain powerful and opposed. It would, consequently, be to risk increasing disparities and tensions. To stick to economic values is to believe that, like the industrial countries of the nineteenth century, the development of productive forces, which has become the categorical imperative, will be sufficient to *cement* the nation.

This silence surrounding politics, this desire not to talk about differences in concrete projects, has two related consequences:

- The establishment of a single party (or the limitation of the opposition to legal and courteous opposition) supposed to represent the will of the people made one in the conquest of independence and of economic growth; and the exclusion of people (or groups) who do not

want to play the game (traitors or potential plotters) and who have no choice but silent submission, prison, guerrilla warfare or the preparation of a *coup d'État*.

- The setting up of an administration which claims to be solely concerned with efficiency and productivity (whereas its role, as we have seen, is first and foremost one of ideological control) and which will supervise, if not directly manage, economic activity. In fact, the role of ideological control is so important that only those who are trusted by the country's leaders (devoted party militants or members of the usual 'clientele' of the ethnic group in power) will be able to rise to positions of responsibility.

This bureaucratic layer will therefore not be recruited, as in Western democracies, according to the universalist criterion of competence. Nor will it take into account Weberian principles of establishing the strict separation of the private and public spheres and the obligation for all civil servants to view their office not as a tribute but as a full-time job. On the contrary, the bureaucrat will be an individual who, whether competent or not, will tend to regard the State as private property, who will want to use his office as a springboard to manifest his desire for power, his thirst for gain and to ensure the well-being of his extended family (his own clientele). He confuses representation of the State with appropriation of prerogatives. As a result, the administration, the narrow ruling stratum, will be both inefficient and *corrupt*, operating on the basis of arbitrariness, improvisation and injustice.

D. Militaristic States

Militaristic States are quite different. By militaristic States we do not mean States in which the military caste is powerful and organised, and plays a fundamental role in the expansionism of the State, in its attempts to control other nations, or in the fear it may arouse in other

countries; we mean those States in which the military caste is directly or indirectly in power, and its essential role is to ensure the passivity of the citizens, if necessary by waging a covert or open civil war against any form of opposition.

In such a case, the central problem is not the development and well-being of the people but either the plundering or the economic transformation of the country, if necessary, by the physical liquidation of part of its inhabitants, for the greater profit of an all-powerful oligarchy which never stops consolidating its power and which does not tolerate rebellion or even criticism of its operation.

This oligarchy is essentially made up of large landowners, a commercial bourgeoisie focused on international trade and holders of capital linked to multinational companies, ready to accept their strategies and demands, and sometimes of traffickers of all kinds. It is linked to a powerful military apparatus which, in exchange for its role as guardian of the regime, claims most of the civilian power or intervenes powerfully in its management.

These States can be differentiated into a *State of organised plunder* in the hands of a family or small group whose sole ambition is to increase its wealth and which does not know how to use any means other than the direct exploitation of the people, and a *State of economic transformation* which places at its head a ruling class with the will to turn the country into an industrially advanced nation. To achieve this, it will use the classic forms of the most savage capitalism.

[...]

In the case of the plundering State, we are dealing with a leader who undergoes a profound transformation. A hero at the time he took power, he becomes subsequently the leader of the horde. He will regard the nation as his own property, to be ruled and exploited at

will, and his citizens as his subjects. His power will be enjoyed by his family and his clientele, who will be obliged to provide him with all the services he desires in return for the gifts he distributes; the other citizens will only be there to suffer, although on certain occasions they may benefit from the resources that the leader has decided to distribute.

The rest of the time, they will be closely monitored and forced to obey by the army and militias, or brutally repressed if they happen to think of rebelling. Any opposition will then be hunted down, and the country will be plunged into a latent or open civil war, which can only end in more ferocious repression or in the victory of the rebellion.

When these States embark on economic transformation and make it the alpha and omega of their policy (with the result that they build up gigantic fortunes, expropriate land, build a class society and endlessly develop a *lumpenproletariat*), the leader takes the form of a popular dictator, capable of leading the masses towards this new project, or more often than not — popular dictators being few and far between — a military junta.

Dictators or junta are the only forces capable, at least temporarily, of imposing this new economic order, which creates new misery affecting the already disadvantaged, and social upheaval, and which can only be set up by depriving people of the most basic freedoms. Anyone who genuinely opposes the development programme (sometimes an official, non-dangerous opposition will be kept as an alibi) will be condemned, in the more or less long term, to exile, imprisonment, torture or disappearance.

E. Dictatorial States

Whatever the differences, if not the divergences, that may exist between the various dictatorial States, it is possible to identify points

in common that are sufficiently fundamental for these States to be grouped together in the same category.

These are States that propose to 're-originate' themselves by referring to a founding myth or a glorious past (or both simultaneously) and by having the desire and the will to transform this driving myth into a social reality. Whether they are rooted in the great Germanic myths and the memory of the old Roman-German Empire, or in the myth of the founding of Rome and the memory of the greatest period of the Roman Empire, or in the reminiscence of the Spanish Empire at the time of its splendour, they are all trying to recreate in the present the splendours of a real (and/or imaginary) past, with the grand aim of restoring to the nation the purity of its origins and to its subjects the pride of their identity.

The aim is to unite an entire people around a mission of salvation that will encourage the regeneration of human beings and the new development of the land.

Only a shared myth can have such a unifying function.

[...]

The recourse to a unifying myth is all the more important when the dictatorship's aim is to guarantee a social order that is felt to have been totally compromised by the previous political regime, hated as a creator of unrest, if not chaos, and above all as a dissolver of all possibility of individual and collective identity, as a destroyer of all points of reference. Dictatorship is the result of a breakdown in values or an attempt to establish new values lacking general consensus, the outcome of a disintegration of economic life, of a military defeat or of a bitter victory (where hopes have been dashed).

Nazism is incomprehensible without the defeat of 1918 and the economic crisis of 1929; Italian fascism without the problem of Fiume and Trieste; Spanish fascism without the installation of a

secular republic in a country where the military and the Catholic hierarchies were reigning supreme. To prevent the fall into the abyss (and the dissolution of the social body) that the present heralds, only a return to the origins, the unification of the nation into a single body, and an eschatological vision of the universe are relevant and effective.

[...]

A dictatorial State cannot exist without continually waging war, because it has to prove to itself and to its enemies that it embodies the highest truth. And how can it embody truth without wanting to spread it as a blessing, even if it means going through fire and iron? A people sure of holding the truth can only think and want to be superior. Dictatorship necessarily leads to racism and the most exacerbated nationalism.

F. Totalitarian States

These States are intended to be representatives of the people – One State (of the whole people) ‘without original division’ (Claude Lefort). For this to happen, three conditions must be met:

a) The overcoming of class conflict. A class society is, by definition, a divided society, where antagonism is normal and conflict constant. The people are therefore traversed by contradictory currents, driven by divergent interests and susceptible to manipulation. If the people are to be one, if they are to be sure of their unified image, class conflict must no longer exist.

b) It is not possible to form a fraternity, a warm and determined community on a lasting basis, if the people are not driven by a common belief that provides legitimacy for their action, their thinking and their way of life.

c) To make impossible the reconstitution of the old ruling class and succeeding in having the ideology endlessly repeated and penetrate the deepest recesses of the unconscious, it is essential that the State be present everywhere, in public life as well as in private life, in economic life as well as in political life. Socialisation and control of the economy, on the one hand, and on the other hand the single party that carries the ideology and controls thoughts and actions, are the two instruments that the State uses to ensure that nothing can happen in civil society that might call into question the equality or, more precisely, the uniformity of all citizens in their love for themselves and in their loving submission to their representatives.

[...]

Other conditions are also indispensable to cement the people with the State, but they are only the consequences of those just listed: the direction of the economy and political life entails the development of an *enormous bureaucratic apparatus* which is not simply a set of organisational and managerial means, but which is progressively constituted as a class of power.

Marx had already emphasised in his studies of the Asian mode of production the extent to which the appropriation by a layer of civil servants of the capacities and methods of organisation gave it gigantic power and resulted in the 'generalised slavery' of the inhabitants. Cornelius Castoriadis has since masterfully demonstrated that this type of State (particularly the Soviet Union) functioned under the aegis of a fully developed bureaucracy that had become a veritable ruling and dominant class.

As a result, the bureaucracy not only regulates day-to-day activities, it also has a monopoly on information (not only does it distort the news, it filters it to suit itself), it establishes a system of censorship on cultural events that prevents any personal creation, and it defines standards of behaviour such that anyone with opinions that do not

conform and who manages, despite all the barriers, to express them, risks prison (or a concentration camp), a psychiatric hospital or exile.

As a normal consequence of the equality of brothers, brothers must be uniform in their thoughts as well as in their behaviour. Any non-conformity is a symptom of deviance, any deviance of dissidence, any dissidence of treachery. The expression 'the self is hateful' takes on a specific colouring in such a situation: the burial of the self in the multitude and the emergence, in place of a class society, of a mass society.

Massification is a central process. It allows us to understand an aspect often considered curious or inexplicable: the treatment of problems 'by large masses' and the advent of quantity (of what Malraux called 'statistical obsession') as a criterion, if not the only one, then at least a fundamental one.

In the field of production, the aim will be to produce as many goods and utensils as possible, whatever their quality or usefulness; in the military field, to ensure supremacy in all weapons so as to be ready to face both conventional and nuclear war; in the field of education, to train as many scientists and engineers as possible; in the field of prisons, to have an extremely high number of prisoners and deportees (a profoundly dissuasive technique); in the field of architecture, to build monuments that astonish walkers with their mass.

The examples could be multiplied. Suffice it to say that a society of massed equals must find the mass in all its behaviours and activities. The mass is reflected in its own mirror and engulfs itself in it, drawing new strength from it every day.

So, although oppositions exist, they remain tenuous and fragmentary. The masses do not tolerate individuality, and dealing with problems 'by the masses' blocks out any nuance or originality.

Finally, for a society founded on a 'granite' ideology (a necessary prerequisite for unification and massification) it is not sufficient to

pretend that it is the best and to accept its isolation from other States. A mass needs an empire to express itself, to flow and expand. The State will therefore export its ideology in order to bring other territories into its fold; when it is impossible to do otherwise (and in this it differs radically from dictatorial States which can only think of themselves in terms of war) it will export it at the point of a gun.

The totalitarian State doesn't like war, it likes *domination*. And more subtle than dictatorial States (and also because it's easier to export an egalitarian ideology than an elitist one), it knows that weapons are the last resort, not the first.

A bureaucratic, massified, solid State, it knows all the vicissitudes of closed systems that have driven variety and diversity out of their land: inertia, apathy, increasing non-adherence, fake behaviour, cunning, careerism.

All one-mass people fall asleep like a well-fed snake because it is too big, its organs are less and less differentiated and its capacity to react is slow. Gradually, because unlike dictatorial States (where the masses have no reason to revolt and no possibility of doing so), the totalitarian State will no longer need a strong ideology or an Egocrat at their head. It will sink into a vegetative life. But woe betide anyone who awakens it, for its strength is still there, it is only growing, and it only needs to be used to give all peoples the regime in which people and State, individual and mass, are finally and definitively merged, for better or, more often than not, for worse.

Butler Shaffer

The Insanity of the State (2003)

The idea that we are very often run by dishonest, uncaring or even mad people using a “wondrous” organization (the State machine) for their vicious ends is quite widespread. What this essay tries to point out is that this idea is way out of the mark, an illusion matched by recurrent delusion. In fact, the supposedly “wondrous” organization is an insane mechanism that not only attracts pathologically power-hungry individuals but also gives to anyone who has reached a position of power within the State the opportunity to express his destructive inclinations shielded by an aura and a conviction of legitimacy. That is why, until we tackle the real problem (the insanity of the State) and dispose of it (by abolishing any monopoly in the use of force), our stance against dishonest politicians or madmen in power will be a futile one, with the next vicious character simply replacing the previous vicious one.

Source: LewRockwell.com, February 26, 2003.

In my lifetime, Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, Pol Pot, Mao, and Castro, have each been labeled a “madman” by one critic or another. More recently, Milosevic, Qaddafi, Khomeini, and Mugabe have had this diagnosis thrust upon them. And now we find Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, and George Bush being referred to as “madmen” by one faction or another, depending upon which side of the battlefield you are on.

Because such depictions are usually reserved for those responsible for the deaths, torture, or other maltreatment of tens of thousands of individuals, the label is not wholly unwarranted. Those who preside over governments during relatively peaceful times are almost never regarded as insane, however delusional they might otherwise be. But when men such as George Bush embark upon a course of action whose principal purpose is to foment war, there is good reason to question the sanity of the proponents of such actions.

On the other hand, confining our focus on the demented state of mind of tyrants and war-lovers is to overlook the more important consideration: *the insanity of the state itself*. Most of us have so merged our personal identity with the nation-state that we see any major imperfection in the state as a flaw in our own character. This is why it is so distressing to most people to be told that *their* political system can be just as vicious and butcherous as others. After pointing out to my students how Franklin Delano Roosevelt manipulated the Japanese into an attack on Pearl Harbor in order to get America into World War II, I often hear the response “*our* government wouldn’t do *that*!” The implication is clear: *other* governments do all kinds of wicked things, but not *ours*.

We have been conditioned to believe in the *desirability* as well as the *necessity* of political systems. Most of us utter the mindless mantra that government is a “necessary evil,” then take comfort in believing that the system established in *our* country has effectively foreclosed the possibilities of tyranny arising in our land. Americans continue to

exalt the Constitution as one of the “wonders” of civilized society, deluding themselves that dividing government into three “branches” has, through some unexplained alchemy, transmuted inherently dangerous and volatile state *power* into more benign, inert *processes*.

The reality is that all political systems are, by definition, grounded in a *monopoly* on the exercise of lawful force, and there is no document, no magical incantation, no external authority to prevent any state system from expanding upon the scope of its power should it, and its supporters, choose to do so. Constitutions may yet abound, out of ritualistic habit, but *constitutionalism*, as a formal system of limiting state power, has no credibility. The 20th century’s record of constitutionally directed state butcheries and tyrannies has given the lie to this presumed method of restraining the exercise of coercive power. Most people are disinclined to give up their illusions, even though this doctrine — and the belief in a “social contract” from which it derives — has about as much plausibility as the “divine right of kings.”

Faith in constitutionalism derives from a failure to understand the basic nature of words: they are subject to *interpretation*. Words are *abstractions* and, as such, can never be what they purport to *represent*. Because most of us equate the *word* with the *thing itself*, we are content to believe that writing words on paper — or parchment, to give it added significance — can somehow assure a continued respect for the *meaning* we attached to such words when we wrote them. But whether we are construing the provisions of a constitution, or seeking the explanation for a line of poetry, words must always be *interpreted* in order to be understood. The problem we experience with political systems arises from the fact that the effective “meaning” of the words in a constitution is determined *by the state itself*!

The courts, a branch of the state, have provided a fairly consistent *expansion* of the allegedly “limited” powers granted to the state, and a *restrictive* definition of the “rights” it was the announced purpose

of this scheme to “protect.” Nor does the state feel obliged to exercise its established powers as they have been spelled out. Article I, Section 8 grants to Congress the “power to declare war,” but not since December 8, 1941, has the government insisted upon this formality in the conduct of the numerous wars and other military actions it has undertaken.

If the state enjoys a monopoly on the use of force, and there is no device or principle that can restrain the scope of such authority, what would we expect government officials to do with such power? Much what we would expect a group of children to do if a bowl of candy was placed before them: grab as much of it as they can! Their appetites are further nourished by those who would like to have such coercive power employed on behalf of their interests. A feeding frenzy quickly occurs, with various groups crowding and shoving one another for a more favorable position at the government trough.

It should be evident to any thoughtful person that politics mobilizes the most vicious, socially destructive attitudes and practices known to mankind. Lies and deceit, coercion, intimidation, the forcible taking of property, killing, the setting of people and groups against one another, the imprisonment and punishment of individuals, the manipulation and control of the behavior of people and, above all else, the arrogant assumption that such power is “rightfully” exercised by those who possess it and the moral condemnation of those who resist.

The most savage and inhumane of all statist practices is, of course, the conduct of *war*. But most of us have become so enamored of state power that, ironically, it is this most destructive expression of its nature that is most revered. Conservatives who, a scant two years ago, could have been counted upon to rage against a tax increase, affirmative action, or the enforcement of some code of political correctness, have suddenly become frenzied drum-beaters for war, any war, against whomever their current rulers identify as their

enemy! Out comes that most jingoistic expression of state belligerence: the *flag*, and any who refuse to shout “hurrah!” have been labeled as traitors, appeasers, terrorist-supporters, and even *communists*!

Recently, an estimated thirty million men and women marched throughout the world in opposition to the Bush administration’s planned war against Iraq. Many of these protestors were Europeans, deriving from a culture that was the cradle of Western civilization. In the eyes of the war-lovers, however, such opposition is unforgivable. While the English poodle, Tony Blair, is unwavering in his bootlicking habits, many — perhaps most — of his countrymen favor peace. So, apparently, do most Scandinavian, French, and German people. The vitriol heaped upon the French and Germans by members of the War Party is, perhaps, the clearest evidence of the obscene character of this administration. Perhaps it is because these nations provided the battleground for two bloody world wars in the 20th century that makes their anti-war sentiments more credible than the caterwauling call to arms coming out of the mouths of those, in Washington, who have never heard a shot fired in anger. Nor have I yet reconciled myself to the spectacle of Jews berating the current German government for not being sufficiently warlike!

To the extent we identify ourselves with the state, we are distressed confronting the destructive and vicious nature of how all governments — including the one under which we live — behave. The state represents the “dark side” of the human character, and so we are disinclined to stare it in the face, out of a fear that we might see something of ourselves reflected back. In an effort to exorcise such attributes from *our* political system, we *project* any negative qualities onto *others*, against whom we then take a morally righteous stance and insist upon punishing *them* for *our* inadequacies of character. If the *United States* has created chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, we will go to war with *Iraq* for allegedly trying to acquire such weapons for themselves. *America* will condemn *North Korea*

for *having* nuclear missiles, even though the United States is the only country in history that has actually *used* such weapons against civilian populations!

No matter how strong or deserving the criticism of any foreign regime, statists can never allow the censure to rise to the level of an attack upon the idea of the *state itself*. If the state is to be regarded as an imperative, then the warfare, genocides, torture, and other tyrannical practices can never be allowed to be seen as intrinsic to statism. To allow such a thought to even cross a synapse in the brain is to call all of politics into question. If we venerate the idea of the state, the wholesale slaughter and brutalities practiced even by *foreign* despots must be explained in terms that do not infect the mindset upon which *domestic* rule depends.

To accomplish such ends, statists resort to the psychological device of “*displacement*,” which involves the *transfer* of an emotion, such as anger, from the original cause to a *substitute* one. Displacement is ordinarily resorted to when the *source* of the anger is considered too dangerous to criticize directly. To condemn *politics*, systemically, for the horrors perpetrated by various nation-states, might endanger the popular sanction upon which *all* governments ultimately depend. And so it is that the Hitlers, Stalins, Maos, Pol Pots, and other tyrants, must be *marginalized* and *isolated* as *aberrations* of an otherwise wondrous system. What better way of accomplishing such state-saving ends than to declare them to be “madmen,” “crazed lunatics” who managed to get into power by some untoward means?

But it is not *madmen* who turn states into the brutal systems they are: it is the *state itself* that mobilizes our “dark side” energies into destructive practices, an end brought about only through our willingness to lose our individuality in the mass-mindedness that is essential to all political systems. In the language of “chaos” theory, the state becomes an “attractor” for the kinds of people who are disposed to use violence and intimidation against others; people who are willing

to exploit the sociopathic nature of all political systems. It is not *madmen* to whom we must look for explanations of the genocides, wars, “terrorist” attacks, and other collective atrocities, but to our perpetuation of *insane systems* that amass those dark forces that we deny or repress at our peril.

Michael S. Rozeff

Reflections on the State

(2005)

Michael Rozeff lists the various reasons why many people cling so persistently to the State and he does so with a conciseness and clarity that is delightful food for thought besides being a pleasure to read and ponder about.

Source: LewRockwell.com, August 2, 2005.

Why the State?

Just about everyone lives under a State. States are what the world has come to. We and our forefathers have both chosen this order and had it imposed on us. Can this whole order be a bad mistake? Yes, it can, if it is based upon faulty theory. Believing in spontaneous generation, not the germ theory of disease, doctors didn't know enough to wash their hands 140 years ago. We're like those doctors.

States were far weaker only 50 years ago and weaker still 100 years ago. Are bigger and stronger and more intrusive States, like the germ

theory of disease, a great boon for mankind, a wonderful discovery that prolongs and saves lives? The bloody 20th century, a ton of evidence to the contrary, and the best theory all strongly suggest the opposite: All States harm mankind and the bigger they are the more harm they cause.

If the State destroys, then why is it the dominant political form? Basically because it gains power over its subjects who, for a variety of reasons, either cannot or do not resist that power. Oppenheimer and Albert Jay Nock tell us much about these developments.

The reactions of the State's citizens to the State fall into a great many categories, ranging from love to hate, indifference to resistance. Three prominent categories are worth mentioning.

There are those who do not like the State but do not resist it. They realize that the State possesses the monopoly of legal violence in the area over which it rules and they view it as an irresistible force. They don't think it's worth fighting City Hall. Their behavior looks like those who are indifferent.

Then there are people who'd like to resist. Some even try but they fail to do much. They discover that the rulers are clever enough to prevent serious organized resistance from groups within the State. The rulers have a catalog of methods of control, including co-opting, subsidy, taxes, smear, propaganda, force, law, ballot access control, press dominance, etc.

Then there are very many people who loyally support, even love, the State. There are many reasons why they cling to the State.

1. Error of identification. People long to be identified as something, an American or a Frenchman or a Russian. These are matters of nation, country, society, custom, language, group, religion, culture, not State. Yet in many people's minds, they merge. The State comes to represent what a person is. The State gains loyalty by blurring the

lines between itself, country and society. Patriotism, a love of country, overlaps with love of State.

2. Error of attribution. People make the logical error of attributing progress achieved by the country to the State: *Cum hoc, ergo propter hoc*. If a horse wins a race despite a 5-pound handicap, it wins despite the extra weight not because of it.

3. Illusion of order. People fear anarchy. They think that the power of the State to suppress and keep order is better than exposure to unnamed and unseen anarchic forces. Fear of one's fellow man sows the seeds of support of the State. This solution to the problem of order is an illusion that is based on contradiction, however. If one fears men, and the rulers are men, then the rulers are also to be feared. In fact, the State to whom one gives such great power is even more to be feared. There is no security of life when one turns one's life over to one's jailer.

4. Illusion of security. People want security, insurance against the trials of life, a father that is there to feed and house them when they have troubles. It is illusion to think that the State can provide comfort. The State has no resources of its own, so it must draw them from the citizens themselves. In the process, much waste occurs, insecurity of rights is fostered, and the overall productivity of the people is reduced. In its external relations, which are frequently aggressive, the State wastes still more resources. Hence, the State makes people less secure.

5. Vicarious pleasure. Many identify with the State's power. They feel good when the State uses its power. Death and destruction do not bother them. They like the idea of wars and armies marching, big tanks, missiles and rockets, and space ships flying to the moon. If the State is a superpower, all the better.

6. Hunger for power and wealth. Many people benefit from the State. Perhaps they rule, or gain subsidies or laws that favor them.

7. Philosophy. There are those, like Hegel, who justify the State and replace God with the State.

8. Miscalculation. Many people think the State is a good deal. These people can't count or calculate. They give up \$1 and get back \$0.80 and do not know it. Sometimes they underestimate the costs they bear now and in the future. Sometimes they overestimate the benefits. Of course, the State does what it can to help them miscalculate.

9. Hope. This is a kind of misplaced faith. People irrationally hope and believe that the State's power will ameliorate various evils, usually in a social context. When the State's programs fail, these people are incapable of analyzing the reason for the failure because of the complexity of social situations and because of their biased hopes.

10. Gullibility and propaganda. The State encourages illusions about its powers and abilities.

The State's success as a political form, even though it is a counterproductive form of human organization, has all these roots and no doubt more that I am overlooking.

The State's concentration of power

States are defined by their possession of a monopoly of legalized violence in a territorial area. But they usually also possess another signal feature: a peculiar pyramidal power structure. The State has a leadership consisting of a rather small group of men. Below each leader is the entire power of the people, and this amplifies the leader into a powerful concentrated force. The men in a country who like to use power see it for the taking in every State, and they take it by becoming its leaders. This process brings power-loving men into

positions of power. This turns a nation's pinnacle into a power-wielding dynamo that can be turned internally or externally.

The leaders represent all their subjects in their inter-State (called international) relations. The various rulers, many being power-loving men, often do not get along with one another and have ambitions to expand their rule. Hence, the system of States with their concentrated powers is geared to produce strife and often war of a more serious scope than mankind's wars before the advent of States. Total war is an invention of the modern State.

If the masses have evil aspirations, and they do, the State focuses and embodies them. If the leaders have evil impulses, and they do, they are given greater scope. Hardly ever do leaders work as hard for peace as they do for conquest, because the State is power and attracts those who wish to use power. Peace talk comes mainly from those outside the State system. Even peaceable rulers are trapped by the system, often their own nasty subjects, and find it hard to promote peace. The results are deadly for the human race.

Overlooked costs

The State imposes, controls, robs, kills and invades, all of which is wrong. These actions are unhealthy for the souls of the citizens. They are also very costly. But I think we may not fully understand the long-term dynamic of some of these costs. Costly social programs, once begun, go on and on and on. War can last generations, even after it supposedly has officially ended.

Often with public consent, often without it, States consciously and rationally choose to begin conflicts, but are the underlying calculations flawed? Shortsighted? Do peoples and rulers fail to count all the costs of conflicts? Do they fail to understand the longstanding unhappiness these choices bring? Do they underestimate how long

conflicts last and how the human and property costs mount? I hypothesize that this is the case.

Observe. The Kashmiri conflict is 60 years old. Today's Irish and English still are paying the price of the English invasion of Ireland over 800 years ago and the subsequent attempt to wipe out Catholicism. The South has not forgotten the North's invasion 145 years ago. Many generations of Arabs will remember the U.S. invasion of Iraq and seek justice. The 9/11/01 attack is related to the U.S. presence in Lebanon which goes back to 1957, some 44 years earlier. The Tamil-Sri Lankan conflict over secession is 30 years old. The Korean conflict is still not settled after 55 years.

Four elements of psychology underlie my hypothesis. First, human beings can be very determined. Second, human beings can pass memories of injustice on indefinitely. Third, human beings are prepared to die for what they believe in. Fourth, the horizon of a leader is approximately his tenure of leadership which is far shorter than the collective and enduring memories of those who bear the ultimate costs of his decisions.

To a leader and his cheerleaders, power looks a lot better in the short-run than in the long-run. But none of them will be around in the long-run. They won't even be around beyond a few terms in office. This is a strong argument for greatly limiting State power.

Costs of conflicts are sometimes hidden and forgotten. The 45-year Cold War has ended, for the time being. It is altogether too easy to forget that the bad and unrealized outcome of the Cold War, nuclear Armageddon, could have occurred. The risk was high. We might have suffered grievously heavy costs. To forget that risk because the gamble paid off is to misunderstand the flawed calculations upon which the Cold War was based. Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) was an incredibly poor policy choice compared to the no-holds-barred pursuit of peace. Trumpeting that we won the Cold War by an arms race is not only bad history but a bad basis for future

policy based once again on even more force of arms. The next series of armed conflicts need not end so happily.

Risk is a peculiar thing and not well understood. It has to do with the loss you might incur if something bad happens. Sometimes the bad outcome does not happen and the player begins to forget the risk or figure it isn't really there anymore. But it is. And when it hits, you understand, even if it is too late to do anything about it.

And have all the costs of the Cold War been incurred yet? Far from it. Our leaders still have the cold war mentality. Our troops are still in far-flung places with missions redefined. Disarmament has not proceeded very far. If even one atomic device left over from the Cold War is exploded over one city anywhere in the world, what will we then think? Probably about blame. We'll be blaming the evil men who exploded it, the lax security of those who lost it, and the failures of those who could have stopped it. We'll be out for revenge. But what we should be thinking is that this is the cost of war-making rather than peace-making. This is a long-term cost of the Cold War.

Costs of the State that involve risk are also hidden. For example, we have a few men who are given enormous power. The risk is obvious but overlooked. The nation is vulnerable to the defects of character and emotion, limitations of mind and intelligence, and limited information of a few men. Concentrating power in a few men is like an investment with all one's wealth placed on one stock. Plunging in stocks usually fails and all is lost.

The U.S. has experienced this problem time and time again, but we have not recognized this problem for what it is. In fact, the Congress has supinely abdicated any serious debate on issues of war and defers to the President. So we have given him even more power! This is really a dumb thing to do. An all-powerful President is nothing more than a highly risky gamble. We have already lost that gamble far too many times. Count the wars and interventions since 1945 and you will know how many times.

Our leaders and their supporters among us overestimate the expected net benefits of fighting. They think naïvely that there is a benefit to a superpower stemming from its ability to impose on others. This is illusion. Superpowers create multiple enemies. The fights grow larger, more frequent, and more destructive as the opponents multiply and build their strength. As the superpower expands, it requires ever more territory and expenditure to secure its new outposts. It becomes ever more vulnerable. There is no security whatsoever in superpower politics and expansion.

Do we the people gain as the U.S. exercises its so-called leadership responsibility in the world? What a lot of hooey that is, designed to justify a losing power game. Is the game worth it, or is it illusion? When the sons are slain and maimed, when nothing real is gained or attained, isn't it illusion, *La Grande Illusion*? What are the gains from World Wars I and II? Some States fended off some other States. We ran just to stay in one place. We were held back by the struggles. We were not made better off. We defended, without necessity, because of the piled-up errors of States. Many millions of lives were destroyed. Each War created the conditions for yet more wars, such as the Cold War. What were the gains from Korea and Vietnam? The U.S. heavily inserted itself into the Middle East during the Cold War in order to contain the Soviet Union. From that questionable policy has sprung today's involvement for which the bills are piling up.

Are the long-run costs of the power game that produces world-wide flashpoints such as Taiwan and the 38th parallel adequately appreciated by its supporters?

I very much doubt it.

Gian Piero de Bellis

What is the State? (2011)

An attempt at updating the famous definition of “the State” formulated by Frédéric Bastiat in 1848.

Source: Gian Piero de Bellis, *Che cos'è lo Stato?* polyarchy.org, March 2011.

In 1838 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon received a scholarship from the Academy of Besançon following a bequest from a certain Madame Suard. Two years later, in 1840, he began drafting a *Memoir* on social and economic topics that appeared that same year under the title *Qu'est ce que la propriété?*

To prevent it from going unnoticed Proudhon made two masterly decisions:

1. the first was to dedicate his *Memoir* to the members of the Academy who, in this way, were almost forced to read it and being, for the most part, of a conservative disposition, were scandalised by

some of the statements and tried to have the dedication withdrawn; by doing so, as the author had intended, they generated enough uproar to arouse people's curiosity, multiplying the number of readers;

2. secondly, Proudhon produced a definition of property (*Property is theft*) that has become very famous even among those who know little about Proudhon, have never read a line of what he wrote, and are completely unaware that Proudhon, despite his sweeping definition, can be counted among the great defenders of personal property as an indispensable counterbalance to the expropriating and tyrannical State (see: Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Théorie de la propriété*, 1862).

A few years later, another French-born author posed an interesting question: What is the State? Frédéric Bastiat, this was his name, considered it so important to answer this question that he thought it would be useful to assign a prize "not of five hundred francs, but of one million francs, with laurel wreaths, merit crosses and ribbons, to reward the person who will offer a good, simple and intelligent definition of this term: the State." (*L'État*, 1848).

And, in the wake of this demand, he produced his definition of the State, a definition that remained in the shadows for a long time (none of us ever got acquainted with it in State schools) but which is increasingly circulating through the Internet, in a sort of universal word of mouth, and which is also becoming justly famous, as was Proudhon's definition of property.

Here it is:

*"The State is the great fiction through which everyone
strives to live at the expense of everyone else."*

There is no denying that this is an entirely accurate and truthful definition, acute and penetrating to the utmost. In a word, brilliant. I

have used it several times in my writings and interventions because it totally captures what is the nature of the State: a fiction made to delude, and then delude, and then delude over and over again.

Yet, and here I want to play devil's advocate, for some time now I have found myself considering this definition too subtle, too nice or, in other words, a too good representation of the State in actual fact.

By saying this, I have nothing against Bastiat who was a noble-minded individual, nor against his statement which I still find brilliant.

I only have the feeling that Bastiat has, with his formulation, characterised the State as it was more than 150 years ago, when it was in the process of invading the whole of society but had not yet done so in the extensive, suffocating and intolerable forms and ways of today. The State, in Bastiat's time, had not yet provoked two World Wars, established mass extermination camps, organised the Gulag, engineered famines and mass expulsions. In essence, in his time, the State was not yet the ultimate architect of a methodical policy of mass extermination and oppression.

Hence, if one knew of all the evil produced by this institution called "The State", from 1850, the year Bastiat died, to the present day, defining it only as a 'fiction' could appear almost equivalent to describing Hitler and Stalin as two mischievous and misbehaving garrulous little rascals.

Perhaps we need a new definition of 'What is the State', one that has the outrageous force that Proudhon's definition of property had.

May be, we should also institute a prize for this new definition. However, in this case, no money up for grabs, but just the infinite gratitude by all those who will employ the new definition as a weapon against oppression and alienation.

Me too, I have a go at it.

Unfortunately, to devise a short, striking expression, I have to resort to the French language, even though it is a French that everyone understands or at least intuitively. To the question: *Qu'est-ce-que l'État*, I answer:

L'État c'est le Dégât

The State is total disaster, permanent degradation, universal corruption, general commodification.

The State is violence practised as a principle, theft organised by law, cheating practised as a rule of life.

The State is absolute immorality, rambling reason, the permanent and insistent madness that takes over everyone's existence.

Nietzsche in one of his lucid statements called the State "the place where the slow suicide of all is called life." (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 1883-1885).

The State, in essence, is a senseless reality, a condition of calamity, exploitation, alienation, dissatisfaction and profound and continuous despondency. Hence, those who speak of a 'sense of the State' should arouse, in people who still retain a modicum of mental lucidity and moral honesty, an infinite sense of disgust, loathing and nausea. Because the State is the moral and mental death of all. That is why we need to shake off the State, to return to life.

But, as Gustav Landauer rightly said, the State "is not something we can shatter into a thousand pieces in order to destroy it. The State is a relationship between human beings ... and we destroy it by giving birth to new forms of relationship." (*Weak Statesmen, Weaker People!* 1910).

And coming back to life, generating new social relations between reborn human beings should be our task in the months and years to come.

Appendix

Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels

Ludwig von Mises

Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels

Against the State (1844-1891)

Here are presented some passages about the State taken from the works of Marx and Engels. The conventional idea is that these two thinkers were completely taken over by the entity State up to the point of making it the indispensable instrument for a long transition towards socialism.

However, by reading these passages, that idea evaporates completely. It seems then highly plausible to draw the conclusion that that interpretation, presented in the past and still repeated in the present, was and is no other than a highly dishonest trick employed by politicians and pseudo-intellectuals of any type and colour in view of occupying positions of power and prestige within the conservative, liberal, socialist, communist, fascist, popular, national, or any other type of State. In other words, to portray a convenient image of Marx-Engels as pro-State fanatics in order then to set up and justify Their Own State Power.

No wonder that Karl Marx, toward the end of his life, already aware of such political chicanery, openly declared: "I am not a Marxist."

The impotence of the State to solve social problems

The State as an unreal community

The bourgeois Society engenders the political State

Bourgeois society submitted to the State (absolute and parliamentary)

The State as external domineering power and illusory general interest

The modern State as the form of political organization of the bourgeoisie

State laws are made to protect the ruling class

The end of political power and of the illusions that originate from it

Capitalism and State centralisation as necessary steps towards the extinction of the State: the illusion and the overcoming of the illusion

Parliamentary cretinism

The State and the Rule of Finance

The State and the Aristocracy of Finance

State debt and the interests of the Bourgeoisie

The State suffocating society

The State as parasite

The State as a machine to extort money

The State as superstructure

The State as an instrument to enslave producers

The transformation-degeneration of socialism into statism

For Free Trade

Against Taxation

The overcoming of the Bourgeois State

The Paris Commune and the Bourgeois State

The State dies out

Beyond the State

References

The impotence of the State to solve social problems

The State will never find the source of social ills in the “State and the structure of society,” as the Prussian demands of his King. Wherever there are political parties each party will attribute every defect of society to the fact that its rival is at the helm of the State instead of itself. Even the radical and revolutionary politicians look for the causes of evil not in the nature of the State but in a particular form of government, which they would like to replace with another.

From a *political* point of view, the State and the *establishment of society* are not two different things. From a political point of view the State institutes society. In so far as the State acknowledges the existence of *social* evils, it locates their origins either in the *laws of nature* over which no human agency has control, or in *private life*, which is independent of the State, or else in *malfunctions of the administration* which depends on it. Thus England finds the cause of poverty to be based on the *law of nature* according to which the population must always outgrow the available means of subsistence. From another point of view, it explains *pauperism* as the consequence of the *bad will of the poor*, just as the King of Prussia explains it in terms of the *unchristian feelings of the rich* and the Convention explains it in terms of the *counter-revolutionary and suspect attitudes of the property owners*. Hence England punishes the poor, the Kings of Prussia admonishes the rich and the Convention beheads the property owners.

Finally, all States seek the cause in accidental or intentional deficiencies in the administration and hence the cure is sought in administrative measures. Why? Because administration is the organizing activity of the State.

The State cannot resolve the *contradiction* between its purpose and its good intentions on the one hand, and its resources and assets on

the other, without destroying itself, because *it is based* on this contradiction. The State is based on the contradiction between *public* and *private* life, between *universal* and *particular interests*.

For this reason, the State administration must confine itself to *formal*, *negative* activities, because where civil life and work begin, its power ends.

Indeed, when we consider the consequences arising from the asocial nature of this bourgeois life, of this private property, of this trade and industry, of this mutual plundering that goes on between the various bourgeois circles, it becomes clear that the *natural law* of administration is *powerless*.

For, the fragmentation, the depravity, and the slavery of bourgeois society is the natural foundation of the modern State, just as the civil society of slavery was the natural foundation of the State in antiquity. The existence of the State is inseparable from the existence of slavery. The State and slavery in antiquity – frank and open *classical* antitheses – were not more closely *welded* together than the modern State and the cut-throat world of modern business – sanctimonious *Christian* antithesis.

If the modern State desired to abolish the *impotence* of its administration, it would have to abolish contemporary *private life*. And to abolish private life, it would have to abolish itself, since it exists *only* in opposition to private life. However, no *living person* believes that the shortcomings of his existence are based on the *principle* of his life, on the essential nature of his own life; they must instead be grounded in circumstances *outside* his life.

Suicide is contrary to nature. Hence, the State cannot believe in the *intrinsic* impotence of its administration – i.e., of itself. It can *only* perceive formal, contingent deficiencies in the administration and try to remedy them. If these modification prove fruitless, then, that just

shows that social ills are natural imperfections, independent of human beings, *a law of God*, or else, the will of private individuals is too corrupt to accommodate the good intentions of the administration. And how perverse individuals are! They grumble about the government when it places limits on freedom and yet demand that the government should prevent the inevitable consequences of that freedom!

The more powerful a State and hence the more *political* a country, the less inclined it is to seek the cause of social ills in the *principle of the State*, i.e. in the *current structure of society*, of which the State is the active, self-conscious and *official* expression, and to understand their *general* principle.

Political understanding is just *political* understanding because its thought *does not transcend* the limits of politics. The sharper and livelier it is, the more *incapable* is it of comprehending social problems. The *classical* period of political understanding was the *French Revolution*. Far from identifying the principle of the State as the source of social ills, the heroes of the French Revolution held social ills to be the source of political problems. Thus *Robespierre* regarded great wealth and great poverty as obstacles to *pure Democracy*. He therefore wished to establish a universal system of *Spartan* frugality.

The principle of politics is the will. The more one-sided, that is the more perfect the political mind, the more it believes in the omnipotence of the will, the more blind it is to the natural and spiritual limitations of the will, and the more incapable it becomes of discovering the real source of the social evils.

(Karl Marx, *Critical Notes on the Article: The King of Prussia and Social Reform. By a Prussian*, 1844)

The State as an unreal community

The perfect political State is, by its nature, the generic life of human beings as opposed to their material life. All the preconditions of this selfish life continue to exist in the bourgeois society outside the sphere of the State, but as characteristics of the bourgeois society. Where the political State has attained its true development, the human being – not only in thought, in consciousness, but in reality, in life – leads a twofold life, a heavenly and an earthly life: life in the political community, in which he considers himself a member of the community, and life in the bourgeois society, in which he acts as a private individual, regarding other people as a means, degrading himself to a means, and becoming the plaything of alien powers.

The relation of the political State to the bourgeois society is just as spiritual as heaven is to earth. The political State stands in the same opposition to the bourgeois society, and it prevails over the latter in the same way as religion prevails over the narrowness of the secular world – i.e., by likewise having always to acknowledge it, to restore it, and allow itself to be dominated by it.

In his most immediate reality, in the bourgeois society, man is a secular being. Here, where he regards himself as a real individual, and is so regarded by others, he is a fictitious phenomenon. In the State, on the other hand, where man is regarded as a generic being, he is the imaginary member of an illusory sovereignty, deprived of his real individual life and filled with an unreal universality.

(Karl Marx, *The Jewish Question*, 1844)

The bourgeois Society engenders the political State

The bourgeois Society, in its opposition to the political State, is recognized [by Hegel] as necessary, because the political State is recognized as necessary. (Karl Marx, *The Jewish Question*, 1844)

Speaking exactly and in the prosaic sense, the members of bourgeois society are not atoms. The specific property of the atom is that it has no properties and is therefore not connected with beings outside it by any relationship determined by its own natural necessity. The atom has no needs, it is self-sufficient, the world outside it is an absolute vacuum, i.e., is contentless, senseless, meaningless, just because the atom has all fullness in itself.

The egoistic individual in bourgeois society may in his senseless imagination and lifeless abstraction inflate himself into an atom, i.e., into an unrelated, self-sufficient, wantless, absolutely full, blessed being. Unblessed sensuous reality does not bother about his imagination, each of his senses compels him to believe in the existence of the world and of individuals outside him, and even his profane stomach reminds him every day that the world outside him is not empty, but is in fact what fulfils him.

Every activity and property of his being, every one of his vital urges, becomes a need, a necessity, which turns his selfishness into an addiction for other things and human beings outside himself. However, since the need of one individual has no self-evident meaning for another selfish individual capable of satisfying that need, and therefore no direct connection with its satisfaction, each individual has to create this connection; it thus becomes the intermediary between the need of another and the objects of that need.

Therefore, it is natural necessity, the essential human properties however estranged they may seem to be, and the interest that hold the members of bourgeois society together. Civil life, not political life, is their real tie. It is therefore not the State that holds the atoms of bourgeois society together, but the fact that they are atoms only in imagination, in the heaven of their fancy. But in reality they are beings vastly different from atoms, namely not divine egoists, but egoistic human beings. Only political superstition still imagines today that civil life must be held together by the State,

whereas in reality, on the contrary, the State is held together by civil life.

(Karl Marx - Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family*, 1845, Chapter VI, 3)

Bourgeois society submitted to the State (absolute and parliamentary)

Napoleon represented the last battle of revolutionary terror against the bourgeois society and its politics, which had been proclaimed by this same Revolution. Napoleon, of course, already understood the essence of the modern State; namely that it is based on the unhampered development of bourgeois society, on the free movement of private interest, etc. He decided to recognise and protect this basis. He was no quixotic terrorist. Yet at the same time he still regarded the State as an end in itself and civil life only as a treasurer and his subordinate which must have no will of its own. He perfected the Terror by substituting permanent war for permanent revolution. He fed the egoism of the French nation to complete satiety but demanded also the sacrifice of bourgeois business, enjoyments, wealth, etc., whenever this was required by the political goal of conquest. If he despotically suppressed the liberalism of bourgeois society — the political idealism of its daily practice — he showed no more consideration for its essential material interests, trade and industry, whenever they conflicted with his political interests. His scorn of industrial *hommes d'affaires* was the complement to his scorn of ideologists. In his home policy, too, he combated bourgeois society who opposed the State which in his own person he still regarded to be an absolute end in itself. Thus he declared in the State Council that he would not tolerate the owner of extensive estates to cultivate them or not as he pleased. Thus, too, he conceived the plan of subordinating trade to the State by appropriating freight

transport. French businessmen took steps to anticipate the event that first shook Napoleon's power. Paris exchange-brokers forced him by means of an artificially created famine to delay the opening of the Russian campaign by nearly two months and thus to launch it too late in the year.

(Karl Marx - Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family*, 1845, Chapter VI, 3)

Owing to its financial straits, the July [1830] Monarchy was dependent from the outset on the upper bourgeoisie, and its dependence on the upper bourgeoisie became an inexhaustible source of increasing financial straits. It was impossible to subordinate the administration of the State to the interests of national production without balancing the budget, without establishing a balance between State expenditures and State revenues. And how could this balance be achieved without limiting State expenditures – that is, without harming interests that were just so important to the ruling system, and without reorganising the distribution of taxes, that is, without shifting a considerable share of the tax burden onto the shoulders of the upper bourgeoisie itself?

(Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850*, 1850, I)

But under absolute monarchy, during the first Revolution, under Napoleon, the bureaucracy was merely a means of preparing the class rule of the bourgeoisie. Under the Restoration, under Louis-Philippe, under the parliamentary republic, it was the instrument of the ruling class, however much it strove for power for its own sake.

It was only under the second Bonaparte that the State seems to have become completely independent. The State machinery has become so entrenched in bourgeois society that at its head stands the leader of the society of 10 December [Louis Napoleon Bonaparte], a soldier of fortune who came from abroad, hoisted onto a shield by a drunken

rabble of soldiers whom he bought with schnapps and sausages, and whom he must constantly appease with more sausages. Hence the meek despair, the feeling of the most tremendous humiliation and degradation that oppresses the breast of France and makes her gasp. She feels dishonoured.

(Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852, Chapter VII)

The State as external domineering power and illusory general interest

This fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up till now. And out of this very contradiction between the interest of the individual and that of the community the latter takes an independent form as the State, divorced from the real interests of individual and community, and at the same time as an illusory communal life, always based, however, on the real ties existing in every family and tribal conglomeration – such as flesh and blood, language, division of labour on a larger scale, and other interests – and especially, as we shall enlarge upon later, on the classes, already determined by the division of labour, which in every such mass of men separate out, and of which one dominates all the others.

It follows from this that all struggles within the State, the struggle between democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy, the struggle for the franchise, etc., etc., are merely the illusory forms in which the real struggles of the different classes are fought out among one another. Further, it follows that every class which is struggling for mastery, even when its domination, as is the case with the proletariat, postulates the abolition of the old form of society in its entirety and of

domination itself, must first conquer for itself political power in order to represent its interest in turn as the general interest, which in the first moment it is forced to do. Just because individuals seek only their particular interest, which for them does not coincide with their communal interest (in fact the general is the illusory form of communal life), the latter will be imposed on them as an interest “alien” to them, and “independent” of them as in its turn a particular, peculiar “general” interest; or they themselves must remain within this discord, as in democracy.

On the other hand, too, the practical struggle of these particular interests, which constantly really run counter to the communal and illusory communal interests, makes practical intervention and control necessary through the illusory “general” interest in the form of the State.

(Karl Marx - Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, 1846, Part I)

The first French Revolution, with its task of breaking all separate local, territorial, urban, and provincial powers in order to create the bourgeois unity of the nation, was bound to develop what the absolute monarchy had begun: centralization; but at the same time defining the scopes, the attributes, and the agents of the governmental power. Napoleon completed this State machinery.

The Legitimate Monarchy and the July Monarchy added nothing to it but a greater division of labor, increasing at the same rate as the division of labor inside the bourgeois society created new groups of interests, and therefore new material for the State administration. Every common interest was immediately detached from society, countered by a higher, general interest, snatched from the activities of the members of society and made the object of government activity – from a bridge, a schoolhouse, and the communal property of a village community, to the railroads, the national wealth, and the national University of France.

Finally the parliamentary republic, in its struggle against the revolution, found itself compelled to strengthen the means and the centralization of governmental power with repressive measures. *All revolutions perfected this machine instead of breaking it.* The parties, which alternately contended for domination, regarded the possession of this huge State structure as the chief spoils of the victor.

(Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852, Chapter VII)

The modern State as the form of political organisation of the bourgeoisie

To this modern private property corresponds the modern State, which has gradually been bought from private owners through taxation, has become completely dependent on them through the system of State debt, and whose existence, in the rise and fall of government securities on the stock exchange, has become entirely dependent on the commercial credit granted to it by private owners, the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie, because it is a class and no longer a social order, is compelled to organise itself nationally rather than locally and to give its average interests a general form. Through the emancipation of private property from the community, the State has become a special entity alongside and outside bourgeois society; but it is nothing more than the form of organisation which the bourgeois necessarily adopt, both externally and internally, for the mutual guarantee of their property and interests.

(Karl Marx - Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, 1846, Part I)

Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political progress. An oppressed class under the

sway of the feudal nobility, an armed and self-governing association in the medieval commune, here an independent urban republic (as in Italy and Germany); there taxable “third estate” of the monarchy (as in France); afterwards, at the time of manufacture, serving either the semi-feudal or the absolute monarchy as a counterpoise against the nobility, and, in fact, cornerstone of the great monarchies in general, the bourgeoisie finally won exclusive political rule since the establishment of large-scale industry and the world market in the modern representative State. Modern State Power is merely a committee that administers the common affairs of the entire bourgeois class.

(Karl Marx - Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1848. Part I)

State laws are made to protect the ruling class

Since the State is the form in which the individuals of a ruling class assert their common interests and the form in which the entire bourgeois society of an epoch is organised, it follows that all common institutions are mediated by the State and take on a political form. Hence the illusion that the law is based on the will of the people, and indeed on *free* will, detached from its real basis. Similarly, right is in its turn reduced to the actual laws.

(Karl Marx - Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, 1846, Part I)

The end of political power and of the illusions that originate from it

... political emancipation is not the accomplished, uncontested form of human emancipation. The limits of political emancipation are immediately evident from the fact that the State can free itself from a restriction without the human being being really free from it, that the

State can be a free state [*Freistaat*] without humans being free individuals. (Karl Marx, *The Jewish Question*, 1844)

Herr Bruno [Bauer], who confuses the State with Humanity, human rights with human beings, and political emancipation with human emancipation, was bound, if not to conceive, at least to imagine a peculiar kind of State, a philosophical ideal of a State.

(Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family*, 1845, Chapter VI, 1)

Does this mean that after the fall of the old society there will be a new class domination culminating in a new political power? No.

The condition for the liberation of the working class is the abolition of all classes, just as the condition for the liberation of the third estate, of the bourgeois order, was the abolition of all estates.

In the course of development, the working class will replace the old bourgeois society with an association that excludes classes and their antagonisms, and there will no longer be any political power, because political power is precisely the official expression of class antagonism within bourgeois society.

(Karl Marx, *Poverty of Philosophy*, 1847, Part II, 5)

When, in the course of development, class distinctions disappear and all production is in the hands of associated individuals, public authority loses its political character.

Political power in the proper sense is the organised violence of one class for the oppression of another.

When the proletariat, in its struggle against the bourgeoisie, necessarily unites as a class, makes itself the ruling class through a revolution, and as such, sweeps away by force the old relations of production, it abolishes with them the existence of class antagonism, of the classes in general, and of its own ruling as a class.

In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

(Karl Marx - Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1848, Part II)

Capitalism and State centralisation as necessary steps towards the extinction of the State: the illusion and the overcoming of the illusion

First phase: illusion

We have seen above, that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy.

The proletariat will use its political supremacy to gradually wrest all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organised as the ruling class; and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible.

Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically inadequate and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are inevitable as a means of revolutionising the entire mode of production.

These measures will, of course, be different in different countries.

Nevertheless, in most advanced countries, the following will generally apply.

1. Abolition of property in land and use of land rent for government expenditures.
2. A heavy progressive income tax.
3. Abolition of all rights of inheritance.
4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
5. Centralisation of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly.
6. Centralisation of the means of transport in the hands of the State.
7. Increase in national factories, production tools, reclamation and improvement of all land according to a communal plan.
8. Equal compulsory labour for all, establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.
9. Unification of agriculture and industry, working towards the gradual elimination of the difference between town and country.
10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's factory labour in its present form. Combination of education with material production, etc, etc.

(Karl Marx - Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1848, Part II)

Second phase: the overcoming of the illusion

The practical application of the principles will depend, as the Manifesto itself states, everywhere and at all times, on the historical conditions for the time being existing, and for that reason **no special stress is laid on the revolutionary measures proposed at the end of Part II.** That passage would, in many respects, be very differently worked today. In view of the gigantic strides of Modern Industry in the last twenty-five years, and of the accompa-

nying and extended party organization of the working class, in view of the practical experience gained, first in the February revolution and then, still more, in the Paris Commune, where the proletariat for the first time held political power for two whole months, **this programme has in some details become antiquated.** One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., that “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.” (*The Civil War in France*. Address of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association. London, 1871).

(Karl Marx - Friedrich Engels, *Preface to the German Edition of* 1872)

Parliamentary cretinism

... Parliamentary cretinism, a disorder which penetrates its unfortunate victims with the solemn conviction that the whole world, its history and future, are governed and determined by a majority of votes in that particular representative body which has the honour to count them among its members, and that all and everything going on outside the walls of their house — wars, revolutions, railway-constructing, colonizing of whole new continents, California gold discoveries, Central American canals, Russian armies, and whatever else may have some little claim to influence upon the destinies of mankind — is nothing compared with the incommensurable events hinging upon the important question, whatever it may be, just at that moment occupying the attention of their honourable house.

(Article written for the New York Tribune, July 1852. In Friedrich Engels, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany*)

... that peculiar malady which since 1848 has raged all over the Continent, parliamentary cretinism, which imprisons those infected

by it in an imaginary world and robs them of all sense, all memory, all understanding of the rude external world. (Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852, Chapter V)

The State and the Rule of Finance

After the July Revolution [of 1830], when the liberal banker Laffitte led his compère, the Duke of Orléans, in triumph to the Hôtel de Ville (Paris City Hall), he uttered the words: "From now on the bankers will rule." Laffitte had betrayed the secret of the revolution.

It was not the French bourgeoisie that ruled under Louis Philippe, but one faction of it: bankers, stock market magnates, railway kings, owners of coal, iron mines and forests, a part of the landed proprietors associated with them – the so-called financial aristocracy. They sat on the throne, they dictated laws in the Chambers, they distributed government posts, from cabinet portfolios to tobacco bureau offices.

(Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France 1848 to 1850*, 1850, I)

The State and the Aristocracy of Finance

In its issue of November 29, 1851, the *Economist* declares in its own name:

"The President is the guardian of order, and is now recognized as such on every Stock Exchange of Europe."

The aristocracy of finance, therefore, condemned the parliamentary struggle of the party of Order with the executive power as a disturbance of order, and celebrated every victory of the President over its ostensible representatives as a victory of order. By the aristocracy of finance must here be understood not merely the great loan promoters and speculators in public funds, in regard to whom it is immediately

obvious that their interests coincide with the interests of the State power. All modern finance, the whole of the banking business, is interwoven in the closest fashion with public credit. A part of their business capital is necessarily invested and put out at interest in quickly convertible public funds. Their deposits, the capital placed at their disposal and distributed by them among merchants and industrialists, are partly derived from the dividends of holders of government securities. If in every epoch the stability of the State power signified Moses and the prophets to the entire money market and to the priests of this money market, why not all the more so today, when every deluge threatens to sweep away the old States along with the old State debts?

(Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852, Chapter VI)

State debt and the interests of the Bourgeoisie

The State's indebtedness was, rather, the direct interest of the bourgeois faction that ruled and legislated through the chambers. The State deficit was the very object of their speculation and the main source of their enrichment. After each year, there was a new deficit. After four to five years, there was a new loan. And each new loan offered the financial aristocracy a new opportunity to fleece the State, which was being kept artificially afloat on the verge of bankruptcy – it had to negotiate with the bankers under the most unfavourable conditions. Each new loan provided a further opportunity to plunder the public, who had invested its capital in State bonds, through stock market manipulations whose secrets were known only to the government and the majority in parliament. In general, the instability of State credit and the possession of State secrets gave the bankers and their associates in the Chambers and on the throne the possibility to cause sudden, extraordinary fluctuations in the quotations of government securities, the result of which was

always bound to be the ruin of a mass of smaller capitalists and the fabulously rapid enrichment of the big players. As the State deficit was in the direct interest of the ruling faction of the bourgeoisie, it is clear why the extraordinary State expenditure in the last years of Louis Philippe's reign was far more than double the extraordinary State expenditure under Napoleon, indeed reached a yearly sum of nearly 400 million francs, whereas the whole average annual export of France seldom attained a volume amounting to 750 million francs. The enormous sums which in this way passed through the hands of the State gave rise to fraudulent supply contracts, bribery, embezzlement, and all kinds of malpractice. The defrauding of the State, practiced wholesale in connection with loans, was repeated in detail in public works. What occurred in the relations between Chamber and government became multiplied in the relations between individual departments and individual entrepreneurs.

(Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France 1848 to 1850*, 1850, I)

National debts, i.e., the alienation of the State – whether despotic, constitutional or republican – marked with its stamp the capitalistic era. The only part of the so-called national wealth that actually enters into the collective possessions of modern peoples is their national debt. Hence, as a necessary consequence, the modern doctrine that a nation becomes the richer the more deeply it is in debt. Public credit becomes the credo of capital. And with the rise of national debt-making, want of faith in the national debt, which may not be forgiven, takes the place of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

The public debt becomes one of the most powerful levers of primitive accumulation. As with the stroke of an enchanter's wand, it endows barren money with the power of breeding and thus turns it into capital, without the necessity of its exposing itself to the troubles and risks inseparable from its employment in industry or even in usury. The State creditors actually give nothing away, for the

sum lent is transformed into public bonds, easily negotiable, which go on functioning in their hands just as so much hard cash would. But further, apart from the class of lazy annuitants thus created, and from the improvised wealth of the financiers, middlemen between the government and the nation – as also apart from the tax-farmers, merchants, private manufacturers, to whom a good part of every national loan renders the service of a capital fallen from heaven – the national debt has given rise to joint-stock companies, to dealings in negotiable effects of all kinds, and to agiotage, in a word to stock-exchange gambling and the modern bankocracy.

(Karl Marx, *Capital*, 1867, Vol. I, Chapter XXIV)

The State suffocating society

It is immediately apparent that in a country like France, where the executive power commands an army of officials numbering more than half a million individuals and therefore constantly maintains an immense mass of interests and livelihoods in the most absolute dependence; where the State enmeshes, controls, regulates, superintends, and tutors civil society from its most comprehensive manifestations of life down to its most insignificant stirrings, from its most general modes of being to the private existence of individuals; where through the most extraordinary centralization this parasitic body acquires a ubiquity, an omniscience, a capacity for accelerated mobility, and an elasticity which finds a counterpart only in the helpless dependence, the loose shapelessness of the real social body — it is obvious that in such a country the National Assembly with its power over ministerial posts, lost all real influence unless it simultaneously simplified the administration of the State, reduced the army of civil servants as much as possible, and finally allowed civil society and public opinion to create their own organs independent of the power of the government.

But it is precisely with the maintenance of that extensive State machine in its numerous ramifications that the *material interests* of the French bourgeoisie are interwoven in the closest fashion. Here it finds posts for its surplus population and makes up in the form of State salaries for what it cannot pocket in the form of profit, interest, rents, and honorariums. On the other hand, its *political interests* compelled it to increase daily the repressive measures and therefore the resources and the personnel of the State power, while at the same time it had to wage an uninterrupted war against public opinion and mistrustfully mutilate, cripple, the independent organs of the social movement, where it did not succeed in amputating them entirely. Thus the French bourgeoisie was compelled by its class position to annihilate, on the one hand, the vital conditions of all parliamentary power, and therefore, likewise, of its own, and to render irresistible, on the other hand, the executive power hostile to it.

(Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852, Chapter IV)

The State as parasite

This executive power, with its enormous bureaucratic and military organisation, with its multi-layered and artificial State machinery, with a host of half a million civil servants alongside an army of another half million, this terrible parasitic body that wraps itself like a retina around the body of French society and clogs all its pores, arose during the period of absolute monarchy, during the decline of feudalism, which it had helped to hasten.

The seigniorial privileges of the landowners and towns were transformed into so many attributes of the State power, the feudal dignitaries became paid officials, and the colourful patchwork of conflicting medieval powers was replaced by a regulated plan of

State power, whose work was divided and centralised in a factory-like manner.

(Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852, Chapter VII)

The State as a machine to extort money

Customs duties originated from the tributes which the feudal lords exacted as protective levies against robbery from merchants passing through their territories, tributes later imposed likewise by the towns, and which, with the rise of the modern States, were the Treasury's most obvious means of raising money.

The appearance of American gold and silver on the European markets, the gradual development of industry, the rapid expansion of trade and the consequent rise of the non-guild bourgeoisie and of money, gave these measures another significance. The State, which was daily less and less able to do without money, now retained the ban on the export of gold and silver out of fiscal considerations; the bourgeois, for whom these masses of money which were hurled onto the market became the chief object of speculative buying, were thoroughly content with this; privileges established earlier became a source of income for the government and were sold for money; in the customs legislation there appeared the export duty, which, since it only [placed] a hindrance in the way of industry, had a purely fiscal aim.

(Karl Marx - Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, 1846, Part I, C)

Taxes are the lifeblood of bureaucracy, the army, the clergy and the court; in short, of the entire apparatus of executive power. Strong government and heavy taxes are one and the same. Small-holding property is, by its very nature, conducive to the establishment of an

all-powerful and countless bureaucracy. It creates a uniform level of personal and economic relationships over the whole extent of the country. Hence it also permits uniform action from a supreme centre on all points of this uniform mass. It destroys the aristocratic intermediate steps between the mass of the people and the power of the State. On all sides, therefore, it calls forth the direct intrusion of this State power and the intervention of its immediate organs. Finally, it produces an unemployed surplus population which can find no place either on the land or in the towns and which perforce reaches out for State offices as a sort of respectable alms, and provokes the creation of additional State positions. By the new markets which he opened with bayonets, and by the plundering of the Continent, Napoleon repaid the compulsory taxes with interest. These taxes were a spur to the industry of the peasant, whereas now they rob his industry of its last resources and complete his defencelessness against pauperism. An enormous bureaucracy, well gallooned and well fed, is the "Napoleonic idea" which is most congenial to the second Bonaparte. How could it be otherwise, considering that alongside the actual classes of society, he is forced to create an artificial caste for which the preservation of his *régime* becomes a bread-and-butter question? Hence one of his first financial operations was the raising of State officials' salaries to their old level and the creation of new sinecures.

(Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852, Chapter VII)

The State as superstructure

The general conclusion at which I arrived and which, once reached, became the guiding principle of my studies can be summarised as follows.

In the social production of their existence, people inevitably enter into certain necessary relations, which are independent of their

will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of human beings that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or – this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms – with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure.

In studying such transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which people become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period of transformation by its consciousness, but, rather, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production. No social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society.

Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation.

(Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 1859, Preface)

The State as an instrument to enslave producers

But the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and set it in motion for its own purposes.

The centralized State power, with its omnipresent organs of standing army, police, bureaucracy, clergy, and judiciary – organs wrought after the plan of a systematic and hierarchic division of labor – dates back to the times of absolute monarchy, where it served the emerging bourgeois society as a powerful weapon in its struggles against feudalism. Still, its development remained clogged by all manner of medieval debris, seignorial rights, local privileges, municipal and guild monopolies, and provincial constitutions. The gigantic broom of the French Revolution of the 18th century swept away all these relics of bygone times, and, at the same time, cleared the social ground of the last obstacles that stood in the way of the superstructure of the modern State. This modern State edifice arose under the First Empire, itself the offspring of the coalition wars of old semi-feudal Europe against modern France.

During the subsequent *régimes*, the government, placed under parliamentary control – that is, under the direct control of the propertied classes – became not only a hotbed of huge national debts and crushing taxes; with its irresistible allurements of place, pelf, and patronage, it became not only the bone of contention between the rival factions and adventurers of the ruling classes; but its political character changed simultaneously with the economic changes of

society. To the extent that the progress of modern industry developed, expanded and deepened the class antagonism between capital and labour, State power increasingly took on the character of a public force for the oppression of the working class, of an engine of class despotism.

After every revolution marking a progressive phase in the class struggle, the purely repressive character of State power becomes more and more apparent. The Revolution of 1830 transferred the government from the landowners to the capitalists, and thus from the more remote to the more direct enemies of the workers. The bourgeois republicans, who seized the reins of government in the name of the February Revolution, used them to bring about the June [1848] massacres, to prove to the working class that the 'social' republic meant nothing more than its social oppression by the republic; and to prove to the royalist masses of the bourgeoisie and landowners that they could safely leave the government's worries and financial advantages to the bourgeois 'republicans'.

(Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*, 1871)

Under his rule [Louis Bonaparte and the Second Empire], bourgeois society, relieved of all political worries, achieved a level of development it had never imagined possible. Its industry and trade expanded to immeasurable proportions; financial fraud celebrated cosmopolitan orgies; the misery of the classes stood in stark contrast to a shameless display of gorgeous, meretricious and debased luxury. The State power, seemingly hovering high above society, was nevertheless itself the most atrocious scandal of this society and at the same time the breeding ground of all its rot. Its own decay and the decay of the society it had rescued were exposed by the bayonets of Prussia, which itself burned with desire to shift the centre of gravity of this regime from Paris to Berlin. Imperialism is the most prostituted and at the same time the final form of that State power which was brought into being by the emerging bourgeois society as the tool

of its own emancipation from feudalism and which had transformed the fully developed bourgeois society into a tool for the enslavement of labour by capital.

(Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*, 1871)

The transformation-degeneration of socialism into statism

Instead of emerging from the revolutionary process of transformation of society, the “socialist organization of the total labor process” arises from the “State aid” that the State gives to the producers’ co-operative societies and which the State, not the workers, “brings into being”. It is worthy of Lassalle’s imagination that with State loans one can build a new society just as well as a new railway!

The fact that the workers want to establish the conditions for cooperative production on a social and, initially, on a national scale simply means that they are working to transform the current conditions of production, and it has nothing to do with the establishment of cooperative societies with State assistance! As for the present cooperative societies, they have value only insofar as they are independent creations of the workers, protected neither by governments nor by the bourgeoisie.

(Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, 1875, III)

Free State — what is this?

It is by no means the aim of the workers, who have got rid of the narrow mentality of humble subjects, to set the State ‘free’. In the German Empire, the “State” is almost as ‘free’ as in Russia. Freedom consists in transforming the State from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it; and today, too, the

forms of State are more free or less free to the extent that they restrict the “freedom of the State.”

The German Workers’ party — at least if it adopts this program — shows that its socialist ideas are not even skin-deep; and this by treating the State as an independent entity with its own “spiritual, moral and liberal foundations” instead of treating existing society (and this applies to any future society) as the foundation of the existing State (or future State for future society).

And what of the outrageous misuse which the program makes of the words “present-day State,” “present-day society,” and of the still more outrageous misconception it creates about the State to which it addresses its demands?

“Present-day society” is the capitalist society, which exists in all civilized countries, more or less free from medieval admixture, more or less modified by the particular historical development of each country, more or less developed. On the other hand, the “present-day State” changes with a country’s frontier. It is different in the Prussian-German Empire from what it is in Switzerland, and different in England from what it is in the United States. The “present-day State” is therefore a fiction.

Nevertheless, the different States of the different civilized countries, in spite of their motley diversity of form, all have this in common: that they are based on modern bourgeois society, only one more or less capitalistically developed. They have, therefore, also certain essential characteristics in common. In this sense, it is possible to speak of “today’s State system” in contrast with the future, in which its present root, bourgeois society, will have died out.

The question then arises: What transformation will the State undergo in communist society? In other words, what social functions will remain in existence there that are analogous to present State functions? This question can only be answered scientifically, and

combining the words ‘People’ and ‘State’ a thousand times does not bring us any closer to solving the problem.

(Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, 1875, IV)

“Education of the people by the State” [advocated in the Gotha Programme] is altogether objectionable.

Government and church should rather be equally excluded from any influence on the school. Particularly, indeed, in the Prussian-German Empire (and one should not take refuge in the rotten subterfuge that one is speaking of a “State of the future”; we have seen how matters stand in this respect). The State needs to receive, on the contrary, a very stern education by the people.

But the whole programme, despite all its democratic rhetoric, is thoroughly poisoned by the Lassalle sect’s blind faith in the State or, what is no better, by a democratic belief in miracles, or rather it is a compromise between these two types of belief in miracles, both equally distant from socialism.

(Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, 1875, IV)

For Free Trade

... the protectionist system is nothing but a means of establishing large-scale industry in any given country, that is to say, of making it dependent upon the world market, and from the moment that dependence upon the world market is established, there is already more or less dependence upon free trade. Besides this, the protective system helps to develop free trade competition within a country. Hence we see that in countries where the bourgeoisie is beginning to make itself felt as a class, in Germany for example, it makes great efforts to obtain protective duties. They serve the bourgeoisie as weapons against feudalism and absolute government, as a means for

the concentration of its own powers and for the realization of free trade within the same country.

But, in general, the protective system of our day is conservative, while the free trade system is destructive. It breaks up old nationalities and pushes the antagonism of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie to the extreme point. In a word, the free trade system hastens the social revolution. It is in this revolutionary sense alone, gentlemen, that I vote in favor of free trade.

(Karl Marx, *Public Speech delivered before the Democratic Association of Brussels*, January 9, 1848)

Against Taxation

The National Assembly was again driven out of the Kolnische Rathaus by force of arms. It assembled then in the Mielenz Hotel, where finally it passed unanimously (by 226 votes) the following resolution on the non-payment of taxes:

“So long as the National Assembly is not at liberty to continue its sessions in Berlin, the Brandenburg cabinet has no right to dispose of government revenues and to collect taxes. This decree comes into force on November 17.” The National Assembly, November 15.

From today, therefore, taxes are abolished! It is high treason to pay taxes. Refusal to pay taxes is the primary duty of the citizen!

(Karl Marx, No Tax Payments!, *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* n° 145, November 1848)

The overcoming of the Bourgeois State

Thus, while the refugee serfs only wished to be free to develop and assert those conditions of existence which were already there, and hence, in the end, only arrived at free labour, the proletarians, if they are to assert themselves as individuals, will have to abolish the very condition of their existence hitherto (which has, moreover, been that of all society up to the present), namely, labour. Thus they find themselves directly opposed to the form in which, hitherto, the individuals, of which society consists, have given themselves collective expression, that is, the State. In order, therefore, to assert themselves as individuals, they must break down the State.

(Karl Marx - Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, 1846, Part I, D)

The period of industrial high pressure, with its unbounded expansion of credit, not less than the crash itself, caused by the collapse of large capitalist establishments, tends to bring about that form of the socialization of great masses of the means of production which we meet with in the different kinds of joint-stock companies. Some of these means of production and of distribution are, from the outset, so colossal that, like the railways, they exclude all other forms of capitalistic exploitation. At a further stage of evolution, this form also becomes insufficient. The large domestic producers in the same branch of industry unite to form a 'trust,' an association for the purpose of regulating production; they determine the total quantity to be produced, distribute it among themselves, and thus enforce the predetermined selling price. However, since such trusts usually fall apart at the first sign of economic downturn, they drive the process of socialisation even further. The entire branch of industry is transformed into a single large joint-stock company, and domestic competition gives way to the domestic monopoly of this one company, as happened in 1890 with English alkali production, which is now, after the merger of all 48 large factories, operated by a

single, uniformly managed company with a capital of 6,000,000 pounds.

In the trusts, freedom of competition changes into its very opposite — into monopoly; and the production without any definite plan of capitalistic society capitulates to the production upon a definite plan of the emerging socialistic society. Certainly, this is so far still to the benefit and advantage of the capitalists. But, in this case, the exploitation is so blatant, that it must break down. No nation will put up with production controlled by trusts, with so barefaced an exploitation of the community by a small band of dividend-mongers.

In any case, with trusts or without, the official representative of capitalist society — the State — will ultimately have to [*] undertake the direction of production. This necessity for conversion into State property first becomes apparent in the large transport companies: the post office, the telegraphs, the railways.

* [Note: I say “have to”. For only when the means of production and distribution have actually outgrown the form of management by joint-stock companies, and when, therefore, the taking them over by the State has become economically inevitable, only then — even if it is the State of today that effects this — is there an economic advance, the attainment of another step preliminary to the taking over of all productive forces by society itself. But of late, since Bismarck went in for State-ownership of industrial establishments, a kind of spurious Socialism has arisen, degenerating, now and again, into something of flunkyism, that without more ado declares all State-ownership, even of the Bismarkian sort, to be socialistic. Certainly, if the taking over by the State of the tobacco industry is socialistic, then Napoleon and Metternich must be numbered among the founders of Socialism.

When the Belgian State, for quite ordinary political and financial reasons, itself constructed its main railway lines; when Bismarck,

not under any economic compulsion, took over for the State the main Prussian railway lines, simply to be the better able to have them in hand in case of war, to bring up the railway employees as voting cattle for the Government, and especially to create for himself a new source of income independent of parliamentary votes — these were, by no means, socialistic measures, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously. Otherwise, the Royal Maritime Company, the Royal porcelain manufacture, and even the regimental tailor of the army would also be socialistic institutions, or even, as was seriously proposed by a sly dog in Frederick William III's reign, the taking over by the State of the brothels.]

If the crises reveal the inability of the bourgeoisie for managing any longer modern productive forces, the transformation of the large establishments for production and distribution into joint-stock companies, trusts, and State property, shows that the bourgeoisie is dispensable for this purpose. All the social functions of the capitalist are now performed by salaried employees. The capitalist has no social activity except pocketing dividends, cutting coupons and gambling on the Stock Exchange, where the various capitalists take their capital from one another. At first, the capitalistic mode of production displaced the workers. Now, it forces out the capitalists, and reduces them, just as it reduced the workers, to the ranks of the surplus-population, although not immediately into those of the industrial reserve army.

But, the transformation — either into joint-stock companies and trusts, or into State-ownership — does not do away with the capitalistic nature of the productive forces. In the joint-stock companies and trusts, this is obvious. And the modern State, again, is only the organization that bourgeois society gives itself in order to maintain the external conditions of the capitalist mode of production against the encroachments by both the workers and individual capitalists. The modern State, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist

machine — the State of the capitalists, the idealised total capitalist. The more it proceeds to the taking over of productive forces, the more it becomes the real total capitalist, the more it exploits its citizens. The workers remain wage-labourers — proletarians. The capitalist relation is not done away with. It is, rather, driven to extremes. But, at the extreme, it turns against itself. State-ownership of the productive forces is not the solution of the conflict, but concealed within it are the technical conditions that form the elements of that solution.

This solution can only consist in the practical recognition of the social nature of the modern forces of production, and therefore in bringing the modes of production, appropriation and exchange into harmony with the social character of the means of production. And this can only happen if society openly and directly takes possession of the productive forces that have outgrown all control, except that of society as a whole. In this way, the social character of the means of production and the products, which today turns against the producers themselves, periodically disrupts all production and exchange, and imposes itself violently and destructively as a blind natural law, is brought to bear by the producers with full consciousness and is transformed from a cause of disruption and periodic collapse into the most powerful lever of production itself.

Active social forces work exactly like natural forces: blindly, forcibly, destructively, as long as we do not recognise them and do not take them into account. But, when once we understand them, when once we grasp their action, their direction, their effects, it depends only upon ourselves to subject them more and more to our own will, and, by means of them, to reach our own ends. And this is especially true of today's powerful productive forces. As long as we obstinately refuse to understand the nature and the character of these social means of action — and this understanding goes against the grain of the capitalist mode of production, and its defenders — so long these forces are at work in spite of us, in

opposition to us, so long they master us, as we have explained in detail.

But once understood in their nature, they can be transformed in the hands of associated producers from demonic rulers into willing servants.

The difference is as that between the destructive force of electricity in the lightning in the storm, and electricity under command in the telegraph and the voltaic arc; the difference between a conflagration, and fire working in the service of man. With this recognition, at last, of the real nature of the productive forces of today, the social anarchy of production gives place to a social regulation of production upon a definite plan, according to the needs of the community and of each individual. Then the capitalist mode of appropriation, in which the product enslaves first the producer, and then the appropriator, is replaced by the mode of appropriation of the products that is based upon the nature of the modern means of production: on the one hand, direct social appropriation as a means of maintaining and expanding production, and on the other hand, direct individual appropriation as a means of life and enjoyment.

(Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, 1880, Part III)

The Paris Commune and the Bourgeois State

From the outset the Commune was compelled to recognize that the working class, once it had come to power, could not continue to run the old State machine; that in order not to lose again its only just conquered rule, this working class must, on the one hand, do away with all the old repressive machinery previously used against itself, and, on the other, safeguard itself against its own deputies and officials, by declaring them all, without exception, subject to recall at

any moment. What had been the defining characteristic of the previous State? Society had created its own organs to look after its common interests, originally through simple division of labor. But these organs, at whose head was the State power, had in the course of time, in pursuance of their own special interests, transformed themselves from the servants of society into the masters of society, as can be seen, for example, not only in the hereditary monarchy, but equally also in the democratic republic. Nowhere do “politicians” form a more separate, powerful section of the nation than in North America. There, each of the two great parties which alternately succeed each other in power is itself in turn controlled by people who make a business of politics, who speculate on seats in the legislative assemblies of the Union as well as of the separate States, or who make a living by carrying on agitation for their party and on its victory are rewarded with positions.

It is well known that the Americans have been striving for 30 years to shake off this yoke, which has become intolerable, and that in spite of all they can do they continue to sink ever deeper in this swamp of corruption. It is in America that we can best see how this separation of State power from society, of which it was originally intended to be merely a tool, is taking place. Here there is no dynasty, no nobility, no standing army except for a few men to watch on the Indians, no bureaucracy with permanent employment or pension rights. And yet we have two large gangs of political speculators who take turns seizing State power and exploiting it by the most corrupt means and for the most corrupt purposes – and the nation is powerless against these two large cartels of politicians who supposedly serve it but in reality exploit and plunder it.

Against this transformation of the State and the organs of the State from servants of society into masters of society – an inevitable transformation in all previous States – the Commune made use of two infallible expedients. In this first place, it filled all posts – administrative, judicial, and educational – by election on the basis of universal

suffrage of all concerned, with the right of the same electors to recall their delegate at any time. And in the second place, all officials, high or low, were paid only the wages received by other workers. The highest salary paid by the Commune to anyone was 6,000 francs. In this way an effective barrier to place-hunting and careerism was set up, even without the binding mandates for delegates to representative bodies, which were added for good measure.

(Friedrich Engels, *Introduction to the German Edition of The Civil War in France*, 1891)

... in Germany particularly the superstitious belief in the State has been carried over from philosophy into the general consciousness of the bourgeoisie and even of many workers. According to the philosophical notion, "the State is the realization of the idea" or the Kingdom of God on earth. Translated into philosophical terms, the State is the sphere in which eternal truth and justice is or should be realized. And from this follows a superstitious reverence for the State and everything connected with it, which takes roots the more readily as people from their childhood are accustomed to imagine that the affairs and interests common to the whole of society could not be looked after otherwise than as they have been looked after in the past, that is, through the State and its well-paid officials. And people think they have taken quite an extraordinary bold step forward when they have rid themselves of belief in hereditary monarchy and swear allegiance to the democratic republic. In reality, however, the State is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another, and indeed in the democratic republic no less than in the monarchy; and in the best case a evil bequeathed to the proletariat victorious in the struggle for class rule, whose worst aspects it will be just as unable, like the Commune, to immediately curtail as much as possible until a generation grown up in new, free social conditions will be able to throw the entire lumber of the state on the scrap-heap.

(Friedrich Engels, *Introduction to the German Edition of The Civil War in France*, 1891)

The State dies out

... a bunch of rather confused, *purely democratic demands* appear in the programme [the Lassalle's programme in favour of State Socialism], some of which are purely fashionable, such as 'legislation by the people', which exists in Switzerland and does more harm than good, if it does any good at all. *Administration* by the people, that would be something else. Likewise, the first condition of all freedom is missing: that all civil servants are accountable to every citizen for all their official acts before the ordinary courts and according to common law. I will not dwell on the fact that demands such as freedom of science and freedom of conscience appear in every liberal bourgeois programme and seem somewhat out of place here.

The free people's State has been transformed into a Free State. Grammatically speaking, a Free State is one in which the State is free towards its citizens, i.e. a State with a despotic government. We should drop all talk of the State, especially since the Commune, which was no longer a State in the true sense of the word. The *People's State* has been thrown at us *ad nauseam* by the anarchists, even though Marx's writings against Proudhon and later the *Communist Manifesto* declare outright that with the introduction of the socialist social order, the State will dissolve of itself and disappear. Since the State is only a temporary institution, used in the struggle, in the revolution, to keep down one's enemies by force, it is utter nonsense to speak of a Free People's State. As long as the proletariat still *needs* the State, it does not need it in the interests of freedom, but to keep its opponents down, and as soon as there is any question of freedom, the State as such ceases to exist. We would therefore propose that everywhere the word *State* be replaced by *Gemein-*

wesen (Community), a good old German word that can very well represent the French ‘commune.’

(*Letter from Friedrich Engels to August Bebel*, March 1875)

Whilst the capitalist mode of production more and more completely transforms the great majority of the population into proletarians, it creates the power which, under penalty of its own destruction, is forced to accomplish this revolution. Whilst it forces on more and more of the transformation of the vast means of production, already socialized, into State property, it shows itself the way to accomplishing this revolution. The proletariat seizes political power and turns the means of production into State property.

But, in doing this, it abolishes itself as proletariat, abolishes all class distinction and class antagonisms, abolishes also the State as State. Society, thus far, based upon class antagonisms, had need of the State. That is, of an organization of the particular class which was, *pro tempore*, the exploiting class, an organization for the purpose of preventing any interference from without with the existing conditions of production, and, therefore, especially, for the purpose of forcibly keeping the exploited classes in the condition of oppression corresponding with the given mode of production (slavery, serfdom, wage-labor). The State was the official representative of society as a whole; the gathering of it together into a visible embodiment. But, it was this only in so far as it was the State of that class which itself represented, for the time being, society as a whole:

- in ancient times, the State of slave-owning citizens;
- in the Middle Ages, the feudal lords;
- in our own times, the bourgeoisie.

When, at last, it becomes the real representative of the whole of society, it renders itself unnecessary. As soon as there is no longer

any social class to be held in subjection; as soon as class rule, and the individual struggle for existence based upon our present anarchy in production, with the collisions and excesses arising from these, have been eliminated, nothing more remains to be repressed, and a special repressive force, a State, is no longer necessary. The first act by virtue of which the State really constitutes itself the representative of the whole of society — the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society — this is, at the same time, its last independent act as a State. State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies out of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of production processes. The State is not “abolished”. It dies out.

(Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, 1880)

Beyond the State

The State is therefore by no means a power imposed on society from outside; nor is it ‘the reality of the moral idea,’ ‘the image and reality of reason,’ as Hegel claims (*Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, § 257 and § 360). Rather, it is a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, has split into irreconcilable opposites which it is powerless to dispel. But in order that these antagonisms, i.e. classes with conflicting economic interests, do not consume themselves and society in a fruitless struggle, a power apparently standing above society has become necessary to dampen the conflict and keep it within the bounds of ‘order’; and this power, which has emerged from society but stands above it and is increasingly alienating itself from it, is the State.

[...]

Since the State arose from the need to keep class antagonisms in check, but since it arose at the same time in the midst of the conflict between these classes, it is generally the State of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which through it also becomes the politically dominant class and thus acquires new means for holding down and exploiting the oppressed class. Thus, the ancient State was primarily a State of slave owners for the oppression of slaves, just as the feudal state was an organ of the nobility for the oppression of serfs and peasants, and the modern representative State is a tool for the exploitation of wage labour by capital. Exceptionally, however, there are periods when the warring classes are so evenly balanced that the State power, as an apparent mediator, momentarily gains a certain independence from both. Such was the absolute monarchy of the 17th and 18th centuries, which held the balance between the nobility and the bourgeoisie; such was the Bonapartism of the First and especially the Second French Empire, which played the proletariat off against the bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie off against the proletariat. The latest achievement of this kind, in which rulers and ruled appear equally ridiculous, is the new German empire of Bismarck's nation: here capitalists and workers are balanced against each other and equally cheated for the benefit of the degenerate Prussian junkers.

[...]

The State is therefore not eternal. There have been societies that managed without it, that had no concept of the State or State authority. At a certain stage of economic development, which was necessarily linked to the division of society into classes, this division made the State a necessity. We are now rapidly approaching a stage of development of production at which the existence of these classes has not only ceased to be a necessity, but has become a positive obstacle to production. They will fall, just as inevitably as they arose in the past. With them, the State will inevitably fall. The society that

reorganises production on the basis of the free and equal association of producers will consign the entire State apparatus to its proper place: the museum of antiquities, alongside the spinning wheel and the bronze axe.

(Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, 1884)

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Ludwig von Mises

About the State (1919-1962)

These passages, taken from the writings of Ludwig von Mises, present a thinking characterized by strong ambivalent views. The State is portrayed either as an absolutely indispensable entity or as an absolutely obnoxious agency.

This ambivalence has probably to do with the classic liberal vision of the State that idealized the liberal State and demonized the socialist State.

However, to every rational and critical person, including some liberals like de Molinari and de Puydt, many anarchists and some socialists, the territorial monopolistic State is mainly a violent organization set up by and operating at the service of an exploitative class.

This is why this monopolistic power needs to be overcome. To this aim many classic liberal thinkers like von Mises can offer some critical insights but not always a consistent and practically useful analysis and strategy.

State, statism, statolatry

For and against the State

State, money, banking

State, war and the business community

The State and the capitalists

Human being is bad

Against Anarchism

For the democratic State

Bureaucracy

Taxation

Property

Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, Protectionism

Varia

References

State, statism, statolatry

The birth of the modern State

The modern state is built upon the ruins of feudalism. It substituted bureaucratic management of public affairs for the supremacy of a multitude of petty princes and counts.

(*Bureaucracy*, 1944, Introduction. Bureaucratism and Totalitarianism)

The totalitarian State

In the second part of this period individualism gave way to another trend, the trend toward state omnipotence. Men now seem eager to vest all powers in governments, i.e., in the apparatus of social compulsion and coercion. They aim at totalitarianism, that is, conditions in which all human affairs are managed by governments. They hail every step toward more government interference as progress toward a more perfect world; they are confident that the governments will transform the earth into a paradise. Characteristically, nowadays in the countries furthest advanced toward totalitarianism even the use of the individual citizen's leisure time is considered as a task of the government. In Italy *dopolavoro* and in Germany *Freizeitgestaltung* are regular legitimate fields of government interference. To such an extent are men entangled in the tenets of state idolatry that they do not see the paradox of a government-regulated leisure.

(*Omnipotent Government*, 1944, Introduction)

Statism as Neo-mercantilism

Etatism ... may with some justification be called neo-Mercantilism.

(*Omnipotent Government*, 1944, Chapter 1)

The features of the State

Etatism assigns to the state the task of guiding the citizens and of holding them in tutelage. It aims at restricting the individual's freedom to act. It seeks to mold his destiny and to vest all initiative in the government alone.

(*Omnipotent Government*, 1944, Chapter 3)

The state is essentially an apparatus of compulsion and coercion. The characteristic feature of its activities is to compel people through the application or the threat of force to behave otherwise than they would like to behave.

But not every apparatus of compulsion and coercion is called a state.

This restriction of the notion of the state leads directly to the concepts of state territory and sovereignty. Standing on its own power implies that there is a space on the earth's surface where the operation of the apparatus is not restricted by the intervention of another organization; this space is the state's territory. Sovereignty (*suprema potestas*, supreme power) signifies that the organization stands on its own legs. A state without territory is an empty concept. A state without sovereignty is a contradiction in terms.

(*Omnipotent Government*, 1944, Chapter 3)

Statolatry

Today the fashionable philosophy of Statolatry has obfuscated the issue. The political conflicts are no longer seen as struggles between groups of men. They are considered a war between two principles, the good and the bad. The good is embodied in the great god State, the materialization of the eternal idea of morality, and the bad in the "rugged individualism" of selfish men. In this antagonism the State is always right and the individual always wrong. The State is the representative of the commonweal, of justice, civilization, and superior wisdom. The individual is a poor wretch, a vicious fool.

(*Bureaucracy*, 1944, The social and political implications of bureaucratization)

From the writings of the German etatists the civil servant emerges as a saintly being, a sort of monk who forsook all earthly pleasures and all personal happiness in order to serve, to the best of his abilities, God's lieutenant, once the Hohenzollern king and today the Führer.

(*Bureaucracy*, 1944, The social and political implications of bureaucratization)

Every German took it for granted that the very essence and nature of things make it imperative that universities, railroads, telegraphs, and

telephones be operated by the government. For a Russian the idea that a man could live without a passport, duly issued and authenticated by the police, always seemed paradoxical. Under the conditions that developed in the last thirty years the citizens of continental Europe became mere appurtenances of their identification papers. In many countries it was risky to go out for a walk without these documents. In most European countries a man has not been free to stay overnight in any place without immediately reporting to the local police department his sleeping place and every change of address.

(*Bureaucracy*, 1944, The psychological consequences of bureaucratization)

For and against the State

The State as an indispensable entity

With human nature as it is, the state is a necessary and indispensable institution. The state is, if properly administered, the foundation of society, of human coöperation and civilization. It is the most beneficial and most useful instrument in the endeavors of man to promote human happiness and welfare. But it is a tool and a means only, not the ultimate goal. It is not God. It is simply compulsion and coercion; it is the police power.

(*Omnipotent Government*, 1944, Chapter 3)

The State as a human institution

The state is a human institution, not a superhuman being. He who says "state" means coercion and compulsion. He who says: There should be a law concerning this matter, means: The armed men of the government should force people to do what they do not want to do, or not to do what they like. He who says: This law should be better

enforced, means: The police should force people to obey this law. He who says: The state is God, deifies arms and prisons. The worship of the state is the worship of force. There is no more dangerous menace to civilization than a government of incompetent, corrupt, or vile men. The worst evils which mankind ever had to endure were inflicted by bad governments. The state can be and has often been in the course of history the main source of mischief and disaster.

(*Omnipotent Government*, 1944, Chapter 3)

Spontaneous order is good ... but government is indispensable

The authority of man-made law is entirely due to the weapons of the constables who enforce obedience to its provisions. Nothing of what is to be said about the necessity of governmental action and the benefits derived from it can remove or mitigate the suffering of those who are languishing in prisons. No reform can render perfectly satisfactory the operation of an institution the essential activity of which consists in inflicting pain.

(*The Ultimate Foundation of Economic Science*, 1962)

Responsibility for the failure to discover a perfect system of government does not rest with the alleged backwardness of what is called political science. If men were perfect, there would not be any need for government. With imperfect men no system of government could function satisfactorily.

(*The Ultimate Foundation of Economic Science*, 1962)

The eminence of man consists in his power to choose ends and to resort to means for the attainment of the ends chosen; the activities of government aim at restricting this discretion of the individuals. Every man aims at avoiding what causes him pain; the activities of government ultimately consist in the infliction of pain. All great achievements of mankind were the product of a spontaneous effort

on the part of individuals; government substitutes coercion for voluntary action. It is true, government is indispensable because men are not faultless. But designed to cope with some aspects of human imperfection, it can never be perfect.

(*The Ultimate Foundation of Economic Science*, 1962)

The State : apparatus of coercion and guarantor of freedom

The state, the social apparatus of coercion and compulsion, is by necessity a hegemonic bond. If government were in a position to expand its power ad libitum, it could abolish the market economy and substitute for it all-round totalitarian socialism. In order to prevent this, it is necessary to curb the power of government. This is the task of all constitutions, bills of rights, and laws. This is the meaning of all struggles which men have fought for liberty.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 15, 6)

Government means always coercion and compulsion and is by necessity the opposite of liberty. Government is a guarantor of liberty and is compatible with liberty only if its range is adequately restricted to the preservation of what is called economic freedom. Where there is no market economy, the best-intentioned provisions of constitutions and laws remain a dead letter.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 15, 6)

Against State schools

There is, in fact, only one solution: the state, the government, the laws must not in any way concern themselves with schooling or education. Public funds must not be used for such purposes. The rearing and instruction of youth must be left entirely to parents and to private associations and institutions.

(*Liberalism*, 1927, Chapter 3, 3)

State, money, banking

Easy money

All governments, however, are firmly resolved not to relinquish inflation and credit expansion. They have all sold their souls to the devil of easy money. It is a great comfort to every administration to be able to make its citizens happy by spending. For public opinion will then attribute the resulting boom to its current rulers. The inevitable slump will occur later and burden their successors. It is the typical policy of *après nous le déluge*. Lord Keynes, the champion of this policy, says: "In the long run we are all dead." But unfortunately nearly all of us outlive the short run. We are destined to spend decades paying for the easy money orgy of a few years.

(*Omnipotent Government*, 1944, Part IV, Chapter 11, 6)

State and banking

The attitudes of the European governments with regard to banking were from the beginning insincere and mendacious. The pretended solicitude for the nation's welfare, for the public in general, and for the poor ignorant masses in particular was a mere blind. The governments wanted inflation and credit expansion, they wanted booms and easy money.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 17, 12)

It is a fable that governments interfered with banking in order to restrict the issue of fiduciary media and to prevent credit expansion. The idea that guided governments was, on the contrary, the lust for inflation and credit expansion. They privileged banks because they wanted to widen the limits that the unhampered market draws to credit expansion or because they were eager to open to the treasury a source of revenue. For the most part both of these considerations motivated the authorities. They were convinced that the fiduciary

media are an efficient means of lowering the rate of interest, and asked the banks to expand credit for the benefit of both business and the treasury.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 17, 12)

Many governments never looked upon the issuance of fiduciary media from a point of view other than that of fiscal concerns. In their eyes the foremost task of the banks was to lend money to the treasury. The money-substitutes were favorably considered as pace-makers for government-issued paper money. The convertible banknote was merely a first step on the way to the nonredeemable banknote. With the progress of statolatry and the policy of interventionism these ideas have become general and are no longer questioned by anybody.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 17, 12)

State, war and the business community

Peace and the removal of all State compulsion

Whoever wishes peace among peoples must fight statism.

(*Nation State and Economy*, 1919, Nation and State, Chapter 2, 2 B)

Full freedom of movement of persons and goods, the most comprehensive protection of the property and freedom of each individual, removal of all state compulsion in the school system, in short, the most exact and complete application of the ideas of 1789, are the prerequisites of peaceful conditions.

(*Nation State and Economy*, 1919, Nation and State, Chapter 2, 2 D)

As long as nations cling to protective tariffs, immigration barriers, compulsory education, interventionism, and etatism, new conflicts capable of breaking out at any time into open warfare will continually arise to plague mankind.

(*Liberalism*, 1927, Chapter 3, 10)

War can be a golden source of profits for part of the business community

It was dear to everyone that the very outbreak of the war had to bring harmful interruptions in business life on the whole, and in Germany and Austria at the beginning of August 1914 people faced the future with fear. Astonishingly, however, things seemed to work otherwise. Instead of the expected crisis came a period of good business; instead of decline, boom. People found that war was prosperity; businessmen who, before the war, were thoroughly peace-minded and were always reproached by the friends of war for the anxiety that they were always showing at every flare-up of war rumors now began to reconcile themselves to the war. All at once there were no longer any unsalable products, enterprises that for years had run only at a loss yielded rich profits. Unemployment, which had assumed a menacing extent in the first days and weeks of the war, disappeared completely, and wages rose. The entire economy presented the picture of a gratifying boom.

(*Nation State and Economy*, 1919, War and the Economy. Chapter 4)

Protectionism, Militarism, Industrialism

... as the German protective-tariff policy permitted the German entrepreneurial class to identify itself with the Prussian state, militarism and industrialism became politically related concepts for Germany ...

(*Nation State and Economy*, 1919, Socialism and Imperialism, Chapter 1)

The State is good for peace

What elevates man above all other animals is the cognition that peaceful cooperation under the principle of the division of labor is a better method to preserve life and to remove felt uneasiness than indulging in pitiless biological competition for a share in the scarce means of subsistence provided by nature. Guided by this insight, man alone among all living beings consciously aims at substituting social cooperation for what philosophers have called the state of nature or *bellum omnium contra omnes* [war of all against all] or the law of the jungle. However, in order to preserve peace, it is, as human beings are, indispensable to be ready to repel by violence any aggression, be it on the part of domestic gangsters or on the part of external foes. Thus, peaceful human cooperation, the prerequisite of prosperity and civilization, cannot exist without a social apparatus of coercion and compulsion, i.e., without a government. The evils of violence, robbery, and murder can be prevented only by an institution that itself, whenever needed, resorts to the very methods of acting for the prevention of which it is established. There emerges a distinction between illegal employment of violence and the legitimate recourse to it. In cognizance of this fact some people have called government an evil, although admitting that it is a necessary evil. However, what is required to attain an end sought and considered as beneficial is not an evil in the moral connotation of this term, but a means, the price to be paid for it. Yet the fact remains that actions that are deemed highly objectionable and criminal when perpetrated by “unauthorized” individuals are approved when committed by the “authorities.”

(*The Ultimate Foundation of Economic Science*, 1962)

The State is bad because of violence

It is a double-edged makeshift to entrust an individual or a group of individuals with the authority to resort to violence. The enticement

implied is too tempting for a human being. The men who are to protect the community against violent aggression easily turn into the most dangerous aggressors. They transgress their mandate. They misuse their power for the oppression of those whom they were expected to defend against oppression. The main political problem is how to prevent the police power from becoming tyrannical. This is the meaning of all the struggles for liberty. The essential characteristic of Western civilization that distinguishes it from the arrested and petrified civilizations of the East was and is its concern for freedom from the state. The history of the West, from the age of the Greek πόλις [city-state] down to the present-day resistance to socialism, is essentially the history of the fight for liberty against the encroachments of the officeholders.

(The Ultimate Foundation of Economic Science, 1962)

The State as promoter of peace

In order to preserve the state of affairs in which there is protection of the individual against the unlimited tyranny of stronger and smarter fellows, an institution is needed that curbs all antisocial elements. Peace — the absence of perpetual fighting by everyone against everyone — can be attained only by the establishment of a system in which the power to resort to violent action is monopolized by a social apparatus of compulsion and coercion and the application of this power in any individual case is regulated by a set of rules — the man-made laws as distinguished both from the laws of nature and those of praxeology. The essential implement of a social system is the operation of such an apparatus commonly called government.

(Human Action, 1949, Chapter 15, 6)

As far as the government — the social apparatus of compulsion and oppression — confines the exercise of its violence and the threat of such violence to the suppression and prevention of antisocial action,

there prevails what reasonably and meaningfully can be called liberty.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 15, 6)

Government, i.e., a social apparatus of coercion and compulsion, is a necessary requisite of peaceful cooperation. The market economy cannot do without a police power safeguarding its smooth functioning by the threat or the application of violence against peace-breakers. But the indispensable administrators and their armed satellites are always tempted to use their arms for the establishment of their own totalitarian rule. For ambitious kings and generalissimos the very existence of a sphere of the individuals' lives not subject to regimentation is a challenge. Princes, governors, and generals are never spontaneously liberal. They become liberal only when forced to by the citizens.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 15, 14)

National sovereignty is necessary for peace

Liberalism did not and does not build its hopes upon abolition of the sovereignty of the various national governments, a venture which would result in endless wars.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 24, 5)

The State and the capitalists

The rich capitalists as conservative state interventionists

The rich, who are already in possession of wealth, have no special reason to desire the preservation of a system of unhampered competition open to all; particularly if they did not themselves earn their fortune, but inherited it, they have more to fear than to hope from

competition. They do have a special interest in interventionism, which always has a tendency to preserve the existing division of wealth among those in possession of it.

(*Liberalism*, 1927, Chapter 4, 6)

Privileges ... for some producers

...within individual countries minority groups have succeeded in obtaining privileges beneficial to themselves and detrimental to the majority of the nation.

(*Omnipotent Government*, Part IV, Chapter 11, 3)

But most supporters of international planning have not the least intention of making raw materials and foodstuffs cheaper. On the contrary. What they really have in mind is raising prices and restricting supply. They see the best promise in the policies by which various governments — mainly in the last twenty years — have tried to put into effect restrictions and price increases for the benefit of special groups of producers and to the disadvantage of consumers.

The only way to increase the sales of coffee and to make prices go up on a nonmonopolized market is to buy more products from those countries in which coffee consumption would expand if their exports increased. But the pressure groups of the producers reject this solution and work for monopoly prices. They want to substitute monopolistic schemes for the operation of an unhampered market.

Export sales drop because imports have been checked; thus the prices of export goods also drop; and then a demand arises for measures to make prices go up.

The government can give to one group only what it takes from another.

(*Omnipotent Government*, 1944, Part IV, Chapter 11, 4)

The collusion state rulers - company executives

Why bother about bringing out better and cheaper products if one can rely on support on the part of the government? For them government contracts, more effective tariff protection, and other government favors were the main concern. And they paid for such privileges by contributions to party funds and government propaganda funds and by appointing people sympathetic to the authorities.

(*Bureaucracy*, 1944, Bureaucratic Management of Private Enterprises)

The conservatism of the masters

Conservatism is contrary to the very nature of human acting. But it has always been the cherished program of the many, of the inert who dully resist every attempt to improve their own conditions which the minority of the alert initiate. In employing the term reactionary one mostly refers only to the aristocrats and priests who called their parties conservative.

Yet the outstanding examples of the reactionary spirit were provided by other groups: by the guilds of artisans blocking entrance into their field to newcomers; by the farmers asking for tariff protection, subsidies and “parity prices”; by the wage earners hostile to technological improvements and fostering featherbedding and similar practices.

(*The Anti-capitalistic mentality*, 1956, Chapter 5)

The State favouring export

The advocates of government interference with business ascribe to the “State” the power to benefit certain groups within the framework of the market by a mere fiat. In fact this power is the government’s power to foster monopolistic combines. The monopoly gains are the funds out of which the “social gains” are financed. As far as these

monopoly gains do not suffice, the various measures of interventionism immediately paralyze the operation of the market; mass unemployment, depression, and capital consumption appear. This explains the eagerness of all contemporary governments to foster monopoly in all those sectors of the market which are in some way or other connected with export trade.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 16, 6)

Monied people and entrepreneurs took advantage of lending to the State

The state, this new deity of the dawning age of statolatry, this eternal and superhuman institution beyond the reach of earthly frailties, offered to the citizen an opportunity to put his wealth in safety and to enjoy a stable income secure against all vicissitudes. It opened a way to free the individual from the necessity of risking and acquiring his wealth and his income anew each day in the capitalist market. He who invested his funds in bonds issued by the government and its subdivisions was no longer subject to the inescapable laws of the market and to the sovereignty of the consumers. He was no longer under the necessity of investing his funds in such a way that they would best serve the wants and needs of the consumers. He was secure, he was safeguarded against the dangers of the competitive market in which losses are the penalty of inefficiency; the eternal state had taken him under its wing and guaranteed him the undisturbed enjoyment of his funds. Henceforth his income no longer stemmed from the process of supplying the wants of the consumers in the best possible way, but from the taxes levied by the state's apparatus of compulsion and coercion. He was no longer a servant of his fellow citizens, subject to their sovereignty; he was a partner of the government which ruled the people and exacted tribute from them. What the government paid as interest was less than the market offered. But this difference was far outweighed by the unquestionable solvency of the debtor, the state whose revenue did not depend on satisfying the public, but on insisting on the payment of taxes.

Capitalists and entrepreneurs were fully aware of the fact that in the market society there is no means of preserving acquired wealth other than by acquiring it anew each day in tough competition with everybody, with the already existing firms as well as with newcomers “operating on a shoe string.” The entrepreneur, grown old and weary and no longer prepared to risk his hard-earned wealth by new attempts to meet the wants of consumers, and the heir of other people’s profits, lazy and fully conscious of his own inefficiency, preferred investment in bonds of the public debt because they wanted to be free from the law of the market.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 12, 5)

State, businessmen and inflation

Living and acting in an environment in which a slow but continuous fall in the monetary unit’s purchasing power is deemed normal, necessary, and beneficial, he [the average businessman] simply cannot comprehend a different state of affairs. He associates the notions of rising prices and profits on the one hand and of falling prices and losses on the other.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 17, 18)

Liabilities and the changing behaviour of state rulers

The laws concerning liability and indemnification for damages caused were and still are in some respects deficient. By and large the principle is accepted that everybody is liable to damages which his actions have inflicted upon other people. But there were loopholes left which the legislators were slow to fill. In some cases this tardiness was intentional because the imperfections agreed with the plans of the authorities. When in the past in many countries the owners of factories and railroads were not held liable for the damages which the conduct of their enterprises inflicted on the property and health of neighbors, patrons, employees, and other people through smoke, soot, noise, water pollution, and accidents caused by defective or

inappropriate equipment, the idea was that one should not undermine the progress of industrialization and the development of transportation facilities. The same doctrines which prompted and still are prompting many governments to encourage investment in factories and railroads through subsidies, tax exemption, tariffs, and cheap credit were at work in the emergence of a legal state of affairs in which the liability of such enterprises was either formally or practically abated. Later again the opposite tendency began to prevail in many countries and the liability of manufacturers and railroads was increased as against that of other citizens and firms. Here again definite political objectives were operative. Legislators wished to protect the poor, the wage earners, and the peasants against the wealthy entrepreneurs and capitalists.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 23, 6)

Human being is bad

Man is basically a violent selfish animal

Zoologically seen, man is an animal. But there prevails a fundamental difference between the conditions of all other animals and those of man. Every living being is naturally the implacable enemy of every other living being, especially of all other members of his own species. For the means of subsistence are scarce. They do not permit all specimens to survive and to consummate their existence up to the point at which their inborn vitality is fully spent. This irreconcilable conflict of essential interests prevails first of all among the members of the same species because they depend for their survival on the same foodstuffs. Nature is literally “red in tooth and claw.” (Alfred Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, 1849, LVI, iv.)

(*The Ultimate Foundation of Economic Science*, 1962)

What the individual forgoes in order to cooperate with other individuals is not his personal interests opposed to that of the phantom society. He forsakes an immediate boon in order to reap at a later date a greater boon. His sacrifice is provisional. He chooses between his interests in the short run and his interests in the long run, those which the classical economists used to call his “rightly understood” interests.

(*The Ultimate Foundation of Economic Science*, 1962)

The human being is evil

Government as such is not only not an evil, but the most necessary and beneficial institution, as without it no lasting social cooperation and no civilization could be developed and preserved. It is a means to cope with an inherent imperfection of many, perhaps of the majority of all people. If all men were able to realize that the alternative to peaceful social cooperation is the renunciation of all that distinguishes *Homo sapiens* from the beasts of prey, and if all had the moral strength always to act accordingly, there would not be any need for the establishment of a social apparatus of coercion and oppression. Not the state is an evil, but the shortcomings of the human mind and character that imperatively require the operation of a police power. Government and state can never be perfect because they owe their *raison d'être* to the imperfection of man and can attain their end, the elimination of man's innate impulse to violence, only by recourse to violence, the very thing they are called upon to prevent.

(*The Ultimate Foundation of Economic Science*, 1962)

Against Anarchism

Anarchism based on a misunderstanding of human nature

In an anarchist society is the possibility entirely to be excluded that someone may negligently throw away a lighted match and start a fire or, in a fit of anger, jealousy, or revenge, inflict injury on his fellow man? Anarchism misunderstands the real nature of man. It would be practicable only in a world of angels and saints.

Liberalism is not anarchism, nor has it anything whatsoever to do with anarchism. The liberal understands quite clearly that without resort to compulsion, the existence of society would be endangered and that behind the rules of conduct whose observance is necessary to assure peaceful human cooperation must stand the threat of force if the whole edifice of society is not to be continually at the mercy of any one of its members.

(*Liberalism*, 1927, Chapter 1, 7)

The difference between liberalism and anarchism

Liberalism differs radically from anarchism. It has nothing in common with the absurd illusions of the anarchists. We must emphasize this point because etatists sometimes try to discover a similarity. Liberalism is not so foolish as to aim at the abolition of the state. Liberals fully recognize that no social coöperation and no civilization could exist without some amount of compulsion and coercion. It is the task of government to protect the social system against the attacks of those who plan actions detrimental to its maintenance and operation.

(*Omnipotent Government*, 1944, Chapter 3)

Those shallow-minded of the anarchists

A shallow-minded school of social philosophers, the anarchists, chose to ignore the matter by suggesting a stateless organization of mankind. They simply passed over the fact that men are not angels. They were too dull to realize that in the short run an individual or a group of individuals can certainly further their own interests at the expense of their own and all other peoples' long-run interests. A society that is not prepared to thwart the attacks of such asocial and short-sighted aggressors is helpless and at the mercy of its least intelligent and most brutal members. While Plato founded his utopia on the hope that a small group of perfectly wise and morally impeccable philosophers will be available for the supreme conduct of affairs, anarchists implied that all men without any exception will be endowed with perfect wisdom and moral impeccability. They failed to conceive that no system of social cooperation can remove the dilemma between a man's or a group's interests in the short run and those in the long run.

(The Ultimate Foundation of Economic Science, 1962)

The necessity of the State

The anarchists contend that a social order in which nobody enjoys privileges at the expense of his fellow-citizens could exist without any compulsion and coercion for the prevention of action detrimental to society. Such an ideal society could do without state and government, i.e., without a police force, the social apparatus of coercion and compulsion.

(Human Action, 1949, 1962, Chapter 8, 2)

The anarchists overlook the undeniable fact that some people are either too narrow-minded or too weak to adjust themselves spontaneously to the conditions of social life. Even if we admit that every sane adult is endowed with the faculty of realizing the good of social

cooperation and of acting accordingly, there still remains the problem of the infants, the aged, and the insane. We may agree that he who acts antisocially should be considered mentally sick and in need of care. But as long as not all are cured, and as long as there are infants and the senile, some provision must be taken lest they jeopardize society. An anarchistic society would be exposed to the mercy of every individual. Society cannot exist if the majority is not ready to hinder, by the application or threat of violent action, minorities from destroying the social order. This power is vested in the state or government. State or government is the social apparatus of compulsion and coercion. It has the monopoly of violent action. No individual is free to use violence or the threat of violence if the government has not accorded this right to him. The state is essentially an institution for the preservation of peaceful interhuman relations. However, for the preservation of peace it must be prepared to crush the onslaughts of peace-breakers.

(*Human Action*, 1949, 1962, Chapter 8, 2)

For the democratic State

For liberals the State is an absolute necessity

Liberalism is therefore far from disputing the necessity of a machinery of state, a system of law, and a government. It is a grave misunderstanding to associate it in any way with the idea of anarchism. **For the liberal, the State is an absolute necessity**, since the most important tasks are incumbent upon it: the protection not only of private property, but also of peace, for in the absence of the latter the full benefits of private property cannot be reaped.

(*Liberalism*, 1927, Chapter 1, 8)

There are no liberal governments

A liberal government is a *contradictio in adjecto* [a contradiction in terms]. Governments must be forced into adopting liberalism by the power of the unanimous opinion of the people; that they could voluntarily become liberal is not to be expected.

(*Liberalism*, Chapter 2, 3)

Liberalism in favour of democracy

For the sake of domestic peace, liberalism aims at democratic government. Democracy is therefore not a revolutionary institution. On the contrary, it is the very means of preventing revolutions. Democracy is a system providing for the peaceful adjustment of government to the will of the majority. When the men in office and their methods no longer please the majority of the nation, they will — in the next election — be eliminated, and replaced by other men and another system. Democracy aims at safeguarding peace within the country and among the citizens.

(*Omnipotent Government*, 1944, Part II, Chapter 3)

The alternatives to the liberal and democratic principle of majority rule are the militarist principles of armed conflict and dictatorial oppression.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 8, 2)

The liberals do not maintain that majorities are godlike and infallible; they do not contend that the mere fact that a policy is advocated by the many is a proof of its merits for the common weal. They do not recommend the dictatorship of the majority and the violent oppression of dissenting minorities.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 8, 2)

But the only question is: Who, should run the country? The voters or the bureaucrats?

(*Bureaucracy*, 1944, Who should be the Master?)

The importance of voting

... it is a distortion of truth to assert that the individual voter's ballot is without influence because many thousands or even millions of votes are required to decide the issue and that those of people not attached to any party virtually do not matter. Even if one were to admit this thesis for the sake of argument, it is a *non sequitur* to infer that the substitution of totalitarian principles for democratic procedures would make the officeholders more genuine representatives of the people's will than election campaigns.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 21, 7)

Bureaucracy

The necessity of bureaucratic management

Bureaucratic management, as distinguished from profit management, is the method applied in the conduct of administrative affairs, the result of which has no cash value on the market. The successful performance of the duties entrusted to the care of a police department is of the greatest importance for the preservation of social cooperation and benefits each member of society. But it has no price on the market, it cannot be bought or sold; it can therefore not be confronted with the expenses incurred in the endeavors to secure it. It results in gains, but these gains are not reflected in profits liable to expression in terms of money. The methods of economic calculation, and especially those of double-entry bookkeeping, are not applicable to them. Success or failure of a police department's activities cannot be ascertained according to the arithmetical procedures of profit-seeking business. No accountant can establish whether or not a police department or one of its subdivisions has succeeded.

Bureaucratic conduct of affairs is conduct bound to comply with detailed rules and regulations fixed by the authority of a superior body. It is the only alternative to profit management. Profit management is inapplicable in the pursuit of affairs which have no cash value on the market and in the non-profit conduct of affairs which could also be operated on a profit basis. The former is the case of the administration of the social apparatus of coercion and compulsion; the latter is the case in the conduct of an institution on a non-profit basis, e.g., a school, a hospital, or a postal system. Whenever the operation of a system is not directed by the profit motive, it must be directed by bureaucratic rules.

Bureaucratic conduct of affairs is, as such, not an evil. It is the only appropriate method of handling governmental affairs, i.e., the social apparatus of compulsion and coercion. As government is necessary, bureaucratism is — in this field — no less necessary.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 15, 10)

Efficiency and appraisal

Government efficiency and industrial efficiency are entirely different things

[But] no reform could transform a public office into a sort of private enterprise. A government is not a profit-seeking enterprise. The conduct of its affairs cannot be checked by profit-and-loss statements. Its achievement cannot be valued in terms of money.

(*Bureaucracy*, 1944, The crux of bureaucratic management)

A bureaucrat differs from a nonbureaucrat precisely because he is working in a field in which it is impossible to appraise the result of a man's effort in terms of money. The nation spends money for the upkeep of the bureaus, for the payment of salaries and wages, and for the purchase of all the equipment and materials needed. But what it

gets for the expenditure, the service rendered, cannot be appraised in terms of money, however important and valuable this “output” may be. Its appraisal depends on the discretion of the government.

(*Bureaucracy*, 1944, Bureaucratic personnel management)

The responsibility of the individual

The plain citizens are mistaken in complaining that the bureaucrats have arrogated powers; they themselves and their mandatories have abandoned their sovereignty.

(*Bureaucracy*, 1944, The plain citizen versus the professional propagandist of bureaucratization)

Taxation

Progressive taxation is acceptable

In and of itself the principle of taxation according to the ability to pay is not socialistic.

(*Nation State and Economy*, 1919, War and the Economy. Covering the State's War Costs)

The justifiability of taxes

The essential task of government is defense of the social system not only against domestic gangsters but also against external foes. He who in our age opposes armaments and conscription is, perhaps unbeknown to himself, an abettor of those aiming at the enslavement of all.

The maintenance of a government apparatus of courts, police officers, prisons, and of armed forces requires considerable expenditure.

To levy taxes for these purposes is fully compatible with the freedom the individual enjoys in a free market economy. To assert this does not, of course, amount to a justification of the confiscatory and discriminatory taxation methods practiced today by the self-styled progressive governments. There is need to stress this fact, because in our age of interventionism and the steady “progress” toward totalitarianism the governments employ the power to tax for the destruction of the market economy.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 15, 6)

Property

Expropriation of property sometimes makes sense

The demand to expropriate all private property and to redistribute it equally among all members of society made sense in a thoroughly agricultural society. There the fact that some people owned large estates was the corollary of the fact that others owned nothing or not enough to support them and their families. But it is different in a society in which the standard of living depends on the supply of capital goods. Capital is accumulated by thrift and saving and is maintained by abstention from decumulating and dissipating it.

(*The Ultimate Foundation of Economic Science*, 1962)

Private property is not sacred

Private property is a human device. It is not sacred. It came into existence in early ages of history, when people with their own power and by their own authority appropriated to themselves what had previously not been anybody's property. Again and again proprietors were robbed of their property by expropriation. The history of private

property can be traced back to a point at which it originated out of acts which were certainly not legal. Virtually every owner is the direct or indirect legal successor of people who acquired ownership either by arbitrary appropriation of ownerless things or by violent spoliation of their predecessor.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 24, 4)

Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, Protectionism

The liberal person as a cosmopolitan human being

The ultimate ideal envisioned by liberalism is the perfect cooperation of all mankind, taking place peacefully and without friction. Liberal thinking always has the whole of humanity in view and not just parts. It does not stop at limited groups; it does not end at the border of the village, of the province, of the nation, or of the continent. Its thinking is cosmopolitan and ecumenical: it takes in all men and the whole world. Liberalism is, in this sense, humanism; and the liberal, a citizen of the world, a cosmopolite.

(*Liberalism*, 1927, Chapter 3, 1)

Statism and protectionism

The only efficient way to equalize labor conditions all over the world would be freedom of migration. But it is precisely this which unionized labor of the better-endowed and comparatively underpopulated countries fights with every means available.

(*Omnipotent Government*, Part II, Chapter 3, 7)

The workers of those countries where natural conditions of production are more favorable and the population is comparatively thin enjoy the advantages of a higher marginal productivity of labor.

They get higher wages and have a higher standard of living. They are eager to protect their advantageous position by barring or restricting immigration. On the other hand, they denounce as “dumping” the competition of goods produced abroad by foreign labor remunerated at a lower scale; and they ask for protection against the importation of such goods.

(*Omnipotent Government*, Part II, Chapter 3, 7)

History between the two world wars is an open record of state intervention to foster monopoly and restriction by international agreements.

(*Omnipotent Government*, 1944, Part II, Chapter 3, 8)

Statism and nationalism

The principle of nationality was derived from the liberal principle of self-determination. But the Poles, the Czechs, and the Magyars substituted for this democratic principle an aggressive nationalism aiming at the domination of people speaking other languages. Very soon German and Italian nationalists and many other linguistic groups adopted the same attitude.

(*Omnipotent Government*, 1944, Part II, Chapter 4, 1)

What the Western liberals have failed to recognize is that there are large territories inhabited by people of different idioms.

(*Omnipotent Government*, 1944, Part II, Chapter 4, 1)

Varia

The Industrial Revolution

In the first decades of the Industrial Revolution the standard of living of the factory workers was shockingly bad when compared with the contemporary conditions of the upper classes and with the present conditions of the industrial masses. Hours of work were long, the sanitary conditions in the workshops deplorable. The individual's capacity to work was used up rapidly. But the fact remains that for the surplus population which the enclosure movement had reduced to dire wretchedness and for which there was literally no room left in the frame of the prevailing system of production, work in the factories was salvation. These people thronged into the plants for no reason other than the urge to improve their standard of living.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 21, 7)

Planning by concerted groups of businessmen

The idea of planning by the organized groups of the various branches of production is very popular with some businessmen. This would amount to a substitution of compulsory cartels for free enterprise and competition. It would set aside capitalism and put entrepreneur syndicalism in its place, something like a replica of the medieval guild system. It would not bring socialism, but all-round monopoly with all its detrimental consequences. It would impair supply and put serious obstacles in the way of technical improvements. It would not preserve free enterprise but give a privileged position to those who now own and operate plants, protecting them against the competition of efficient newcomers. It would mean a partial abdication of the state for the benefit of small groups of wealthy men.

(*Omnipotent Government*, 1944, Part IV, Chapter 11, 1)

State employment

Italian Fascism masked itself as a youth movement. Its party song, "*Giovinezza*," is a hymn of youth. Its buffoon Duce boasted still in his late fifties of his youthful vigor and was anxious to conceal his age like a coquettish lady. But the only concern of the rank-and-file Fascist was to get a government job. In the time of the Ethiopian war the present writer asked some graduate students of one of the great Italian universities for an explanation of their hostility to France and Great Britain. The answer was amazing: "Italy," they said, "does not offer enough opportunity for its intelligentsia. We want to conquer British and French colonies in order to get in the administration of these territories the jobs which are now in the hands of British and French bureaucrats."

(*Bureaucracy*, 1944, The psychological consequences of bureaucratization)

Justice is relative to social organization

The notion of justice makes sense only when referring to a definite system of norms which in itself is assumed to be uncontested and safe against any criticism.

There is no such thing as an absolute notion of justice not referring to a definite system of social organization. It is not justice that determines the decision in favor of a definite social system. It is, on the contrary, the social system which determines what should be deemed right and what wrong.

(*Human Action*, 1949, Chapter 27, 3)

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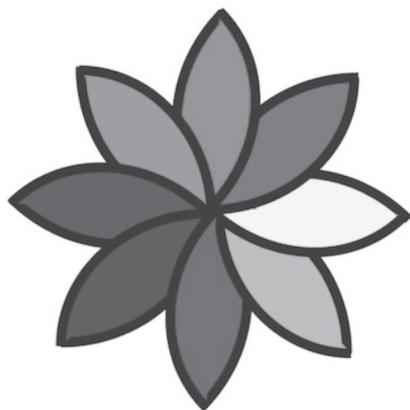
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