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In the course of its evolution, communism has been driven to determine itself both practically and theoretically in relation to the capitalist State. The State is the government of men organised into classes. Politics is the art of organising men. Political life is the confrontation of social (= class) interests over the direction of the state, that is to say, to determine how to organise men (= the relations between classes). Under capitalism, democracy is the political meeting place of different class interests and social groups (the economic meeting place is the market, which even those elements situated outside of the capitalist mode of production are obliged to enter, since everything tends to become a commodity).[1] With the development of capital, there are no longer any fundamental social oppositions between the classes and groups that meet in the political sphere : a) the bourgeoisie liquidates the remains of the former propertied class by incorporating them;[2] b) the bourgeoisie itself is

[1] Marx, Fondements de la critique de l’économie politique (Ebauche de 1857–1858), En annexe : travaux des années 1850–1859, Trad. Par R. Dangeville, Anthropos, 1967. Vol. II, pp. 1–65 suiv.

[2] “The bourgeoisie (…) finally absorbs all propertied classes it finds in existence” (Marx & Engels, The German Ideology, MECW vol 5 p. 77).

unified by the centralisation of capital. There only remain conflicts of interests between the various industrial and financial monopolies : but these are not opposed class interests, and the State reconciles them almost automatically. The only class opposition is between capital (unified and presenting an almost single face) and the proletariat.[3] Of course the unification of the bourgeoisie is nothing but a tendency, whose complete realisation is impossible because of the existence of competition (cf. Part One : "Value and development"). But it is precisely capital itself that opposes elements, its elements, its representatives, one against the other. Politics no longer opposes classes but the different layers inside the class of functionaries of capital.

Under these conditions, the decisive role of politics and democracy is to fool the proletariat. There are always political struggles, which cannot be completely reduced to struggles for power by persons and clans : in effect there are different programs. But on the one hand, this is above all a matter of different aspects of one and the same essential programme (this was not previously the case, for example in France before 1914, and especially at the start of the Third Republic, when certain political fractions attempted to restrain economic development). On the other hand, the parties exchange and reciprocally take as their own whole pieces of their respective programs. This state of affairs particularly developed after the crisis of 1929, and again to an even greater extent after the Second World War. In France, governments of right and left each brought their own solution to the crisis in the 30's : Laval through deflation (freezing civil service wages), then Blum through devaluation and an increase in spending power. By contrast, since 1945, governments of the big capitalist countries, whether they are of the right or the left, all use the same panoply of anti-crisis weapons : monetary politics (control

[3] Le 18 Brumaire, dans Marx Les Luttes de classes en France (1848–1850), Ed. Sociales, 1948, pp. 255–256.

of the mass of currency in circulation), budgetary politics (control of state credits, given a much greater importance since the state is itself a principal economic agent), and fiscal politics are used either alternately or simultaneously by all governments. In addition for Europe the movement of the constitution of nation States finished in 1870; in the same way, World War I marked the moment when, in Europe, capital destroyed the external hindrances to its development. From that point on, the State was above all the means for containing the productive forces, and for struggling against other States : which doesn't prevent rival States from uniting against the proletariat. Thus the action of the state is political, but above all it is economic : the struggle against overproduction.[4] The national setting has became too narrow : the only possible dimension for social development is the world.

Capital itself expresses this contradiction in practice, by rising up against the national limits which often hold back valorization. The tendency towards the destruction of national limitations is achieved by communism, but it appears under capitalism, and is developed by it to the extent that it advances the productive forces. However, just as it cannot itself suppress value, in the same way it cannot itself suppress the nation State. Only communism offers the possibility of an end to national and ethnic struggle, the perspective of the reconciliation of the species with itself, the birth of humanity as the only subject of history;[5] which doesn't exclude shocks and jolts during the period of transition. Communism thus presents itself as the destruction of national limits, and fights any demonstration of nationalism as counter-revolutionary.[6]

[4] Letter of Engels to Schmidt, 27 October 1890, Selected Correspondence. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1957. pp. 500–507.

[5] The re-appropriation of the conditions of life can be only global, universal : (Marx & Engels, The German Ideology, MECW vol 5, p. 87 (?)).

[6] Id., p. 73 (?). While pushing the movement of national State formation, communism prepared the following stage : "in recognising no homeland, the

Our times thus mark the completion of a whole evolution of political forms. In the United States, in France, in England, the classic bourgeois revolutions had created a representative system from which the people (petit-bourgeoisie, isolated peasants, wage earners) were excluded, but which united the interests of fractions of the bourgeoisie.[7] The newly created capitalist society assured its cohesion[8] through this place of meeting and compromise, where one fraction sometimes established its domination over the others. The groups making up the bourgeoisie were different, even opposed : some more progressive (in the sense of the development of capital), others more conservative (because tied to the old layers of the vanished feudal society). It is not enough to denounce democracy as the government of the bourgeoisie. For there is in this political system the possibility — and necessity — of a theoretical and practical self-criticism by the bourgeoisie which progressively purifies itself of its links with the former society. These links were still very strong in the 19th century, in Germany, but also in England and in France. Here democracy played a progressive historic role :[9] it was the political means by which capital came to dominate

international aims at the unity of humanity (…) it is against the watchword of nationality, because this formula has the tendency to divide the peoples" (Marx and Engels, exposition to the meeting of the general Council of the A.I.T., 25 July 1871,) There is no contradiction therefore between positions on the constitution of national States, when they represent historic progress, and the principle according to which the proletariat doesn't have a homeland (Marx & Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, in Marx, The Revolutions of 1848, Penguin 1973., pp. 84–5 (?) and the commentary that is made in the critique of the Gotha programme).

[7] On the bourgeoisie and the state after the French revolution, cf. Marx & Engels, The Holy Family. MECW vol 4 pp. 123–4 (?), and Marx & Engels, The German Ideology, MECW vol 5, p. 89 (?).

[8] On this cohesion see Marx & Engels, The Holy Family. MECW vol 4., pp. 120–21 (?).

[9] Marx, Engels, La Nouvelle Gazette Rhénane., t.1, 1er juin-5 septembre 1848, Tra., introduction et notes par L. Netter, Ed. Sociales, 1963, passim.

and political conflicts taking place outside western Europe. In the same way, if its counter-revolutionary character now begins to appear, it is because real social contradictions appear and oblige it to reveal its repressive face : capital is forced to become more and more totalitarian, because it needs to include and to contain the totality of the components of its society.[33]

[33] "In any case our sole adversary on the day of the crisis and on the day after the crisis will be the whole of the reaction which will group around pure democracy, and this, I think, should not be lost sight of…" (Marx & Engels, Selected Correspondence. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1957. p.457.)

(and generally in close connection), to itself, which then liquidated it as it became useless.[29]

Democracy thus fulfilled its role perfectly. First by crushing the proletariat (physically and ideologically). And when this appeared insufficient, the counter-revolution, for which democracy was only one instrument among others, got rid of it. After the defeat of the fascist countries, essentially due to their relative weakness compared to the other imperialist countries, democracy reappeared while participating all over again in the crushing of the proletariat :

a. during the last part of the war by organising (with the full collaboration of the workers parties) national anti-German coalitions in France and in Italy;

b. during the reconstruction and boom that followed the war.

Today the defence of democracy against "reaction" only has an anti-communist content.[30] The only reaction today is capital, as it well shows by reproducing after 1945 all the horrors which it would like to make the responsibility of a particular political form, whereas they constitute the contents of the dictatorship of capital in its phase of real domination (militarism, permanent wars, waste, massacres, misery, organised famine, etc.).[31] Democracy is no more than part of the counter-revolution, a screen used parallel to the most savage dictatorship.[32] It is not an ideological but a practical phenomenon : if it has been so successful after 1945, this is because its economic and political conditions were met by prosperity and peace in Europe, all the large social

[29] "Le P.C. d'Italie face à l'offensive fasciste (1921–1924)", Programme communiste, nos 45 to 50.

[30] Thèses de la gauche communiste (1945), Invariance, no 9, pp. 24–30.

[31] See for example "Le nouveau statut des entreprises d'Etat en Russie" (1965), Programme communiste, no 35.

[32] "Everything which used to be reactionary behaves as if it were democratic" (letter of Engels to Bebel, 11 December 1884, (Marx & Engels, Selected Correspondence. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1957., p. 456).

society.[10] At the end of the 19th century the Third Republic was obliged to pursue an anticlerical policy in order to definitively eradicate the remainders of monarchist and religious reaction. Schools were one of the essential weapons in this fight : the teacher representrd a force for (capitalist) progress compared to the priest. From this point of view, the workers movement supported the efforts of capital to get rid of these obstacles. But the secular state school system and the separation of Church and State are not in themselves instruments of social progress : at the completion of this movement, the capitalist school revealed all of its mystifying and obscurantist (thus finally reactionary) function, for example by disseminating nationalist ideology. The fact remains that in one specific historical period the democratic state fulfilled some revolutionary functions.[11] It was for this reason that in the 19th century communism in certain phases supported democracy, in order that it fully played its destructive revolutionary role.[12]

In the phase of formal domination, it put pressure on the state against the bourgeoisie (laws for a 10 hour working day, etc.). In the phase of real domination, workers reformism seeks to

[10] "Everything that centralises the bourgeoisie is of course advantageous to the workers." (Letter of Marx to Engels, 27 July 1866. Marx & Engels, Selected Correspondence, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1957 p.221).

[11] Yet since 1845, Marx and Engels affirmed that the "independence of the state" exists only in the backward countries : "The most perfect example of the modern state is North America." (Marx & Engels, The German Ideology, MECW vol 5. pp. 90.)

[12] The interest of the bourgeoisie in this topic is sometimes contradictory : cf. 18th Brumaire in Marx Les Luttes de classes en France (1848–1850), Ed. Sociales, 1948, pp. 200, 236, 254. Besides, the Communist position is always preparation of the ulterior stage, and by a struggle against the nation and the national State : "The working class alone constitutes a real active force of resistance against national swindles" (letter of Marx to Engels, 3 August 1870, Marx, Engels, La Commune de 1871, Lettres et déclarations pour la plupart inédites, Trad. et présentation de R. Dangeville, U.G.E., 1970. p. 49).

assure for itself a function that is already fulfilled by the State, and to integrate itself into the State (industrial legislation, etc.). Its action is counter-revolutionary.

Capital thus develops a political realm which is different from the State of the Ancien Régime. It introduces a new relationship between production and government, between economic agents and political subjects. The sum of the interests of the bourgeoisie is different from the sum of the interests of the former ruling classes. Strictly speaking there was no economic struggle between landowners : by contrast, capitalists are in opposition to one another. Thus it was necessary to create a body which stands above society, a bureaucratic and military apparatus which can at the same time reconcile their interests and cause them to triumph. The counter-revolution was able to present the creation of a State with autonomous power as a monstrous phenomenon, contrary to nature, opposed to the balance of the previous hierarchical system.[13] Of course, their presentation of the social body as a harmony disturbed by revolution rested on pure illusion. There were classes and class struggles before the bourgeois revolution. But that illusion was made all the more credible since politics and economics had formerly tended to go hand in hand. The rich had almost naturally been the political chiefs. The appearance of a separate political world was precisely a sign of change : thus the increasingly important role of ministers in England and France in the 17th and 18th centuries. In place of the pyramid of king/subjects, with its fixed intermediate groups (orders, corporations), a duality was substituted comprised of an economic sphere and a political sphere.

The state operates a relatively peaceful conciliation of the conflicts internal to capital and the struggles between capital

[13] "Bourgeoises abolish the natural state to erect and make a State that is them own." (Marx, Engels, L'Idéologie allemande. Présentée et annotée par G. Badia, Ed. Sociales, 1968., p. 381.)

economic or social programme, nor in its use of violence,[26] still less in its ideology. Its only innovation consists in the organisation of a whole ensemble of counter-revolutionary means, at all levels (economy, politics…).[27] The only foreseeable solution for capital is the reduction of its contradictions, by obtaining through violence (fascism), or through reformism the agreement of workers (Popular Front). But this is only for a period and in the end the result is the same : in both cases, the reduction of contradictions is necessarily accompanied by nationalism and militarism (both of which flourished under the Popular Front) and leads to preparations for a new imperialist war (the difference is that Germany could prepare for it under favourable conditions). After the downfall of the fascist countries, in 1943 and 1945, democracy presented itself all over again in those countries, as an alternative permitting progress in relation to the fascist regime. Actually, it had itself given birth to those systems and had never fought against them.[28] It had made itself the instrument of anti-proletarian violence and had been the first to set up special bodies of repression outside of the police and the regular army (Germany, 1919). Democracy served after 1914–1918 :

a. to make the proletariat believe that its democratic-parliamentary framework permitted a progressive evolution toward greater collective well-being and internal and international peace;

b. to allow counter-revolutionary forces to organise in parallel,

[26] In respect of June 1848, Marx speaks of "war of extermination" against workers proclaimed as "enemies of society" (Marx Les Luttes de classes en France (1848–1850), Ed. Sociales, 1948, pp. 142–143).

[27] Communisme et fascisme, Ed. Programme communiste, 1970 (texts of the P.C. italien, 1921–1924).

[28] On Spain see articles in Invariance, nos 7 and 8, and various articles (1936–1938) in Bilan, journal of the communist left.

and the proletariat. But it has recourse to the most energetic violence whenever it becomes necessary.[14] The phase during which democracy was revolutionary saw the use of violence against the proletariat, and against the undisciplined fractions of the petit bourgeoisie (1871) and even of the bourgeoisie itself.[15] The harmonisation of the interests of capital, with respect to itself and others, thus combines what is commonly called "democracy" and "dictatorship" (including the employment of systematic and organised terror and massacres : cf. the struggle against the Commune).

When capital generalises large-scale industry, its total domination of society has begun to be set in place. The real domination of capital over labour takes place with the development of relative surplus-value (cf. the previous section).[16] From this point it becomes necessary to obtain the worker's involvement in his work and to control his work, and at the same time to force him into a certain type of work, the intensity and productivity of which must constantly be increased (the development of the category of the semi-skilled worker and of assembly-line work, governed by the "scientific organisation of work", starting after the First world war).

At the same time, the organisation of the economy becomes necessary. It is well known that capitalism organises produc-

[14] In June 1848, cf. Marx, Engels, Écrits militaires, Violence et constitution des Etats européens modernes, Trad. et présenté par R. Dangeville, L'Herne, 1970., pp. 199–219"It (the people) didn't suspect that methods of war experimented in Algeria would be used in full in Paris" (p. 204).

[15] Le 18 Brumaire, in Marx Les Luttes de classes en France (1848–1850), Ed. Sociales, 1948, pp, 180–181.

[16] Fondements de la critique de l'économie politique (Ebauche de 1857–1858), En annexe : travaux des années 1850–1859, Trad. Par R. Dangeville, Anthropos, 1968., vol. II, p. 86 on "regimentation" in production (also pp. 89–90).

But one of the most important weapons of capital is the democratic illusion.[22] Most of the time, capital preserves the parliamentary facade. Of course, parliament was always the instrument of the bourgeoisie.[23] The difference is that in the past it used it to discipline itself. Today, the State bureaucracy fulfils this role much more simply since all fractions of the bourgeoisie[24] (that is to say of the class that manages capital : whether classic or State bourgeoisie) understand the object to be realised : to master and contain the development of capital. This doesn't mean : not to develop it, because capital is dynamic by definition, but to control its development, to use all economic and political means to avoid great economic crises and the communist revolution. Parliament, deprived of any real power is used today, rather effectively, as an instrument of mystification. It is curious to note that most of the countries which have carried out their bourgeois revolution in an original manner (the "socialist" countries) either preserve or create all the parts of a democratic machine under the most ridiculous conditions (99% votes in favour of the government). In certain countries, for historic reasons, democracy may have disappeared, even as a facade, in giving way to "new" political systems : thus it was in Germany and in Italy under fascism. In fact, the innovation only lay in the systematisation of processes already employed by capital during its "democratic" period.[25] Fascism doesn't bring anything new as regards

[22] Le fil du temps, no 8, p. 27.

[23] On "parliamentary cretinism", cf. The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, in Marx Surveys From Exile, Penguin. 1973, pp. 210–211.

[24] "The state is nothing but the organized collective power of the possessing classes (…)" (Engels, The Housing Question., Martin Lawrence. n.d., p. 71).

[25] See the description of the Société du Dix-Décembre (Bonapartist), The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, in Marx Surveys From Exile, Penguin. 1973, pp. 220–222.

tion rationally at the level of each business,[17] but that the ensemble of businesses, meeting in the market, do not form a harmonious whole : balance is only established through fights and destruction (under all kinds of forms : stocks of unsold goods, bankruptcies of companies). Capital is now obliged to organise society like a business because it is necessary to stifle, to reabsorb, the contradictions between business enterprises, and between capital and the proletariat.

Capital no longer merely subjugates the worker inside production, in the factory, but in the whole of his life. To this end it fights against the worker's spontaneously communist tendencies. Its action is at the same time economic, ideological and political. It develops a mind-numbing mass consumption.[18] It speaks in praise of the worker and the waged condition, thus creating a mythical world of work where the worker is a king. "Workers" parties play a primary role in this mystification : Labour Day as a national event, workers festivals, workers culture, which are grafted onto the workers traditional attempts at self-expression, dating from the time when a minority of skilled workers reached a level of cultural consumption (and perhaps, to a certain extent, of cultural creation) denied to other workers — quite simply, for example, because they could not read. One speaks in praise of work, and one celebrates its "dignity", whereas another type of activity is possible and necessary for economic and social development. The organisations of the labour movement also claim to continue the efforts towards the advancement of workers during the last century, an attempt which is purely reactionary today. The only social "advancement" which is possible is that

[17] Cf. the summary of Capital by Engels in Engels, Pour comprendre "Le Capital", Suivi de deux études de F. Mehring et R. Luxembourg sur le "Capital", Ed. Gît-le-coeur, s.d., pp. 57–58.

[18] Fondements de la critique de l'économie politique (Ebauche de 1857–1858), En annexe : travaux des années 1850–1859, Trad. Par R. Dangeville, Anthropos, 1967. Vol. I, pp. 236–237.

of all workers (and of humanity) producing social relations adapted to contemporary social development. One could show the extent of this ideology of work : in the reformist labour movement; in the most brutal counter-revolution (Nazism); in the Russian counter-revolution and generally in all "socialist" countries which glorify the proletariat and the proletarian condition.[19] This is the opposite of the Communist position which is the destruction of the proletarian condition as an out-of-date social relation. The goal of capital is to simultaneously drown the proletariat in the ideology of consumption, and in the consumption of ideology. It also meets an economic need : to fight against the tendency to overproduction.[20] Exchange must be spread as widely as possible : it is the colonisation of society by the commodity. But, in its function, the commodity is only at the service of capital : any destruction of the reign of the commodity by-passes that of the domination of capital.

At the same time, capital uses armed struggle whenever it is necessary.[21] But alongside this it regroups the proletariat around the national State, developing nationalism and all the ideologies of a nationalist type (here again the "workers" parties play a major role). In the same way as it mobilises men, capitalism mobilises their consciousness and attempts to impose on them an ideological mould. Hence the development among intellectuals of forms of tragic and unhappy consciousness.

[19] Letter from Marx to Engels, 12 June 1863, Marx & Engels, Selected Correspondence, Lawrence & Wishart, 1934 VII, pp. 151–2.

[20] Marx, Fondements de la critique de l'économie politique (Ebauche de 1857–1858), En annexe : travaux des années 1850–1859, Trad. Par R. Dangeville, Anthropos, pp. 368–371.

[21] On the role of violence and phases of capitalism, cf. Marx, Engels, Écrits militaires, Violence et constitution des Etats européens modernes, Trad. et présenté par R. Dangeville, L'Herne, 1970., Introduction, pp. 16 17 and 23 24.