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The Question of the State

La Guerre Sociale
1978

This text originally appeared in French in *La Guerre Sociale*, no. 2, in March 1978. A translation to English was made in the early 80s, and was later revised and posted online – with a substantial preface – on the John Gray Website at <https://web.archive.org/web/20091027060023/https://www.geocities.com/~johngray/questat.htm>.

Preface from the John Gray Website

“La Question de l’Etat” requires a longer introduction than is usual for the texts we put on line. There are two reasons for this.

The first is that it comes from the french ultra-left journal *La Guerre Sociale*. In the early 1980’s a number of french ultra-left groups became involved in supporting Robert Faurisson and his view that the nazi’s had not deliberately set out to commit genocide and that the gas chambers in the nazi death camps were a hoax perpetuated by the victorious allied nations to justify their own war crimes. (In France these ideas are called negationism). *La Guerre Sociale* were one of the main protagonists in this disgraceful stupidity.

The second reason is that this article was based on one written by Gilles Dauvé, and this has been used to help justify false allegations that he also supported Faurisson and his ideas. Allegations which have been made side by side with accusations that the critique of anti-fascism and democracy made by the ultra-left currents he belonged to in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s “opened the door” to negationism.

“La Question de l’Etat” is unmarked by either negationism, or by the misogyny evident in the loathsome “The Misery of Feminism”, which appeared in the same issue of *La Guerre Sociale*. (An english translation of this was recently published by Elephant editions). “La Question de l’Etat” represents an interesting perspective on the state. However it is scarcely possible to ignore where it has come from.

La Guerre Sociale was a group which produced a journal of the same name from the mid-1970’s to the mid-1980’s. Its leading spirit was Dominique Blanc who had formerly been part of a grouping called the Organisation des Jeunes Travailleurs révolutionnaires which had been formed in the early 1970’s. Originally inspired by the Situationist International, the OJTR subsequently became influenced by left communism, in particular the mixture of German and Italian left communist ideas developed by the milieu based around the bookshop La Vieille Taupe, from which had come the group Le Mouvement Communiste.

In 1972 the OJTR produced the text “Militantisme, stade suprême de l’aliénation” (available on line at this link). The grouping also produced texts under the

name Quatre Millions de Jeune Travailleurs, a name taken from a 1971 PSU youth publication (Parti Socialiste Unifié – a French Socialist Party). In 1974 the OJTR organised a national conference and disappeared shortly afterwards. From the remains of the group came a text “Un Monde Sans Argent” which attracted favourable attention. It was published as three pamphlets by the ‘Les Amis de 4 Millions de Jeunes Travailleu’ between 1975-76.

In 1976 Dominique Blanc published a journal called King Kong International with a group of former members of the OJTR, Le Mouvement Communiste and the milieu around La Vieille Taupe. The following year essentially the same grouping produced the first issue of *La Guerre Sociale*.

Blanc contacted a number of people regarding the possibility of collaboration in *La Guerre Sociale*. One of them was Gilles Dauvé, who at the time still used the pen-name Jean Barrot, and who had formerly been involved with the group Le Mouvement Communiste. Dauvé did not wish to become directly involved with *La Guerre Sociale*, but offered two texts for possible inclusion. Before either was published he had ceased any further involvement but said they could do as they wished with the texts.

One became the basis of the article reprinted here. It was rewritten without Dauvé’s participation – “completed, drastically cut and profoundly corrected and revised” according to *La Guerre Sociale*, although they also stated about 70% of the result was from Dauvé’s original article [*La Guerre Sociale* no. 7 pp 42 & 43]. The result appeared under the title “La Question de l’Etat” in the second issue of the journal. According to *La Guerre Sociale* Dauvé declined to have his initials put to the published article and also reportedly stated that his views about the state were better expressed in an introduction he wrote to a collection of articles from the 30’s left communist paper Bilan. (That introduction is available on line at that link. One part of it was translated into English, again without his involvement, under the title “Fascism/Antifascism”. The translation can be found at that link together with Dauvé’s recent comments on it). *La Guerre Sociale* for their part were emphatic that they were responsible for “La Question de l’Etat” and that it represented their viewpoint.

The second article which Dauvé had given them, titled “Le totalitarisme et son mythe”, was used as source material for a much longer text by *La Guerre Sociale* which appeared in its third issue (1979) under the title “De l’exploitation dans les camps à l’exploitation des camps”. This article was quite influential within some sections of the French ultra-left.

“De l’exploitation dans les camps à l’exploitation des camps” tackled the concentration camp system and its subsequent use for ideological purposes. It drew extensively on the work of Paul Rassinier, a lifelong pacifist and former left-opponent, socialist deputy and then member of the Anarchist Federation in the 1950’s, who had been imprisoned in German labour camps during the war for resistance activities. Rassinier had written a number of books after the war challenging other accounts of the concentration camps, in the course of which he moved from scepticism about the idea that there had been extermination camps as well as labour camps, and that there had been any deliberate genocide of jews, to denial of the scale of the genocide. For the ultra-left one of the points of interest in Rassinier’s writings was his visceral anti-Stalinism – in his account of his experiences he accused Communist Party members of collaboration in the functioning of the camps. What the *Guerre Sociale* article ‘failed’ to mention was Rassinier’s equally obvious anti-semitism. Unlike subsequent articles by *La Guerre Sociale* this one largely professed a careful agnosticism

regarding many of the claims of negationism – one account of this sorry episode in ultra-left history describes it as “pre-revisionist”.

However at the same time that the article was published in the journal, extracts were used on a wall poster titled “Qui est la juif?” (Who is the Jew?) which *Guerre Sociale* published in defence of Robert Faurisson, a then obscure professor of literature with a taste for controversy, who was being ‘persecuted’ for declaring that the gas chambers had not existed.... Faurisson’s ‘victimisation’ by opponents of his views was compared in the title of this wall poster to the victimisation of Jews. Thus began the frankly bizarre love affair between small sections of the French ultra-left and Faurisson, echoes of which have continued to reverberate ever since.

The ‘intellectual’ mentor of this coupling was Pierre Guillaume, an ex-member of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* and *Pouvoir Ouvriere* who had founded the bookshop *La Vieille Taupe*, which from 1965 to its closure in 1972 provided a home to the section of the ultra-left milieu referred to above. In 1978, some years after the bookshop had closed and the milieu around it had largely dispersed, Guillaume became infatuated with Faurisson and subsequently revived the name *La Vieille Taupe* for a publishing house devoted to negationism. Today he is the principal negationist publisher in France. However if Guillaume was the messenger, *La Guerre Sociale* were the prime movers in disseminating the revisionist message within the French ultra-left in the early 1980’s.

Gilles Dauvé’s involvement with Guillaume and *La Guerre Sociale* before they began to support Faurisson has in recent years been used to brand him, unjustly, as a negationist like them. In reality, in 1983 the disagreements between Dauvé (by then involved with the journal *La Banquise*), and *La Guerre Sociale*, disagreements which included a rejection of their support for Faurisson, as well as a rejection of the type of ultra-leftist activism which *La Guerre Sociale* stood for, became public with the appearance of the article “Le roman de nos Origines” in *La Banquise* no. 2. (It can be found – in French – at that link). Along with a lengthy critique of Guillaume and *La Guerre Sociale*, it contains an interesting account of the origins of these currents in the French ultra-left. Dauvé’s more recent views on the ultra-left’s involvement with Faurisson and negationism can be found here and also here.

The following translation of “La Question de l’Etat” is a revised version of an unpublished translation made in the early 1980’s in London.

1

The State increasingly occupies the totality of our lives. States seem to sustain the world, and each constituted State in a way creates society. The product of society, it appears to be society’s guarantor, even its founder. Assuring its cohesion, the State seems to give it life.

Any present day State has infinitely more power than the despots of yesteryear. The progress of “democracy” goes hand in hand with the strengthening of the State, and liberalism engenders its opposite.

The economic and technical socialisation of the world allows the State to spread its propaganda everywhere, through countless newspapers, radios and televisions, and thanks to rapid communications and modern technology it can send its police wherever it wants, in no time at all.

This omnipresence became universal with the conquest of the planet by capital. There is not a territory in the world which does not throw up a State. “Decolonisation” has multiplied their number. One can even see States where there is no nation.

Within borders drawn in chalk lines over thousands of miles, because they only express a division agreed between imperialist powers and local bourgeoisies, statist structures display the bare skeleton of the State, stripped of all the attributes which give it life in the West. Here it is reduced to its simplest expression: an administrative machine propped up by an army, and reinforced by an educational system.

Even when it's violently denounced as a parasite, the State is considered indispensable to the survival of societies. It might be a necessary evil, surpassable in the distant future of political science fiction. Indeed men of letters have discussed its withering away with V. Giscard d'Estaing, and the head of State himself has acknowledged that the dissolution of the State remains a valid objective.

But even in the most extreme thought, the concept of the abolition of the State only has a narrowly political meaning. The question of social transformation is never raised.

2

The question of the destruction of the State is central to the revolution to come, and thus central to revolutionary theory now. This question has been, and still is, an indicator of different positions towards revolution. It's the question of the State which has marked and continues to mark the dividing line.

Common sense considers the State an unsurpassable reality. If it isn't eternal, then perhaps it will disappear with the development of socialism. But paradoxically, the construction of this socialism is entrusted, either to a renovated version of the old State, or to a Workers' State. Socialism thus ends up legitimising the maintenance, and even the strengthening of the State.

The State is not the inevitable result of the complexity of modern technology and conditions of life. Communism doesn't have such a feeble constitution – a state of angelic behaviour – that its principles can only be applied once conflicts and contradictions are eliminated. Communism does not need a State, even a workers' or provisional State, to carry itself forward. It can only conduct its warfare according to its own principles, and it is from this that it draws its strength and its superiority; it is by shifting the conflict to new terrain that it will make the State vulnerable.

It will need to be effective, to organise, centralise and repress, but it will do this in its own way. By its nature, the State unifies and administers from outside. Communism dissolves separations, and directly establishes unity and community around common needs.

Modern conditions of life, and technical developments such as telecommunications and data processing, far from assuring the State's permanence, even if it now fashions and uses them according to its needs, assure the conditions of its supersession. Modern technology can be sabotaged, turned aside and transformed by the anti-statist movement.

3

Even in its original and simplest form, the basic relationship of feudal economy, the concession of land in exchange for the performance of certain personal services and for feudal dues, offered endless scope for legal dispute. This was particularly true in the relations of lords of the manor to their overlords, which gave many of them an interest in picking quarrels.

From this emerged a time honoured game that alternated the attraction of nobles towards the royal centre – which alone could protect them against outside forces

and from each other – and a repulsion from it, in which the new focus of attraction changed constantly and inescapably; from which arose an uninterrupted struggle between royalty and nobles whose quarrels consumed everybody else.

In this general chaos royalty formed the progressive element. It represented order amidst disorder, the formative nation as opposed to a dissolution into rival principalities. The revolutionary elements which formed under the surface of the feudal system, were reduced to supporting royalty, just as royalty was reduced to relying on them. The alliance between royalty and bourgeoisie dates back to the tenth century.

The kings' need for centralisation, and the needs of the newly emerged bourgeoisie for a world which no longer saw the feudal conditions of disorderly use of force, rape and plunder, gave them a basis for mutual agreement. For example, the rediscovery of Roman law, which provided a powerful weapon for royalty, was to such an extent the classic legal expression of the conflicts and the conditions of existence in any system where private property reigns, that all the legislation passed by the bourgeoisie after its seizure of political power could make no significant improvement to it.

It was the development of urban commerce that undermined feudalism, the enhanced role of money, the replacement of feudal dues and services by the general equivalent, but this also gave royalty a hitherto unknown power.

The feudal nobility had been able to maintain their position, in spite of their opposition to the development of the national State, thanks to their monopoly of bearing arms. For a long time the kings strove to create an army of their own, and thus emancipate themselves from the feudal army; but to do this it was necessary to be able to institute new relations of subjection and to have at their disposal new "military" social strata.

It was the development of the bourgeois economy which made it possible to solve this problem, firstly by allowing sovereigns the option of enrolled or hired troops, and then by creating the conditions for a seasoned infantry, emerging from a social strata opposed to the nobility. In the triumphs of the confederated Swiss against the Austrians and the Burgundians in the 14th century, the feudal army succumbed before the first appearance of the modern army, the cavalier fell before the bourgeois and the free peasant.

With technological innovations conditions were established sealing the fate of the feudal nobility. Gunpowder breached the ramparts of their castles and printing undermined their local particularisms. And having been copiously pillaged and abused by its ally the monarchy, the bourgeoisie was now to prepare its revenge and create political structures in the image of its economy.

4

The former society rested on personal relations, whether in the form of slavery, serfdom or landed property. The authority of the patrician or of the lord was invested with divine grace. The possessors of this authority received a particular gift from heaven which justified their rank and their function.

Mercilessly the bourgeoisie untied the multicoloured bonds which attached man to his natural superior, to leave no other bond between men except interest, cold "cash payment".

The relation of individuals to the totality of society, which previously had been entrusted to a belief in God as supreme principle and regulator, now found its profane expression: No longer were supernatural qualities attributed to one man but to

society as a whole, and to its economy, which possessed a virtue and an autonomous nature, distinct from that of social relations and those who set them in motion.

No more the masters of their history than in the old society, taking charge of an activity which has fallen to them through a general division and distribution in which they have taken no part, the individual sees his action turn into an external power which opposes and enslaves him. Social power – whose tenfold increase in productive forces has been created by co-operation between people – does not seem to them to be their own combined power, but as something monstrous and oppressive, capable of destroying them at any moment.

We are astonished by the things men believed of gods, as regulators of their existence: but modern men also act and think as if society was made up of something other than themselves. Society has autonomised itself in relation to the citizen, and this autonomisation is crystallised in the State. By an ideological inversion, the State appears as the creator and dispenser of riches taken from a society incapable of making use of them by itself. So it appears just as impossible for people to influence the course of events as it did when God, in his hidden purpose, took charge of the direction of worldly affairs.

5

The problem of the bourgeois revolution has always been to create a social contract, since it does not so much build a new economy – the basis of which already exists – as build a State which allows it to develop. It sets up a social organisation reuniting individuals who have been atomised, both by the dissolution of the old feudal social frameworks (Orders, corporations, estates and local interdependencies), and by the shitty capitalist mode of production, dominated by individual rivalry and competition.

Hobbes, the theoretician of the English bourgeois revolution of the 16th century, considered that individualism and competition formed part of the fundamental traits of human psychology, absolute submission thus being in the interest of each individual. But this is a simple rationalisation of emergent bourgeois competition: “The desire which Hobbes first gives to man to subjugate one another is not reasonable. The idea of the empire and of domination is so composite, and depends on so many other ideas, that it would not be this which he would arrive at first”¹.

Political organisation is thus defined by a contract: Men must forego their social power in favour of the State: “Good social institutions are those which know how to pervert man, to remove his absolute existence to give him a relative one, and transport the ego into the common unity, in such a manner that each particular no longer thinks itself one, but a part of the unity, and no longer is perceptible except in the whole”².

Tocqueville a century later feared the effects of what Rousseau wished: “Despotism seems to me particularly to be feared in democratic ages. In the centuries of equality, each individual is naturally isolated. He is easily set apart, and easily trampled underfoot”³. The monarchists themselves affirmed that the loss of an hierarchic order would provoke an isolation of individuals such that only an implacable State would be able to reunite society. Burke, the English counter-revolutionary philosopher says of France in 1795: “The State is supreme. Everything is subordinated to

¹ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Law*.

² Rousseau, *The Social Contract*.

³ A. de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*.

the production of force.” The counter-revolutionaries were however mistaken in believing that despotism would manifest itself as the deeds of dictators, when it has mainly assumed an impersonal countenance.

6

The State and class societies appeared at the same time. But if the State is an instrument of class domination, it is more than that too. The division of society into classes accompanies and originates in a division, a scission in human activity. The State emerges when human activity poses a problem, because it is no longer unified. The problem of power appears when men lose the ability to control their lives and their environment, and are forced to act for reasons external to the content of their activity. The State is the organisation made indispensable by alienated labour.

Since its origin, the State has not been merely the instrument of the domination of one part of society over the other, but also the mode of unification and of organisation of the dominant class. The Greek State did not just conciliate class interests to the profit of the ruling class: it preserved a certain equilibrium within the property owning class, itself eroded and divided by wealth; the history of the Greek City-States is a long and vain effort to limit merchant wealth and preserve the precarious unity of the citizens – who were all property owners but divided into rich and poor.

The modern State fulfils the function of mediator all the more, as capitalism isolates individuals and deprives them of the means of life. Each individual is alienated from his activity and from the object of his activity, from the world which surrounds him and the individuals with whom he is in competition. The justification for, and the strength of the modern State lies in unifying this separation.

Simple acts and relations become administrative acts or market relations. The worst of it is not that the State forbids and constrains, but that it is always there to perform elementary functions wherever advanced capitalism creates a problem. The State rises above mankind: “It gladly works for their happiness; but it wants to be for them the unique agent and sole arbitrator; it provides for their safety, foresees and secures their needs, facilitates their pleasures, directs their main business, directs their industry, regulates succession, divides inheritances; why can it not entirely take away from them the trouble of thinking and the pain of life”⁴?

It only oppresses because in doing this it acquires for itself power and because a whole series of formerly natural activities like providing heating, lighting or lending a helping hand in case of fire have become “public services”. Social divisions are only made indispensable by the inability of people to satisfy their vital needs for themselves.

The school is one of the constituent elements of this system: Only the modern State develops it to the astonishing degree which it reaches today. Learning has become an enormous problem, presupposing an immense apparatus and bureaucracy, because the anxiety to produce runs deeper than interest in the process of production, and concern for the result deeper than for the activity. Learning and doing have become two distinct moments which the school cannot reunify. In the “under-developed” countries, in learning to unlearn agricultural labour, the school system lays the basis of capitalist society: the destruction of subsistence co-ops, and the creation of proletarians forced into wage-labour. Capital uproots humans and reduces them to cripples lost without the support of the State.

⁴ A. de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*.

7

The modern State isn't merely a mediator and equally isn't situated outside the movement of capital, it has become an element distinct from the whole.

The State hasn't awaited the development of capitalism to perform an economic role, as is proved by the organisation of agriculture, or the initiation of great public works by the Incas, and in ancient Egypt and in China. But above all it remained an administrator, often in an unstable form. The Incas, a conquering tribe, became the "dominant class" over suppressed tribes, constituting the State on an ethnic basis, yet at the mercy of military defeat, or internal crises (wars of succession). Even the Greek city, prefiguring some of the aspects of the modern State, in particular through the duality of its centralised/democratic institutions was above all a political body.

The originality of the West is in having created, under the pressure of merchant and artisan activities, a State which does not restrict itself to living off the economy, but lives in parallel with it, a State which is both cause and effect of an accumulation of the means of production unknown in the Orient, enabling it to survive conquests and political crises. In Asia, a State could be annihilated by sacking a few towns; the contemporary State has a much greater strength, as can be seen by the ease with which the State rebuilds itself after the ravages of modern war.

Capitalism wasn't liberal at first, and then later monopolist and statist. Free trade was only a digression for a few decades (generally speaking between 1840 and 1870). Since the end of the 19th century, even England has preferred "fair trade" to free trade. But, even in its liberal phase, the State played a key role. The strong advance made by England over France in the area of industrial production was also due to the bourgeois State, which though monarchist, was able to provide capital, whilst France waited until 1830 and even beyond, until the Second Empire, to industrialise.

There was no more a pure liberal phase of capital, with entrepreneurs doing as they liked and at their own initiative, than there is today a phase of "State capitalism" – as if the State effectively controlled capital, and as if Russian State capitalism was a more advanced form prefiguring the future. Liberalism has always coexisted with State intervention, and the more bureaucratic countries are probably those which least master their economic process.

In the younger capitalist States, the State alleviates the insolvency of the bourgeoisie. Capital was accumulated where there was a strong statist tradition: Bismarck's Germany, Japan in the Meiji era, Russia before 1917. In these three countries the bourgeoisie, socially weak, was excluded from political power but the State developed a capitalist economy.

8

The State exists to unify a disunited society. It is normal that in our time its essential function is economic, since economic production, the motor of the modern world, is today the supreme social agent of control and unification. The State has become the guarantor of accumulation. Taking in France a 40% share of "gross domestic product" (of which, in 1975 24% was in tax and 17% in social insurance), it redistributes these sums in order to harmonise production, increase profitability and make the transfer payments necessary for relative social peace.

Take away the unifying social function which has become indispensable, and the State is reduced to its repressive political aspect or to its role as a regulator of the economy. How then can it be explained that it is accepted in spite of its repressive role?

The State today helps out those social groups previously taken under society's wing: the strict application of the logic of the market and wage labour would leave a fair number of old, sick and other "underprivileged" people, to die of hunger.

Some say that the State is the army and taxes, the one maintaining the other. This is to forget that it does not just take away money, but also gives it away, thus profiting from the absolute power money has to make itself indispensable.

9

Contrary to left mythology, the bourgeois democratic and dictatorial political forms succeed and give way to one another, without direct proletarian intervention. Dictatorships don't come to power after beating the workers in the course of street battles: it is democrats and the traditional workers movement who undo revolutionary workers by force and by electoral confusion (such as in Germany in 1918-21).

Those who make military counter-revolution the great bugbear, the unique form of the counter-revolution, should meditate on the fact that the proletariat is not defeated by military action (consider for example the failure of Kornilov's action or of the Kapp putsch), but that on the contrary, this can accelerate the revolutionary process. It is when the proletariat is already socially defeated that the counter-revolution is military and violent.

Italian fascism confronted agricultural and industrial workers, but it did not triumph until after the workers had been divided by the elections and the socialist attempts at conciliation, and also by the physical intervention of the democratic State.

Dictatorships don't fall under the blows of the masses finally rising against tyranny. They themselves once more give way to democracy. In 1943 in Italy it was the regime itself which withdrew its powers from the "dictator" Mussolini and decided on a progressive return to democracy, made contact with the opposition parties which up until then had been spurned and hunted down, and opened negotiations with the Allies in order to change sides. In 1945 in Germany it was military defeat which brought down the regime, the allies replacing it with their own leaders, in both east and west, before "national" leaders once more took the reins.

In 1975 in Greece, the Cypriot crisis and American pressure obliged the colonels to hand over the reins to the democrats, who were in any case right wing and had been waiting in exile for their turn, and who naturally came to take up their place. In Portugal a section of the army understood that the old political formula no longer held good, and went ahead with a change of regime, which finally succeeded, though the process was slow and gentle. In Spain too, capital took the initiative for a progressive and controlled democratisation.

There is in effect as rigorous a logic behind the "Suicide of Democracies" as in the subsequent "return" of democracy. It is only a question of a division of tasks, and of a concentration at times on the violence necessary to liquidate those oppositions which hinder the smooth running of the system.

10

If democratic pluralism, parliamentarism, mass parties and the unions are very useful for containing any revolutionary push, they can also create a non-revolutionary situation of confusion, which nevertheless impedes capital's return to stability.

Dictatorship then becomes necessary to discipline the bourgeoisie, reduce the middle classes, and eliminate movements making elementary demands.

Fascism was an illustration of this forced centralisation in those countries – Italy and Germany – where political unity was fragile, the national question having been settled badly, and where the reformist workers movement had taken on too great an importance following the revolutionary tide which it had helped to dam up. It was a specific form of the coming of capital to a total domination of society, in politically fragile countries.

Anti-fascism wants to push capital towards becoming or remaining democratic, preventing it from turning to dictatorship. But the political forms of capital flow from the needs of the moment: the workers' parties, the unions, the masses or the liberals can do nothing about it. There is no "choice" which the workers can be invited, or can invite themselves, to make.

In certain phases, capital can no longer remain pluralist, it must centralise the constituent parts of society by force, make them converge in a single direction. The opposition between the two methods is all the more limited where capitalism is more developed and the modern State already draws on both tendencies. But it cannot be ruled out that in the future capitalist conflicts, between advanced and retarded forms of capital, will combine to stifle revolutionary movements, producing civil wars in which capital is present in both camps, each representing a capitalist solution, as in Spain after July 1936.

The secret of the passage from democracy to fascism, and vice versa, is revealed in this recent declaration of S. Carrillo, leader of the P.C.E. (Spanish Communist Party), who affirms his desire "to change the regime to save the State". This is exactly what the coming of dictators to power does, as does the return of democrats to the head of the State, presented every time as a "victory for the working class".

The advantages which workers can win from these evolutionary changes, by struggling on their own terrain, or quite simply by making the rationalisation and profitability of capital difficult are not negligible, as was shown in Portugal. But these do not ensure a movement towards revolution except in so far as they go beyond the opposition democracy/dictatorship. Capital is never stronger than when it succeeds in mobilising the masses to its own advantage, making them think that they are fighting for themselves.

11

In the long run all regimes, on all continents, organise a semblance of parliamentary life.

Hitler, the scourge of "rotten parliamentarism", still maintained the fiction of a sovereign Reichstag right up to the war. In 1939 he made it vote for the declaration of war, not without elements of farce: as too many deputies were missing, vacant seats were taken by party functionaries.

Stalin, and later the "peoples democracies" made a point of reproducing electoral forms, emptied of any meaning. Today it isn't just a single party list, there are also "non-party" candidates, and in the "peoples democracies" there are satellite parties distinct from the Communist Party, all in order to provide actual results of 98% for the party.

Brazil has had to return to a minimal political life, with two parties, one governmental, the other of moderate opposition. In Senegal, the State now authorises parties, but on condition that it differentiates them and names them itself. Even present day Cambodia, as little concerned about international opinion as it is about spilling the blood of its citizens, is preparing elections: admittedly the army will have a

dominant voice in the assembly, but it is significant that the need is felt to legitimise its hegemony by an election.

By the same token many of the ideas bound up with the concept of the citizens' duty to vote belong, properly speaking, to the totalitarian form and seem misplaced in the vocabulary of liberal democracy.

If the "dictatorial" countries themselves feel the need for democracy it is because this corresponds to a State need, as was shown by the recent Spanish elections. The demand of capital isn't simply to find leaders or a majority but also to find an opposition – to provide itself with a focus for its own uncertainties, and set them on display. "Political life" as a whole modulates itself according to this requirement: before 1939 Great Britain and the United States were almost the only countries to know this "bipolarisation" – the alternation of two parties whose action is quasi-identical, but supposed to represent different solutions. Today, the F.D.R, Austria and Sweden function in the same way – it makes for more effective government than the centrist game which can still be seen in Italy. Dictatorships can also become an impediment to the development of productive forces when they rely – as Caetano did in Portugal – on archaic social strata (landed aristocracy etc.)

It is precisely at the moment when classic bourgeois political life is stripped of its meaning, by the unification of capital into its total domination and the advent of the modern State, that the most obsolete political forms spread across the surface of the globe.

Like competition between capitals, political competition is part of the essential nature of capitalism, although the network of monopolies and States today envelops political life just as it does economic life.

12

Debates within and between, the parties of the left are once again taking up controversies from the turn of the-century. German Social Democracy was built up partly as a reaction to Lassallianism, which had exchanged workers' support for Bismarck for an improvement in their conditions.

Once legalised, the party adopted the same attitude: Bernstein believed in a progressive evolution of the State which would be opened up to democratic discussion and would grant more and more rights and reforms.

Against him, Kautsky insisted that the State is a class State and cannot be reformed from inside, but he himself did not make any criticism of the State as such since he proposed to replace the existing State with another: exactly the same thing, only brought to life by the workers and for their own interests. He even spoke of a renewal of parliamentarism.

Wanting to "restore" Marx's thought in 1917, Lenin separated the revolution into communisation (which he set to one side, reducing it to electrification) and the creation of a new organ of administration.

The positions of Bernstein, Kautsky and Lenin are the models of all the variants which have been put forward since, and which are still expressed in the arguments within Stalinist and socialist parties and all the leftist groups. Today these positions have been fused to the point where it is impossible to disentangle them.

For the Left, the State is always preferable to private capital, since it can influence the mechanisms of the State more easily than those of the private economy. Thus it will denounce the "bosses' stranglehold" in this or that sector, calling for the

State alone to assume responsibility. It only reproaches the State for keeping out of things. For example, the Stalinist Elleinstein recognises the growing power of the State, but concludes that it must be democratised⁵. Since the State has penetrated the whole of society, and thus social struggles also unfold within its bosom, he deduces that the State is no longer an apparatus to be fought against but rather a place to be occupied. It is no longer “the instrument of the ruling class” but a social space where, at all costs, we must intervene.

13

Since its beginnings, that is since the middle of the 19th century, the official workers’ movement has sought recognition by and integration into the State. Deprived of an economic base (in contrast to the bourgeoisie) the only means the “workers” bureaucracy possesses to promote itself and ascend to control of the means of production lies in entering the State and emphasising State intervention. Even in countries where the workers’ movement is a financial power, as in German – where the unions own, amongst other things, the country’s fourth largest bank – it always strives to penetrate the State in order to establish control over capital.

This tendency is reinforced by the ambitions of social layers of small and middle functionaries (led by teachers) who also possess no capital, and have no hope of taking control of it except through economic control of the State. These layers play a considerable role in the old workers’ movement, and are parasitic on it. This is the “new left”.

These two tendencies, the workers’ bureaucracy and the civil servants, come together to promote the workers movement within the State, and when possible, at its head. It is not surprising that the socialist and stalinist parties have never made a radical critique of the State. The growing habit of complete dependence destroys at last all initiative; everything is expected of the State, so from the first wielding of power, everything is insisted upon, making the State responsible for everything. It thus becomes the all-purpose State.

The workers movement demands that the State should in certain respects suppress its nature: it wants it to be paternal and conciliatory, impartial and so independent of class division in society, just – in other words outside the reality of the history of class struggle, neutral – in other words a common inheritance for proletarians and bourgeois. It wants it to be the people’s educator.

The workers’ movement has expected everything of the State and has remained the best defender of the Welfare State, and thus, whether it likes it or not, of the strong State. Paradoxically, apart from anarchism which remains very marginal, it has abandoned the critique of the State to the anti-statist fraction of the right. Monarchism has worked unceasingly to denounce the oppression of the republican State, reproaching it for having negated regional life and community, but sees no salvation except the coming of a new powerful State which will re-establish order and will deliver us from the tyranny of the republic...

14

Having defined capitalism as a process of ever more menacing “fascisation”, and socialism as a democratic liberalisation, the left glorifies democracy, side-steps the critique of the State, and reduces the social problem to the purely political level. The question of social relations, of the nature of productive activity, of the content of life,

⁵ Elleinstein, *Le Parti communiste*.

is diluted in the demand for ever more numerous “rights”: we must be allowed to do this, that and the other... But he who talks of “right” also talks of the power that grants it, limits it and punishes its non-observance. The idea of right implies that of duty: so it is also a multiplication of duties that is being demanded.

So that we can be free, the State must more and more intervene in all aspects of life. Avowed totalitarianism and the democratic movement both become the champions of the State, the first that it may be strong, the second that it may protect us, which comes down to the same thing: “We can no more, alas! believe that in breaking Hitler and his regime we strike evil at its source. At the same time, we form plans for the post-war which would make the State responsible for all individual fates and which, would necessarily put into the hands of the Power means adequate to the immensity of its task”⁶.

It is the whole of society which capital wants to involve in the democratic totalitarianism of a society of illusory uniformity, each person being his or her own representative, obliged to conform to their particular interest, which itself conforms to the general interest.

Between the atomised individual and society represented by the State exists a host of intermediary amalgamations – family, business, union, party, local authority, neighbourhood ties, consumers associations – capitalism downgrades some (such as the family) while developing others. Dictatorship reorganises them by force and controls them directly. Democracy makes each play its own part, to the profit of capitalist society as a whole.

The principle of democracy is to be able to leave initiative to individuals and groups, knowing that placed in a capitalist framework (in which the logic of value and wage labour imposes itself on them by itself, without outside pressure), they will operate in a capitalist direction.

15

The programme of the left anticipates compensating for State power through mass organisations in which individuals are mobilised on the basis of their work, their home-life, their interests as consumers and users... De Gaulle’s “participation” appeared paltry in 1968 in the face of the thoroughgoing democratic wave and the lyricism of self-management: “You can also see youths building their youth clubs, workers doing up their workplaces, adults setting up old people’s homes, consumers conceiving and organising commercial zones”⁷. That each might participate in the life of the city and of the nation, demand and militate for an expansion of the scope of their particular organisation: this is what changing life is all about!

It is here that the left is totalitarian, through this generalised participation, more than in the Russian Gulag or any other stew of the same flavour. The dictatorship of capital doesn’t lie in the existence of the F.B.I. or the K.G.B. It lies in the attempt to give everyone an illusory power, to make them participate in making decisions which, have already been taken in any case, because they are inscribed in the logic of capital, now so omnipresent in material structures and human relations that it has also penetrated behaviour and mind.

Words are employed to avoid a real questioning: it is a liberation in language, a surrogate for a real emancipation. Capital knows so well how to transform revolt into discourse. For of course this heap of shit lives off the aspirations for a social

⁶ Bertrand de Jouvenal, *On Power*.

⁷ M. Ragon, *L’Architecte, le Prince et la Démocratie*.

upheaval: “The explosion of May 1968 was realistic in the search for means which would allow the reintroduction of play, of heat, of life in the functioning of large organisations. All, even the communist party, the catholic church, felt the repercussions of May, which had disturbed their regular hum, perhaps opening in them the way to a happy transformation”⁸. Capital, which overcomes everything which tends to destroy social revolution, still has the better of us: impotent revolution nourishes counter-revolution.

Although it creates them itself, capital fears dictatorial forms, because it is then deprived of the active intervention of people in its functioning. Dictatorship tends to make wage labourers passive whilst democracy rests, in principle, on their capacity to actively reorganise at least a part of their activity.

16

If capital animates those who serve it, it equally makes them passive. It lives off our participation, but puts brakes on it at the same time. It offers activity, whilst making it impossible. It requires initiative from workers as much as from leaders, while repressing it when it shows itself. It gives rise to collective activity, while individualising work, assumes a global vision, but fragments production.

Because it is exterior to wage labourers – being the means to earn a living in relative indifference to what one does– wage labour needs an organisation which is itself outside productive activity, but which isn’t just a framework to prevent skiving: the bureaucracy must also bond together that fragmentation of work which is produced by the individualisation of tasks and rewards. An external apparatus is necessary to reassemble the unity of production and assure its execution.

This separation is worse still with regard to the State. The State bureaucracy organises that which it doesn’t do, and which is performed by bodies outside the State (individuals, businesses etc.). In order to organise it must know. To apply itself effectively, it must oversee.

The State as an administrator is as much the captive of total social capital, as each managing director is of his company. Under these conditions, effective participation by citizens is even more difficult than in a business: wage labourers can at least assist the business to make profits and to reward them with various benefits. But you can have no hold over the State because it escapes all significant reform: it is reformed only in violence, through serious crises.

The State works out its budget with the most sophisticated econometric models, it can know exactly where money comes from and where it goes for all its services; it is only unaware what effect this money will have in the real relation of each service with society in general. The State itself progressively complicates the task. To manage society, it devotes an enormous part of its effort towards managing itself. It reaches the point where the citizen is put in the position of a passive subject, making even the slightest participation difficult.

In the political sphere, where powers are shared out, political life will disperse energies by an excessive pluralism, as much as it will absorb social forces. On the other hand, the State if it could, would extinguish all politics, authoritatively concentrating all powers. Most of the time, politics dominates as much as the State, and society is unified by its own dynamic, the State not intervening except to guarantee the limits to the game, which nobody must transgress: but the balance remains precarious.

⁸ M. Duverger, *L’Autre côté des choses*.

17

In this context, projected reforms to make the State more and more social, rebuilding it at the level of the citizen, can settle nothing. The revitalisation of the municipality won't in any way stimulate an impossible direct democracy: At best it will adjust a few minor affairs "in front of the people", the municipal council itself offering the public spectacle of sessions in which it will not exercise the slightest power.

These reforms would decentralise the State: its means of action would be multiplied, those of its citizens dispersed. The world of militants and politicians couldn't ask for anything better: all these people want power. If one creates a neighbourhood assembly, here is another place where they can put in an appearance or make an intervention.

State dictatorship tends to strengthen democratic procedures and their formalism, while always claiming to give them more reality: commodity circulation throughout the whole of society allows capital to exert its pressure everywhere without perpetually resorting to centralised coercion.

Bureaucratic totalitarianism and popular self management coexist in the programme of the French left. They are both impossible dreams born in the inability of the all-embracing State to resolve capital's problems, and in its tendency to weigh itself down by complicating daily life. Statist and self managerial temptations feed off each other: the former, in the name of order and justice, want to reunite the elements of society whose dispersal provoke complication and wastage everywhere; the latter, in the name of freedom, want to bypass or suppress the excessive power of the State through counter-powers.

The coexistence of these two tendencies reflects the crisis in the State (born out of capitalism's difficulties since the mid-sixties), which brings with it a crisis in political thinking, and divides the left as well as the right.

The crisis of the State in the epoch of fascism was overcome by the all-embracing democratic State which developed in the most advanced countries. But today there exists another crisis, much more serious, because it is bound to the existence of capital as a social relation.

It is no longer a matter of liquidating the middle classes or troublesome workers organisations, but of resolving the growing contradiction between the ever increasing influence of the State and its continuing inability to solve social and economic problems: at the social level it isn't succeeding in creating a new organisation of life, purely capitalist and market oriented, unburdened by the old customs and institutions. Within the economy, the State, by its very nature blocks the free development of capitalist laws. It only softens the squeeze on profitability by aggravating it elsewhere.

"We are witnessing a curious spectacle. Before our eyes are unfolding the preliminaries to communality"⁹. The question of the appearance of communism – of the destruction of the obstacles to its functioning – is thus posed: the insoluble situation created by capitalism requires the transformation of human activity and of the whole of social life.

18

Anarchism has the merit of having affirmed the necessity of the destruction of the State. However the inability of anarchism to give its critique any foundation has

⁹ Blanqui, "Le Communisme, avenir de la société", in *La Critique sociale*.

reduced it to sterility, if not actually led it into aberrations. Making the whole of society rest on the authority concentrated in the State, seen as the target above all others to be shot down, it reduces capitalism to the State, and looks no further than the vulgar marxists in defining communist revolution. The “abolition of the State” has thus become a magical formula concealing a host of confusions.

Bakunin was right when he said that the revolution isn't made by decree. That didn't prevent him from signing the “affiche rouge” (red declaration) of Lyons in 1870, decreeing the abolition of the State, nor from imagining a “secret dictatorship” which would direct everything from the shadows. Negating politics, anarchism sees the source of all evil in authority: once again, its only an ideological abolition of the State.

“Have these gentlemen never seen a revolution then? A revolution is without doubt the most authoritarian thing there could be, it is the act whereby one part of the population imposes its will on the other, with hundreds of guns and rifles – which are authoritarian methods par excellence.” (Engels - On Authority). The fact that the proletariat have no particular (individual) interests changes nothing in this affair: the interests of humanity in its entirety are obliged to assert themselves over the bourgeoisie, the class whose acts are only determined by the abstract logic of capital.

In Spain 1936-9, the anarchists came to identify revolution with taking a little power everywhere without a direct attack on the State.

Not wanting to secure the necessary administrative and repressive tasks, which cannot be statist if they are tied to the transformation of society, they left it to traditional statist to occupy themselves with this, or were obliged to become statist themselves: the participation of anarchist ministers in the government showed what that could lead to.

Paradoxically, the current most set against the State argues that in Spain in 1936 there was a revolution, although the proletariat left the State there intact. For anarchism too, the revolution is a great democratisation.

19

In spite of its critique of anarchism on the economic level, where it tries to define communism as going beyond the law of value, councilism retains divisions in its administrative and territorial vision: “the anarcho-syndicalists recognise the necessity for planning economic life and think that this is unrealisable without a centralisation of accounting implying a statistical census of productive factors and social needs. However, they omit to give an effective base to this statistical necessity”¹⁰.

The conscious calculation of the average labour time socially necessary to the production of goods, and the democratic system of councils, both have as their objective the management of a particular zone, to organise factories, associated groups of producers and their mutual association.

Councilism does not make a critique of the economy and of politics as such, as separated activities: its point of departure is the need to produce, and to organise this production. It thus only amounts to envisaging a total decentralisation of society in each council, as well as a value totally internalised and calculated by each producer and each enterprise; its vision of communism remains tainted by outdated notions: Pannekoek was satisfied with the notion of the council resting on the “natural regrouping of workers in the process of production”.

¹⁰ Helmut Wagner “Anarchism and the Spanish Revolution”, in *International Council Correspondence*, Vol III Nos 5&6, June 1937.

This perspective had some merit in the past, but today all that can be established by it is a generalised self-management. Councilism also contributed to a vision of communism as a great democratic reorganisation, in which first a minority (however numerous) of workers participated, and then the whole of society, in “communism realised”. Now, if the demand that each and all should take control of life is a communist aspiration and can give rise to the most subversive acts, it only coagulates if it remains on the terrain of administration and decision. The cult of democracy isn’t anticommunist because communism will be dictatorial, but because it turns discussion, which is often fruitless and paralysing, into a privileged moment and an essential preliminary to action.

In councilism, the system of councils is conceived as a generalisation of parliamentarism. The council is the parliament of the working class. So the dividing line between reform and revolution in this false perspective is made in the following way: reformists (Stalinists, leftists etc.) want to transform the existing decision-making organs, democratising them little by little, injecting them with stronger and stronger doses of participation by the masses. The councilists want to create other ones, setting up a “true” democracy immediately, a real structure for discussion and decision.

Some want to work on the inside, others want to work on the outside, but the error is identical: all privilege the moment of decision, and adapt the revolution to the creation of a new decision-making process. Councilists want to transfer this process from statist bodies to the factories and local communities. Because they have not extricated themselves from the political illusion, they can speak of the “abolition of wage-labour”, and of the suppression of the commodity-form, without making any more of it than a slogan which is never made clear: they do not understand the revolution as a process generating a new activity.

20

Both the strength and impasse of utopian communism, since the millenarians, was to want to artificially create a community, calling upon some external factor to realise a non-existent unity: God, a strict morality or an authoritative blueprint. However Communism is a general consequence, and a human community is possible today which is based on what is common to the individuals who make it up: their needs and their passions, their ways of satisfying them, their modes of existence. This is why the State can disappear, and a revolution can set up structures of centralisation without thereby recreating a new State.

The actions of the bourgeoisie are not determined by the human nature of its members but by the abstract logic of capital which imposes itself on them, just as the commercial activities of bourgeois individuals are not determined by their human desires, but by the logic of the market. All social activity is organised along the lines of this disunited competition, deceitful and complicating: the system will only put up with falsehood, the unique path to success in social affairs, as in “romantic affairs”.

Only statist ideology still exalts “social life”, knowing quite well that in reality the only vehicle for it is financial gain: its a sick joke for it to reproach people for their lack of community spirit, when this is created by the atomisation for which the State is both one of the causes, and its principal guarantor.

On the contrary, it is in order to realise their human needs that the proletariat must destroy a mode of production in which their human capacities are reduced to commodities. The dissolution of exchange allows a recomposition of activity on all other levels.

In a division of labour which is freely consented to and ruled by the members of society, no-one has an exclusive sphere of activity, but can perfect himself in whatever field he chooses. Society regulates general production, which creates for me the possibility of doing today one thing tomorrow another, fishing in the morning, offset printing in the afternoon, carpentry in the evening, writing criticism after dinner, according to my own convenience, without ever becoming a fisherman, printer, carpenter, or critic.

The relationship with nature is itself changed, and man can at last emerge from the stunted deformity of his faculties and all the other industrial pathologies inseparable from our class societies. "In the civilised order in which work is repugnant, in which the people are too poor to have a share in the consumption of delicacies, and in which the gastronome is not a cultivator his gluttony lacks a direct link with nature; it is only simple and ignoble sensuality, as with all who do not attain the composite process, or the influence of production and consumption acting on the same individual"¹¹.

The State has no place in a world where gluttony is in composite form.

21

The communist revolution is not, as is generally seen in military conflicts, the clash of two opposing armies, with one defending the old world and the other announcing the new. To think like this is to reduce the revolution to a military problem, at best to a popular war.

Separating the subjective world of the State and politics from the objective world of human society and economy, the bourgeoisie can believe that war is the continuation of politics by other means. Since separation appears as the natural state of society, indeed its mode of perception, it apprehends everything through this police mentality. But to conceive the destruction of the State as armed struggle against the police and military forces is to mistake the particular for the general.

The social war is not a classic war, but the overthrow of all aspects of life. "Fronts" and all of the logistical brothel are above all the displacement of men and commodities in a political space where what is at stake is the control of territories or the seizure of power.

Communism is not the outcome of capitalism nor a programme to be applied: it is in its destructive movement that it generates new relations. Communism is neither a condition nor an ideal to be realised, but the supersession of present social movements.

Fighting the State violently under arms will come from the need to transform life. This is why one of the essential problems of the revolution will be armaments, as means to satisfy social needs. Our collective use of violence will help us to get over our deficiencies. Revolutionary violence, as opposed to political violence, is a product of social needs and itself plays the role of a social relation, modifying beings and their relationships.

The human community already heralds itself in communist violence, because it does not concern specialists and is not a specialised function. Modern pistoleros and other terrorists, left to their forces alone, can never rise above a Guevaristo-Leninist consciousness: it is more than violence which separates revolutionaries from the advocates of the parties of order.

¹¹ Fourier, *Théorie de l'Unité universelle*.

Communism is above all activity. The overthrow of society will only be possible if the proletariat puts its social function to work against capital, using its function within the economy as a weapon to dissolve economic relations. It will not act through the expedient of value, since its condition gives it no control over capital as a sum of value: it has no way of making use of finance capital and can only make use of the labour process, of which it is the subject. In overthrowing society the proletariat thereby explodes the double character of capital: labour process and valorisation process, thus undermining the material basis of the State.

22

In previous revolutions, revolutionaries did not see the link between action against the State and communisation of society. Many still reason in Leninist terms or in terms symmetrical to Leninism: against a perspective which foregrounds the socialisation of the economy, the "Italian Left", for example, privileges the question of power; the revolution would be primarily political, and only then social and economic. For the councilists, on the other hand, it is enough to overturn the management of the economy to overturn society in its entirety.

In Russia in 1917, the old State was not even destroyed: it practically broke down by itself, incapable of satisfying the elementary demands of the peasants and soldiers: peace, land for all. Since multiple causes – the failure of revolution in Europe, the conceptions of the Bolsheviks, weakness of the proletariat – prevented a communisation of society, soviet organisation found before it the task of administering Russia in the name of a socialism which it never realised, while wage labour was extended more than ever before. This form could only quickly become filled with a capitalist content, and reassume the role of agent of capitalist accumulation that had been previously been played by the tsarist State. One then arrived at Kronstadt, the reformist politics of the Third International, and all the things which a capitalist State has to do, both internally and at the international level.

In Spain, the workers' insurrection checked the Francoist putsch. But though master of the situation, the workers did not take over the legal (republican) State. Even worse! They placed themselves under its direction to struggle against Franco: the revolution got lost amidst the civil war. A direct link ties the submission to the republican State at the end of July 1936 to the definitive capitulation of the most advanced elements in May 1937. The proletariat could only be beaten in a war whose primary aim was the constitution of a legitimised State, better able to integrate them. The collectivisations? They managed, not without a certain revolutionary enthusiasm, what still remained capitalism. Workers took the place of the bosses in one way or another. Their communist tendencies remained essentially half-hearted. In these conditions, the republican State eliminated them without major difficulties.

The Russian and Spanish movements demonstrated that there can be no revolution without the destruction of the State, and no destruction of the State without communist upheaval. In Russia as in Spain, anti-worker repression was only a side effect of the absence of communisation.

The goal of communist revolution is not to create a social structure, a system of democratic or dictatorial authority, but a different activity. It does not push power into the foreground, either to seek it or hold it in dread. It only resolves the "question of power", because for it this question is neither primary nor essential. It resolves it because it attacks its basis. It is the appropriation of all the material conditions of life: it is by destroying the bonds of dependence and isolation that the proletariat will destroy the State.

The communist revolution is not founded on the opposition rulers/ruled. Even if men were to self-govern themselves, the principle of separation at the root of the State and politics would persist. Communism does not particularise this principle, it suppresses it.

23

The State which lives off the inability of men and groups to organise an activity in which they control their own lives, is undermined as soon as one starts to render useless its role as mediator.

This destruction is not automatic. The State will not disappear bit by bit, as the sphere of non-commercial, non wage-laboured activity is enlarged. Or rather this sphere would remain very fragile as long as it let the State persist alongside it, as numerous leftists and ecologists would want it to do. So one of the tasks of revolutionaries will be to pose clearly the question of the State, while putting forward from the start communist measures tending to undermine its strength and to create an irreversible situation.

It is in effect impossible to destroy the State first and only then transform society, or vice versa. The State will never stand aside. This formidable organ of repression, whatever form it takes, will use every weapon at its disposal, direct or indirect, against a revolution. It will have to be at one and the same time upset by military blows and undermined by the communisation of society, without which it will inevitably be the stronger.

No new life will start on the margins of the State, for in making a rupture with capitalism, it will clash violently with the State. There is not on the one hand the problem of a "new way of living" and on the other "the question of the State". The destruction of the State, and principally of its armed force, is not a means at the service of some end external to it. The revolution is also a different way of going about things in its military aspects.

The revolution does not want "power" but it needs to be able to carry out its measures, without which it would once again be mere ideology, "the phrase outflanking the content". It therefore has no fear of appointing for itself authorities and officials: these will only become a new power if the members of this society do not appropriate their own conditions of existence. All authority is not statist. The communist revolution is a "dictatorship" in so far as it imposes itself on a part of society, but a dictatorship which only succeeds by pushing towards everybody's realisation of practical human activity, and which stakes its destiny on that.