

AN ESSAY ON THE NATURE OF THE STATE

CEM EROĐUL

Ankara, 1981

UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCES PUBLICATIONS: 480

FOREWORD

I am at present working as a professor of constitutional law, at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Ankara (Turkey). I was born in 1944, so I am over sixty now. After graduating in 1964 from the faculty above-mentioned, I went to Paris where I got the Diplôme d'Etudes supérieures, which was a prerequisite for the Doctorat d'Etat, the best Ph.D. degree offered by France in the discipline of political sciences in those years. It is during my stay in Paris, till the very end of 1965, that I discovered Marxism. (Since then, this degree, as well as my faculty, the Faculté de Droit et de Science économique, have been profoundly reshaped following the turmoil of May 1968.)

The discovery of Marxism has shaped my whole life since then. On my return to Turkey, I became a research assistant in the field of constitutional law. My Ph.D. thesis, completed in 1969, was the first political party monograph realized in Turkey and it was written from a historical materialist point of view. During the same period, I was active in the Turkish Workers' Party, which was the first legal Marxist party founded in Turkey.

The military coup of March 1971 dissolved the Turkish Workers' Party and put thus an end to my political activities. As a result, I shifted the bulk of my energy to a thorough research which aimed to build the concept of politics, the object of my academic studies, within a Marxist framework. This drew me to the analysis of the state. In 1976, I started a postgraduate course on the Marxist Theory of the State. This course lasted three years, till my going to England.

This book was written during a prolonged sabbatical leave in England, between 1979-81. It was printed in a haste (this explains its bad impression) after my return to Turkey, due to the mounting apprehension following news that the military junta which had seized power in September 1980 was now turning its attention to the universities. As a matter of fact, nearly all Marxists and a good many democrats were expelled from the universities, following a vast purge initiated in the beginning of 1983.

I had to make a living. I returned to the university (again, the Faculty of Political Sciences in Ankara) in 1990 (following a judicial decision of great courage). But the return to a truly democratic atmosphere took a very long time. It's only in 2003 that I was able to introduce, once again, a postgraduate course on the Conceptual Framework of Marxism. This prompted me to look back at my forgotten book. On rereading it I thought that it could be of interest to others and that is why I am offering it to the attention of anyone concerned.

This is my e-mail address: cem.erogul@tmail.com or:
cem.erogul@gmail.com

AN ESSAY ON THE NATURE OF THE STATE

CONTENTS

PREFACE: The Revenge of the State	1
INTRODUCTION: Some Preliminary Remarks	11
CHAPTER I: The Three Functions of the State	25
CHAPTER II: The General Interest	51
CHAPTER III: The Dominant Class Interest	73
CHAPTER IV: The State's Own Interest	99
CHAPTER V: The Nature of the State	123
CHAPTER VI: Forms of the State	145
CONCLUSION: The Future of the State	171

PREFACE

THE REVENGE OF THE STATE

No major political current appears to be very fond of the state. In the eyes of the Anarchists, the state is the main source of evil. The most important task of humanity is to get rid of it at once. In the Marxist conception it is no less an evil. Although it cannot be disposed of at a stroke, everything must be done to ensure its gradual withering away. The ultimate reign of liberty is incompatible with statehood. Social-Democracy is a little ambiguous. It values the state as a tool to be used for its aim of achieving more and more equality. It is, nevertheless, well aware of the dangers of an unbridled state power. Hence its insistence on decentralization and extended self-government. Even if its infinite gradualism somehow dilutes its ultimate socialist goal, Social-Democracy is still a part of this widespread left-wing thinking which upholds a basic incompatibility between state and liberty.

Interestingly enough, the right wing of the political spectrum is no less suspicious of the state. The Liberals' contempt for the state is truly endemic. They undoubtedly feel a deep-seated revulsion against it. Neither can the Conservatives be considered as particularly fond of the state. Despite admitting its necessity for the preservation of social order, they are very wary of any extension of state power. Actually, Fascism is the only political current of any importance which values the state as such, and it is no coincidence that Fascism itself is so odious, not only in the eyes of the left, but equally for the most part of the right.

Apparently then, whatever their other differences, all major political creeds, with the exception of Fascism, share a common dislike for the state.

Nevertheless, in actual life, the state does not appear as being in the least upset by the theoretical misgivings of this Holy Alliance. In fact, it is faring quite well. In spite of what has been said and predicted on all sides, the striking reality is that the state has never before thrived as it has in the contemporary world. Never in the course of history has the state been able to achieve such a total conquest of the world, never has it multiplied to such an extent, never has it secured so much power, never has it reached such a degree of interference in all aspects of human life. No Anarchism has yet been able to suppress any state. Notwithstanding the various political creeds of those holding power, the state has conquered the whole world, and grown stronger everywhere. Thus, the state has already achieved its **practical revenge**. But it still awaits its theoretical one. The aim of this essay is to contribute to the achievement of this long expected **theoretical revenge**.

During the last decade, a new awareness of the theoretical problems related to the state has been witnessed. This new theoretical concern is not fortuitous. It has been brought about by a very practical situation. Social life has started to stumble, everywhere, on the state. It has become obvious that the latter is the focal point of the deep-rooted social crisis which emerges, all over the world. As this crisis is more conspicuous in the West, it is not surprising that the need for a theoretical handling of the state is most felt in this part of the world. But this must not, mislead us. The problem is not at all a parochial Western one; it is, in fact, universal.

Historically, such an awareness of the problem of the state; has manifested itself every time radical changes in state forms

were on the agenda. At least, this has been the case since humanity has been able to develop systematic theoretical thinking, i.e. since the Ancients. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle were the product of an acute crisis stemming from the basic inadequacy of the city-state to match the needs of a rapidly expanding world. The problem was eventually solved by the establishment of empires, first by the Macedonians and later by the Romans. The challenge faced by Machiavelli, Bodin and Hobbes was brought about by the basic inadequacy of feudal institutions to meet the needs of rising capitalism. Historically the problem was solved by the establishment of the nation-state. Locke, Montesquieu and Rousseau were confronted with an even more formidable task: the tremendous expansion of capitalism necessitated new economic freedoms which compelled the curbing of state power. The challenge was met by the establishment of the liberal state. Since then, the emergence of monopoly capitalism and the rise of the proletariat have provided the main stimuli for the political developments witnessed in the twentieth century. These challenges have been met by the establishment of imperialist, fascist, or social-democratic states, on the one hand, and socialist, or anti-imperialist ones, on the other.

As we approach the close of this century, a totally new problem is emerging with regard to the state. Until now, the question has always been to find, at every stage, an adequate form of state compatible with the new needs of its emerging social environment. At present it looks as if the challenge were much more radical. No conceivable form of state seems likely to respond to the needs of the new world which is taking shape before our eyes. Yet, paradoxically, what we are witnessing is a continuous expansion of all forms of state. On the one hand, the whole world looks as if it was getting sick of the state, while on the other, it does everything possible to further widen the role of the state. It is precisely this contradiction which compels us to make a new effort in order to re-consider the problem of the state. This is

not an effort however, which aims at conjuring more suitable forms of state, but an attempt to go to the roots of the state phenomenon. Precisely because the state has now reached all aspects of our life, it is essential that we must focus upon its very nature rather than its variant forms.

This new awareness was mainly triggered off by the May 1968 uprising in France. Towards the end of the 1960s, it looked as if the theoretical problem of the state had been totally removed from the agenda of political scientists, both in the East and the West. On one side, Marxian social thinking was still numbed by the terrible blows delivered in the Stalinist period. On the other side, the Parsonsian brand of a neo-Weberianism was ascendant in Western political thinking, discarding the problem of the state as an old-fashioned concern. Even radical thought, as exemplified by H. Marcuse, was explaining at length why a revolution, i.e. a social upheaval whose main target is the state, was unthinkable in the West. In brief, the state as a theoretical problem, was ousted from the field of scientific theory. It is in such a calm sea that the storm of May 1968 suddenly exploded.

Once again, social reality had outrun theoretical thinking. The questions that theoreticians should have dealt with before were bluntly put forth in the heat of political action: What would any successful revolution in the West do with the state? Was it going to 'smash' the whole of it (including, for instance, social welfare services), or only some parts of it? And then, which parts? What was to replace the 'smashed' apparatuses? What was to be done to secure from the outset the future 'withering away' of the state? Theoretical thinking, well embarrassed by its shameful delay, had no other choice than taking up the gauntlet. It did so with an unprecedented energy, and soon produced a cascade of brilliant works, due to the efforts of N. Poulantzas, R. Miliband, H. Lefebvre, C. Offe, P. Block, the West German 'derivationists', J. O'Connor, P. Birnbaum, to cite only a few.

The originality of this new theoretical endeavour is its insistence on reaching the core of the problem, viz. to answer the main question: **What is the state?** Until this time, many valuable contributions had been made around various problems concerning the state. In this context, one should particularly refer to the works of scholars such as D. Easton, G. Almond, D. Apter, etc. in the field of 'comparative government'. Questions like the listing of the technical functions of the state, the detailed exposition of their handling by different state structures, the similarities and discrepancies witnessed between various structures, the classification of state forms according to their structural-functional peculiarities, etc. were handled with a great deal of insight. On the other hand, many interesting studies were due to the efforts of constitutionalists, contributing the clarity of the legalistic approach, and also of ethnologists and historians, unveiling the functions, structures, and forms of ancient states. None of these studies, however, notwithstanding the undeniable value of their contribution, were able to come to grips with the main 'ontological' question concerning the nature of the state. The main interest of the recent Marxian approach induced by the French upheaval is precisely its focus on this fundamental question.¹

The problem is, however, extremely arduous. No wonder that in spite of the outstanding quality of the majority of recent studies, a satisfactory solution has not yet been achieved. Indeed, the complexity of the matter allows for a variety of approaches. Besides Marxism, approaches like system analysis, structuralism, functionalism, historicism, etc., and techniques like model-building, comparisons, quantitative 'methods', etc. may be considered. Let us note from the outset that opting for a Marxian approach is not an easy way out.

The first difficulty facing Marxists is the very lack of a political theory in the works of the founding fathers. Marx never produced a

theory of the state, even though he was well aware of both its necessity, and its acute difficulty. In a letter to Kugelmann, dated 28th December 1862, he says that with the publication of the first two instalments of the **Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy**, his main task of laying down the "quintessence" of the principles of political economy was now accomplished. With what has already been achieved, others would be able to carry out the necessary developments. But there may be an exception, adds Marx, an exception where his own contribution might prove indispensable. This, he writes, is the problem of "the relations of different state forms to different economic structures of society."² Nevertheless, the sad truth is that when Marx died twenty-one years later, he had not yet undertaken this particular task. Such a start was made by Engels, however, with his **Origin of the Family, the Private Property and the State**, but despite many illuminating insights, this was just a start. In fact, the 'Marxist theory of the state' remained inchoate even after Lenin's **State and Revolution**, and many valuable contributions by Gramsci.³

The second main difficulty confronting Marxists is the obvious discrepancies between the tenets of the doctrine and historical reality itself. Even at its beginnings, Marxism was adamant in its prediction of a gradual withering away of the state following immediately the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. However, and in spite of the trenchant assertions of its founder, the first state to claim officially to be Marxist has ended up as the most almighty organization that history has ever witnessed. Without a single exception, all socialist states established later have followed the same trend.

The third difficulty facing a Marxist approach is the existence of sharp differences among the various advocates of this doctrine. Even if it is true that all Marxists agree on some fundamentals, there still remain cleavages of such an importance that

the label of 'Marxist' is quite insufficient to define precisely any particular endeavour in the field of social science. Every author must explain, in addition, where his/her own particular approach to the problem under study stands within the broad area of Marxism. This is not an easy task, which is why, not only our introduction, but also the bulk of the first chapter as well, will be devoted to it. Different aspects of this same problem, moreover, will be encountered in many places throughout this essay.

Despite the basically positive contribution of recent Marxian studies on the state, it must also be acknowledged that the subject has started to suffer from a certain amount of logomachy. This is mainly due to two reasons. The first one stems from the very richness of Marxism itself. After over a century of studies, the doctrine has now reached such a wealth of interpretations that its followers are often driven to minute explanations of their attitudes on all major controversies which appeared in the doctrine itself. As has been pointed out above, a certain amount of clarification is indispensable. When this is taken too far, however, the specific problem under study risks getting drowned in a sea of epistemological and methodological disputes. The second reason explaining the current loquacity arises from the problem itself. The very ubiquity of the state has brought to the fore a multitude of aspects all authorizing a theoretical interest. The temptation to say something about everything may then result in losing sight of the core of the problem.

In the present essay I have tried to avoid these pitfalls. My constant preoccupation has been to be as concise and as clear as possible. I have not indulged in lengthy considerations on the 'crisis' of Marxism, on the social meaning of this crisis, on the best way of 'reading' the classics, on the relative value of their different texts, etc. Neither have I undertaken an assessment of all political writings of classical and modern Marxism. I have also

refrained from extended quotations from Marxist classics accompanied by meticulous exegeses. This not being an essay on Marxism but an essay on the state, I have limited myself to a short exposition of the Marxist conception only in so far as it was necessary for the problem under study.

On the other hand, concerning the object of analysis, I have deliberately confined myself to the essentials, consciously taking the risk of being misjudged. Rather than dispersing my attention upon all the aspects of the question, I have tried to concentrate exclusively on what appears to me as being the crux of the matter: namely, the clarification of the basic nature of the state.⁴ It is my belief that only when this 'qualitative analysis' is carried through, here or elsewhere, that a manifold historical, empirical, and eventually quantitative research will be able to find a solid ground to stand upon.

As noted above, the introduction and the first chapter are devoted to a preliminary discussion of the fundamentals of the approach used here. Each of the following three chapters deals with one of the three basic state functions. The fifth chapter attempts to form a synthesis of these constitutive functions. The last chapter discusses the problem of the forms of the state. Finally, the conclusion contemplates the future of the state, in the light of this essay's understanding of its nature.

Cem EROĞUL Faculty of
Political Sciences University of
Ankara - Turkey

NOTES

¹ This was a novelty not only from the point of view of state studies in general, but also from that of Marxian political thinking. **cf.** David A. Gold, Clarence Y.H. Lo, and Erik Olin Wright, "Recent Developments in Marxist Theories of the Capitalist State", **Monthly Review**, V. 27, n. 5 (October 1975), p. 30: "While Marxists have always had much to say about the state, it has only been fairly recently that the creation of a theory of the state has been considered an explicit task."

² Karl Marx, **Letters to Dr. Kugelmann**, London, Martin Lawrence, 1934, p. 23.

³ For a brief and accurate outline of the general situation of the Marxist classics with regard to the problem of politics and state, **cf.** Ralph Miliband, **Marxism and Politics**, Oxford University Press, 1977, pp. 1-3.

⁴ Throughout this essay the 'state' is used in its sense of apparatus and not community.

INTRODUCTION

SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Everyone agrees that social activity is the sum total of all individual actions, and nothing else. Both behaviourism and Marxism hold the same opinion on this crucial matter. It is crucial in the sense that from the outset it rejects all idealistic (or metaphysical) approaches concerning social life. There is no General Will, no unfolding of Idea, no realization of Reason or Justice. There are just individuals relating to one another. There is no society beyond this point as there is no human being beneath it.

The motor of social life, its moving force, **social energy**, is nothing else but individual energy. True, it is a combination of individual energies, but in its core it is still individual energy. And energy, be it natural or social, is always physical. It is only the combined physical energy of millions of individuals (the 'masses') which account for social movement. There is no social energy outside of the muscles, the nerves, the brains of human beings and the 'tools' (in its largest sense) they use to help them in their actions.

Individuals, however, do not act randomly. On this point also, behaviourism and Marxism agree. In the course of social life and in the midst of their everlasting struggle against nature, individuals acquire more or less definite patterns of behaviour. Western social theory has agreed to call these 'roles', and it cannot do any harm to Marxism to adopt the same terminology. Roles are patterns of behaviour which mould individual action,

and which bestow on them a social meaning. That is why roles are always interrelated. And that is also why individual actions interest social theory only as long as they perform roles. For social theory, individuals are above all the supports of roles for the performance of which they supply energy. Thus, their biology or their psychology are, in the main, outside the scope of social science. We must note, however, that on this point Marxists have been more coherent than Western non-Marxists, who, in spite of for example Parsons' emphatic warnings,¹ have indulged, too often in some sort of psychologism.

Roles repeating themselves and reproducing socially moulded sets of interrelations give way to **social structures**. Then, it is true, in the main, that structures are clusters of roles. But, actually, they are something more. For, in their social roles individuals use different means, tools, buildings, etc., and all these are parts of structures along with roles. Thus, a structure is a pattern of social behaviour materialized in concrete roles and diverse material means.

As it is particularly important to be clear about the notion of structure, it is pertinent to offer here the following remarks : 1) The elements of a structure may be of a very heterogeneous nature: ideas, beliefs, physical force, animate and inanimate objects, etc.; 2) All the elements of a structure are social products : all depend on education, training, economic production, etc.; 3) A structure is socially dead as long as it is not animated by individual energy; 4) Individual energy is socially meaningless, it is a mere physical force, as long as it is not shaped by a structure; 5) In social life, structures and individuals are never separated: structures are the 'keys' transforming individual energy into social energy; 6) It must be finally added that while shaping social activity, structures alone do not decide its outcome. The latter depends also on a series of external factors, i.e., the 'conditions', as well as the subjective situation of the actors.

It can easily be seen that societies and their constituents can always be defined as clusters of roles and structures. Indeed, there is not much controversy on this point. This does not take us very far, however, for we still do not know what differentiates these roles and structures, what their relative social importance is, and how they are related to one another.

Functionalism has rightly pointed out that what differentiates social actions, and consequently roles and structures, is their **function**. Or, in other words, what they really do. If the object of a social action is production we are faced with productive roles and structures. If it is politics we have political roles and structures, and so on. Accordingly, to be able to differentiate between roles and structures, we have to be clear about the nature of the field to which they belong.

Up to this point there is a consensus between the main trends of social thinking, be they positivist, structuralist, or Marxist, because, this is the starting point of a materialistic conception of social science. Beneath it, there is no science at all. Beyond this point, however, the main currents in social science begin to part. The first cleavage is of an epistemological, and consequently, methodological nature. Behaviourism and empiricism, hold that social reality is what we can come to grips with through our senses. To look for an inner reality under this surface is just metaphysics or mysticism. It is 'unscientific,' an approach that could at best be labelled 'philosophical.' This is the dominant view in the Western social science community, with the important exception of structuralism.

On this point structuralism is on the side of Marxism. Both currents hold that what appears at the surface of social life is usually misleading. It gives us only a distorted view of social reality, like — to repeat a very common example— the apparent movement of the sun hiding in fact its real movement. To grasp social reality, social science has to go beneath these appearances with the aim of unveiling

the hidden structures. The consequence of this epistemological view for studies of the state is that the real nature of the state is not at all obvious in its apparent roles and structures.

Thus, it can be very misleading to rely upon empirical forms as ready data indicating the reality of the state. Incidentally, this is what has always been done under the heading of 'comparative government.' In actual life states are big-small, rich-poor, socialist-capitalist, authoritarian-liberal, federal-unitary, etc. This gives the opportunity of comparisons **ad infinitum**, and the academic world cherishes indulging in them. They compare legislatures, political parties, bureaucracies, army rules, religious policies, etc., making classifications and designing maps emphasising this or that factor. They use abundantly the most sophisticated techniques. All this ends up, however, in a huge heap of 'photographs' of state forms, not a real picture of its nature.

To point out this fundamental shortcoming is not to say that apparent forms, roles, or structures have to be totally discarded. Such a statement would be utterly meaningless. Rather, what is meant, is that a theoretical explanation should not start with them. Empirical reality must be accounted for, but only as the outcome of previous theoretical developments. Both structuralism and Marxism hold that the secret of phenomenal forms lies in the hidden structures. It is only when this hidden reality is theoretically grasped that the apparent social 'facts' may be explained. Any 'short cut' to science, attempting to jump from observable phenomena to theoretical explanation is doomed to failure.

The second important cleavage leaves Marxism alone on one side, with all other schools—including structuralism—on the other side. This concerns the existence of **social determinism**, and its nature. In fact, all schools of scientific thought admit to some form of determinism.

Because, without **any** determinism social actions would be totally random, leaving no possibility for any kind of scientific approach. But for non-Marxist schools, determinism is partial and manifold. There are a lot of factors which explain social actions. These factors usually differ according to the social field under scrutiny. There is no privileged factor to determine the overall movement of society. That is why there is no 'thread of development' to be looked for in the course of history. True, societies as well as their components change. But these changes do not follow a development mainly determined by one and the same factor. Moreover, social factors generally admitted in Western thinking are mostly of a subjective kind. What accounts for social action is the self-interest, the greed, the striving for power, honours, etc., of human individuals.

Marxism differs radically on these points from all other schools. It holds that the main struggle of all societies is that between mankind and nature. This struggle being the basic condition of the very existence and development of any kind of society, the **economic** factor is the **main** determinant of all social life. The structures of all societies are mainly shaped by and through this struggle, and it is in the course of this endless strife that societies come to be divided between roles and structures which differ according to the position they hold in the battle against nature. One should recall that the physical powers of human individuals are also a part of nature, as such. It follows that the struggle against nature includes the harnessing of the strength of human beings by other human beings. This is how the struggle against nature also takes the form of a struggle between human beings themselves. Or to put the same thing in Marxian terminology, the battle against nature aims at the reproduction and development of the 'forces of production' and it is always led under definite 'relations of production.'

This basic conception enables Marxism to single out the economic factor as the most important one. That is not to say that Marxism considers this factor as unique. Contrary to the allegations of many of its detractors, it makes ample room for all sorts of other factors. It considers, however, that amongst all the factors, the economic one always succeeds to be the main determinant, due to its unique role in the survival of society.

Every Marxist agrees on this basic proposition. But when it comes to define the **nature** of the economic determination, important differences arise between various schools of Marxism. I have touched upon the existence of these antagonistic trends within Marxism, and it is not at all my intention to discuss here the validity of their respective claims. Here, I will limit myself to a very brief exposition of Marx's conception of social determinism only as far as it is helpful in considering the problem of the state.

It is in the **Preface** of 1859 that Marx has exposed his basic conception of social reality, in its most general and thus abstract form. In his view, every society is mainly divided between two sets of structures: the infrastructure (the base) and the superstructure. The first is the cluster of structures moulding economic activity and that is why it carries more weight than the second one, which covers fields of human activity such as politics, philosophy, aesthetics, etc. Marx describes this second set as the ideological forms in which human beings understand and direct —rightly or wrongly— their social activity. According to this definition the state is a part of the 'superstructure', and its own determination has to follow the general pattern of the determination of all the superstructures by the infrastructure.

Contrary to what has been often alleged, this determination is far from being simple and unilateral. A few examples below listed will hopefully suffice to show the immense **variety** of the possible forms of this determination. Its simplest and most often cited form is the 'direct and positive' action, e.g., the capitalist

mode of production bringing about the bourgeois revolution. This, however, is only one possible form. This 'direct' action can also be 'negative': for example, to be able to preserve its social supremacy, the bourgeoisie may have to give up its political supremacy -cf. the 18th Brumaire. Thirdly, this action can be 'passive and positive', i.e., the infrastructure may open definite ways to the superstructure. Capitalism, for example, may get on with a monarchy as well as a republic. Fourthly, the determination can be 'passive and negative', i.e., the infrastructure may close definite possibilities to the superstructure. The social conditions being yet immature, for example, the upsurge of 1848 was doomed to fail as a proletarian revolution. Fifthly, the determination can be 'active, but contradictory.' That is to say, the infrastructure may push the superstructure towards an innerly contradictory direction. The bourgeoisie, for example, has to carry out a land reform in order to cut the ground from under the feudal landlords, but by doing so it strengthens also another enemy, the proletariat. Sixthly, the determination can be 'passive and contradictory'. This happens when the infrastructure leaves only conflicting possibilities to the superstructure. Confronted with national war, for example, the bourgeoisie can do nothing without strengthening one of its two enemies in this case, viz. the foreign bourgeoisie, or its own proletariat. Seventhly, the determination can be 'active, positive, and selective', i.e. infrastructure may compel only one part of the superstructure without touching the others. Confronted with a new threat in the relations of production, for example, the bourgeoisie may radically shift its policy of fighting the Church and may even come to subsidize religious schools. And so forth.

I think these examples are sufficient to indicate how great the variety of forms of the determination of the superstructure by the infrastructure may be. To reduce Marxism to the uniformity of the simplest form of this determination could only stem from ignorance or total unfairness. Moreover, one could show that the

real variations in the forms of this basic determination would be even greater in reality.

Before carrying on with this point and trying thus to reach some preliminary conclusions for the theory of the state, I must warn about two other mistakes which are also often made. The first one is related to the nature of the determinant action, while the second concerns the nature of the infra- and superstructures.

When one says that the infrastructure 'acts' on the superstructure or 'determines' it, this statement should not at all be understood as if the infrastructure were a sort of active 'subject' pushing around a cluster of lifeless forms. It is to avoid such a deep misunderstanding that right at the outset of this introduction I have insisted on the fact that there is no society beyond human beings. Social activity is always the activity of concrete individuals. As has already been underlined, however, this activity is always shaped by social structures. What is then really meant when one says that a structure 'acts' on another one, is that a number of individuals acting in a structurally determined form provoke definite effects on a number of the same or other individuals whose activity is thus shaped in a determined structure. 'Determined' in the sense that the shape of the second structure **depends on** the effects of the first. To word this differently, human beings always make their own history, but they always make it in structurally given conditions.²

A second necessary clarification concerns the nature of infra- and superstructures. Many misunderstandings about Marxism stem out of a mistaken conception of these categories. The first point to be stressed is that there is no difference in the **degree of reality** between these two sets of structures. The infrastructure is no more real than the superstructure. The second point to be stressed is that there is no difference in the **degree of abstractness**

between them. The superstructure is no more abstract than a somehow more concrete infrastructure. As theoretical categories they reflect exactly the same degree of abstractness. Thirdly, it should be stressed that there is no **chronological priority** between these two categories. The infrastructure does not come before the superstructure. Some sort of superstructure is always contemporary to a certain infrastructure. The fourth point to be stressed with particular emphasis, because it is too often misunderstood, is that there is no **difference in materiality** between infra- and superstructures. The infrastructure is not a heap of hardcore, palpable things opposed to an evanescent superstructure clouded with ideas. Material things, human relations, or ideas may very well be a part either of the infrastructure or of the superstructure. For example, the mental design of a new product, in spite of being 'conceptual', is a part of the infrastructure, whereas a fortress may be a part of the superstructure.

In reality, what differentiates these two categories in Marxian thinking is the **field** they cover, their respective domain, and consequently, their varying ability to determine human behaviour. All material things, activities, ideas which are related to economic production belong to the infrastructure. The superstructure covers all other things, activities, and ideas. Thus, it is the place of any social object, be it 'material' or 'ideal', which determines its being infra- or superstructural. It follows that an object which was once a part of the superstructure may be a part of the infrastructure in a different society, and **vice versa**. And it is only owing to its domain, to its location amidst the most vital activity for the survival of society, that the infrastructure is determinant.

To pursue the subject of the multiformity of Marxian social determinism, I have already pointed out that it would be a gross misunderstanding to reduce this to a single unilateral determination. And, I have already, given examples of some sort of active-passive, positive-negative, direct-indirect, simple-contradictory, selective-overall forms of determination.

Not only can and should this list be extended,³ but also one should keep in mind that these different forms can act within the most varied **combinations**.

And this is not all. For, Marxism does not pretend that determination is totally one-way. It only says that the 'main' direction is from infra- to superstructure. Otherwise, it explicitly allows for a **reciprocal** determination. Thus, one can easily see how complex in fact, the Marxist conception of the relations between infra- and superstructures is.

The state being a part of the superstructure, its relations with the infrastructure must be considered at the same degree of complexity. In fact, more so, because, the state is not only subject to partly reciprocal determination by the infrastructure, but being only one part of the superstructure among others, it is also in reciprocal relationship with the rest of the superstructure. All this should be kept in mind, adding finally that like all structures, the state is also determined by the particular nature of **its own** structure.

But let us not anticipate. Before taking up the peculiar nature of the state, one last and extremely important feature of Marxian epistemology must be emphasized. We all know that according to Marx, the economic factor is the determining one "in the last instance." I have already stressed the possible complexity of this determination. We know that it points mainly to a propensity, that its forms are likely to vary in a very wide range, that it allows for a certain reciprocity, and so on. But even after making allowances for all these qualifications, we may still be totally misled if we are expecting to come across a set of economic results as effects of economic determination. For, contrary to a very widespread misunderstanding of Marxism, the effects of economic determination are **never** exclusively economic.

And they could not be. To pretend that they would be, is to show a total lack of logic. For if this were the case, then society as a whole would merely consist of economic activity and economic results. Thus, society would be reduced to the economy. Actually, this is exactly the point of view of scores of 'intellectuals' around the world who look for economic effects in order to prove or to refute Marx's conception of economic determination.

This is not only a matter of simple logic. What is really at issue here is a very basic **principle** of dialectical materialism (i.e. Marxist philosophy). I would like to first state it in an abstract formula: **The result of a determination depends on the nature of the determined, and not on that of the determinant.** A simple example may be helpful in understanding this point. Imagine that there is an important increase in temperature and try to spell out its possible results. Plants may dry up, birds may migrate, elderly and ill people may die, psychologically weak persons may have nervous breakdowns, governments may decree emergency measures to limit the use of water, and so on. One can, indeed, think of a multitude of other effects. Now, it is obvious that if the **existence** of all these effects is determined by the same factor —increase in temperature — their extreme variety can only be accounted for by the variety in the nature of those affected.

When this basic principle is applied to historical materialism (i.e. the Marxist science of society), one understands easily why the **same** main determinant, the economic factor, may explain a whole range of very **different** social effects. Incidentally, this is another reason why it would be misleading to limit oneself to appearances in the study of social phenomena. As pointed out above, what is to be seen on the surface of social life, as outcomes of economic determination, is a series of heterogeneous effects filtered and transformed by a whole range of structures.

This epistemological rule has naturally very important methodological consequences. It is for this reason that Marx says

that to be able to explain reality, one must start with the main determinant at the most abstract level, and construct step by step the path of its transformed effects through different structures, to reach finally a level of theoretical concreteness capable of accounting for the empirical social reality. What makes things really complicated is the fact that once a factor has determined any structure it becomes unrecognizable while still carrying out all its effects. To go back to my example, if vegetarian animals starve because plants have dried up, and if as a result there is a shortage of milk and so on, research aiming at the explanation of the final phenomena will have to trace the whole chain of determinations, facing at each level a different determinant. The same goes for historical materialism, where the economic factor may determine an ideological structure which may in turn determine a political structure, etc. Then, apparently, the political structure would be determined by the ideological one though, in fact, it is the economic one which is the determinant. This is what Marx means when he says that the economic factor is determinant "in the last instance."

Let us repeat that the variations encountered at each step of the chain of determinations have their source in the difference in the natures of the structures affected. Marx strikingly illustrates this methodological principle in a most interesting passage of **Capital** where he tries to sort out the effects of commerce: "Commerce, therefore, has a more or less dissolving influence everywhere on the producing organisation, which it finds at hand and whose different forms are mainly carried on with a view to use-value. To what extent it brings about a dissolution of the old mode of production depends on its solidity and internal structure. And wither this process of dissolution will lead, in other words, what new mode of production will replace the old, does not depend on commerce, but on the character of the old mode of production itself."⁴ As it can be clearly seen, the result of the determination does not depend on the

determinant (commerce) but on the determined (the old mode of production).

Finally, it is exactly for this reason that historical materialism provides us with only a science of society at the most abstract level, which cannot be used as such to explain any concrete social phenomenon. These abstract principles tell us, generally, where to look and how to look at social reality, and that is all. To be able to reach a valid explanation of the particular social area under study we must still construct its **particular** theory. For, as we have emphatically underlined, it is the nature of different social structures which shape the outcome of the economic determination.

NOTES

1 Talcott Parsons, **The Social System**, The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1951, pp. 14-5.

2 It is interesting to note that certain representatives of the structural-functional approach acknowledge at least the 'passive' kind of this determination (be it 'positive' or 'negative'). Witness this statement by Almond and Powell: "The processes of political change are extremely complex and rest upon a very large number of interacting factors. Yet, the hope for prediction and, indeed, for any kind of reasonably parsimonious explanation lies in the fact that every system is the prisoner of its past. The way in which a system faced certain types of problems, and the nature of its present characteristics as they bear the mark of those efforts, limit and constrain the alternatives which lie before it. History does not, of course, determine the future, but it may limit or foreclose certain alternatives." Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., **Comparative Politics**, Boston, Little Brown and Company, 1966, p. 301.

3 For an effort in this direction cf. Erik Olin Wright, **Class, Crisis and the State**, London, NLB, p. 15: "At least six basic modes of determination can be distinguished within the global concept of structural causality: structural limitation, selection, reproduction/nonreproduction, limits of functional compatibility, transformation and mediation."

4 Karl Marx, **Capital**, V. 3, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1977, pp. 331-2.

CHAPTER I

THE THREE FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE

We may now tackle the specific object of this essay: the elucidation of the nature of the state. It has already been indicated that the nature of any social object depends on the activity of its constituent roles and structures. It is 'the task it fulfils', 'the duty it performs', 'the role it plays', 'the place it fills,...', briefly, its **function(s)** that defines the nature of a social object. To use a subjective analogy: 'you are what you do.' But what does the state actually do?

If one could be satisfied with a nominal answer, then the problem would have been solved right at the outset. Because on this point there is a general consensus: what the state does is unanimously called 'politics.'¹ Even if all politics is not state activity, all state activity **is** politics. There is no doubt on this point. The trouble is, however, that a nominal answer does not solve the problem. For, it is not at all clear what is meant by 'politics.' A quick glance at the related literature shows immediately that there are—and there have always been— wide discrepancies among the views held on this problem.

Not only does the term 'politics' have different meanings in everyday life (**cf.** current definitions in dictionaries), but much more important, there is no consensus among political scientists on the precise meaning of this concept. Sadly enough, political science is a discipline where scholars have not yet been able to agree on a common definition of the very subject of their studies. A couple of random examples will suffice to illustrate this point.

For some scholars politics is state activity (e.g. M. Prélôt); for others it is a pervading social relationship going far beyond the state, and characterized by the basic inequality of the partners involved (e.g. M. Duverger); for an important number of political scientists politics is defined with reference to the legitimate use of material force (e.g. M. Weber); whereas for others it should be defined as the enforcement of particular values on others (e.g. D. Easton); yet, some scholars think that, not enforcement, but compromise between conflicting demands for power is what defines politics best (e.g. R. Macridis). And so on.

No one is to blame for this diversity. Every scientist has to start with a definition. He/she needs it to be able to build a theoretical frame of reference without which no scientific research is possible. In fields where there is a consensus on the object under scrutiny, definitions are usually shared by the entirety, or at least vast majority of the scientific community. In fields like politics where there is no consensus, every scientist feels rightly free to adopt a definition of his/her own. Besides, I will shortly follow this example, thus adding to the current diversity.

It seems that the variety of conceptions witnessed in the domain of politics is mainly due to **three** reasons, all sharing an equally **objective** character. The first two are related to the specific nature of the object under study, while the third is connected with the particular situation of the scientists in this field. As an object of study, politics has two peculiarities worth noting at the outset. The first one is its **antagonistic** nature. This can be easily observed in everyday life, where diverging or even seemingly incompatible activities² are encompassed under the same term of 'politics.' No wonder, then, that scientists impressed by this or that aspect of a conflicting reality should reach conclusions at odds with one another.

Another peculiarity of politics which gives us the second reason for the variety of conceptions it has engendered, is its

historical **plasticity**. Political activity has always been at the heart of social life in a most intimate relationship with society as a whole. It is then understandable that it should have evolved parallel to every major social transformation. As a result, politics has gained objectively different meanings in the course of his-tory.³ Some of these have fallen into oblivion, but others have been superimposed. It follows that political scientists interested in this or that aspect of the concept feel rightly that their particular definition relates to a very objective situation.

The third cause of the current discrepancies among conceptions of politics is again of a sociological and historical nature, although no longer in relation to the object under study but to the subjective perceptions of the observers as conditioned by their **social setting**. The very importance of political activity necessarily entails various or even conflicting views among the different social strata of antagonistic societies. Every major group is driven to adopt a view of politics which necessarily reflects its objective interests. Thus, there is not only an ambivalence stemming from the historically evolved differences in the meaning of politics, but there is also one which finds its source in the objective situation of the observers themselves. Like all human beings, political scientists are members of different social strata, and they cannot help finding the 'right' answer in a definition which reflects the priorities of their own social group.

Thus, it can be seen that the heterogeneity of the current conceptions of politics is not due to the whims of particular scholars, but is firmly rooted in the present and historical heterogeneity of both the object of study and the social location of the observers. These constraints being of an objective character, it is impossible to escape the limitations which they impose upon any attempt to furnish a scientific definition of politics. However, a clear awareness of their existence and nature may help in devising definitions of a greater validity, as these would consciously try

to take into account such objective constraints. This is precisely what I have aimed at, when, like anyone starting an analysis, I have been confronted with the dire necessity of defining the object of my study.

The definition of politics that I would like to propose is the following: 'Politics is a social activity whose object is to provide on an overall scale the conditions necessary for the maintenance and development of a particular mode of production.'⁴ If a mode of production involves conflicting activities for its survival and expansion, politics will be, as indeed it is often seen to be, a **conflictual** activity. Then, this definition has the advantage of allowing, if need be, for the representation of an antagonistic reality. Another of its advantages, is its **plasticity**. As modes of production are combined, superseded, and replaced, in the course of history, the proposed definition readily encompasses a wide range of differing activities which, despite their apparent variety, are still recognized as 'political.' Thus, by emphasizing the general function of politics, it is possible to take into account the first two constraints indicated above. This compliance enables us to avoid the double-trap into which the majority of current definitions have fallen with their one-sidedness and/or historical shortsightedness.

Concerning the third constraint, however, this definition is as biased as all others. So better be frank about it right at the beginning, and try to explain the reasons of my choice. When it comes to politics, only **two** basic attitudes are possible: one may view social reality, either as a process following a certain line of development, or as a blind movement with no definite thread to pursue. The first attitude supposes a belief in 'progress', a conviction about the 'ephemerality' of the present hardships, a hope for a 'better' world, and thus entails an effort to bring about this 'future.' Whereas the second attitude, acknowledges 'change' but refuses to admit any sustained direction in it, thinks

that it can be for better or, as most often seen, 'for worse', that given 'human nature' no radical change in social life may be hoped for, that 'piecemeal' improvements are much more suitable, and besides more 'realistic' than visionary upheavals. The first attitude is **revolutionary** in essence, while the second one is **conservative**. The former is advocated by those who are not satisfied with the present social order, the latter by those who are afraid of losing their present privileges in a new social order.

There is a basic incompatibility between these two attitudes and, like all major social issues, they also divide the definitions of politics—even if it is true that on both sides there are an infinity of possible shades. There is no such thing as a 'neutral' or 'apolitical' definition of politics. Even the most uncommitted one hides, in fact, a commitment. This is also true for my own definition which, as already indicated, is no less biased than all others. Stressing the historical relativity of politics, it reflects a 'developmental' view.

Is this to say, however, that as all conceptions of politics are inevitably biased, there can be no scientific conception of this subject? Not at all. Neutrality is by no means a condition of being scientific. History is witness that scientists have very often fought fierce battles in relation to their scientific attitudes. Nowadays, in the general field of social science, no attitude can escape being biased in a world where social interests clash at their roots. The only scientific outlet left lies not in adopting a superficial neutrality, but in assuming consciously the point of view of those social groups which, objectively, are most interested in unveiling social reality.

A comparable situation arose at the end of the Middle Ages, when natural science came on the agenda. The class most interested in grasping social reality through these new sciences was then the bourgeoisie. The natural scientist had no other choice

than to side with the bourgeoisie against the Church and all other medieval interests. In the contemporary world, and concerning the social sciences, the labouring classes are in the same situation as the bourgeoisie was then. Social sciences are vital for these classes which cannot achieve their supremacy and build a new society fitting their own interests, without genuinely relying on them. This explains why an approach which takes into account the objective situation, in which social sciences find themselves in the present world, is, in fact, not a hindrance, but a **scientific advantage**.

Thus, the definition given above, by strictly complying with the objective constraints stemming out of its very subject-matter, meets the first requirement of scientific status. It seems, therefore, safe to use it as a foundation for building a theoretical frame of reference, in order to deal with the problem of politics.

According to our definition, politics is a social **activity**. Confronted with an activity, the first questions that any scientist would ask can be very simply formulated: **what is done, by whom, and how?** These, of course, are not the only possible questions, but they are truly the preliminary ones, and we will start with them.

Recalling what has been said in the introduction and at the start of this chapter, the most important question among the preliminary ones is that beginning with 'what'. If we can find out 'what political activity is?', or 'what politics do?', or 'what the functions of politics are?', we may come closer to the nature of the state, keeping in mind that what the state does is politics—even if politics is not limited to the state. Now, according to our definition, politics is an activity whose object is the provision of the conditions required by 'modes of production'. This calls for some explanation.

In the Marxian general frame of reference, any concrete society, i.e. a 'social formation', is under the dominance of a definite mode of production, which most often coexists with other modes of production, combining them to form the 'infrastructure' (cf. our introduction). Every mode of production is composed of two main sets of elements. The first one, 'the forces of production' comprise, on the one hand, the material means (including the conditions) necessary for the productive activities of society, and, the labour-force of the producers, on the other. The second one, 'the relations of production' are the specific social relations which shape the form of productive activity according to the position of the actors in regard to the means of production. Then, the first conclusion to draw from our definition is that the object of political activity being to serve modes of production, this service must necessarily encompass the components of modes of production, i.e., the forces of production, on the one hand, and the relations of production on the other.

As pointed out in the introduction, all societies, whatever their mode(s) of production, are confronted with the basic task of exploiting nature in order to extract from it their means of subsistence. In societies divided into antagonistic classes, this exploitation involves class struggles. Even if such a situation has been prevailing overwhelmingly in the recorded period of history, it still holds true that class conflict is a particular case within the more general confrontation between nature and society. It follows, therefore, that what must be first considered is the antagonism between mankind and nature. This is the basic contradiction which pervades the life of all societies, at all times, and whatever their particular forms may be.

The existence of such a common element in all modes of production has important consequences for our conception of politics. According to our definition, this activity is directed towards the maintenance and development of modes of produc-

tion. As all these modes share a common element, the most common feature of politics will necessarily be directed to this element. As the forces of production are composed partly of means of production, and partly of the labour-force of the producers, the first feature of politics can be defined as the provision of conditions for the preservation and development of the means of production and of the producers in any given society.

The particular content of this activity will, of course, vary according to the concrete situation of the forces of production. It is therefore impossible to 'describe', at this level of abstraction the concrete forms of this aspect of politics. This question will be dealt with in the following chapter. Nevertheless, what matters at this stage is to note that politics will perform this task in all societies, whatever their particular modes of production may be. This is, therefore, the most general function of politics. I propose to call it the 'first function'. First, not in importance, but in the degree of abstraction, and thus generality. Indeed, first, also chronologically. For, this function being independent of time, place, and any particular circumstance, it should be expected to have acted as the general matrix out of which all other particular functions of politics were born.

Another peculiarity of this first function is that it always serves humanity as a whole. The survival of society depending basically on the success of its war against nature, the more its soldiers (the producers) are victorious, and the more trophies (the means of production and consumption) they get, the better it is for everybody. This holds true even for societies where the spoils are very unequally shared. Even in the most exploitative society, as it is impossible to do without the producers, the effort to sustain the forces of production will cover not only the means of production but also, necessarily, the labour-power of the producers themselves—even if this is only done with a view to go on exploiting them. The fact that the gap between rich and

poor may widen with development does not change the other fact that the poor of a wealthy society are, at least potentially, in a better condition than those of a less wealthy one. Thus, notwithstanding class exploitation, the development of the forces of production is in the long run always beneficial to all members of society. It is for this reason that I propose to name the first function of politics: 'providing for the general interest'.

We may now consider the second element constitutive of all modes of production, the relations of production. These relations are shaped by the property rights of the members of society. Without drawing at this stage distinctions between real appropriation and legal proprietorship, the basic issue in this context is the ownership of the means of production. The invariant elements of any production are the labour-power of the producers and the means of production. However, the connection between these elements is most variable, and it is these variations which, according to Marx, account for the fundamental difference between forms of society throughout human history. There is obviously a wide range of possibilities between a society where the producers own commonly the means of production, and one where these are the property of a very tiny minority.

Nevertheless, and whatever their form may be, the relations of production are always constitutive of modes of production, and to ensure the maintenance and expansion of these relations is another object of politics. I propose therefore, according to our definition, to call this other aspect of political activity, the 'second function' of politics. Second, that is, in the development of the logical argument, and also chronologically, for the appearance of this function denotes a relatively advanced social situation. Not second in importance, as we will later see, this so-called second function constituting in reality the most important aspect of political activity. But let us not anticipate. This function will be considered in more detail in a separate chapter, the third one of this essay.

When relations of production are such that the means of production are the common property of the producers, and there is no class differentiation, we are faced with a society without human exploitation. It is obvious that in the Marxian outlook, there can be no fundamental conflict of interest dividing the members of such a society. For, a difference of that kind could only stem out of a discrimination in the ownership of the means of production. In a classless society, therefore, the second function of politics is absorbed by the first one. Either it has not yet appeared, or it is already superseded. Caring for the property of the owners of the means of production, when this ownership extends to the whole of society, becomes necessarily synonymous with providing for the general interest.

However, according to the Marxist conception, things are very different in all other forms of society. Means of production being privately owned, one part of society is partially or totally deprived of a direct access to them. This part has to work in order to survive. But it cannot achieve this without using the means of production. Thus, those who own these means are in a position to dictate their terms to those deprived of them. The preservation of such a social order is obviously in the interest of the dominant class(es), and against that of the exploited one(s). It follows that in class-divided societies, the second function of politics, aiming at the maintenance and expansion of the relations of production, is necessarily in the service of the superior classes, and opposed to the inferior ones. This is why I propose to name this second function: 'providing for the dominant class interest.'

Whereas in the first function of politics strife was against nature, in the second one it is among individuals belonging to opposing classes. With the appearance of class differentiation, politics acquires a new task, that of preserving and promoting precisely this differentiation. Whereas the aim of the first function was the aggrandizement of the 'cake' (economic production),

the aim of the second one is to arrogate to the dominant class its largest part, proportionally reducing thereby the share of the exploited class(es). The second function of politics is based on social conflict, it thrives on it, and its invariable aim is the consolidation of the position of the winners.

In all modes of production the producers are the common element of **both** the forces of production, and the relations of production. In the first instance they act in their capacity of productive force, whereas in the second, their place is determined according to the distribution of the ownership of the means of production. In class differentiated societies, the producers appear also in this double capacity. On the one hand, their labour-power is a major component of the forces of production, and on the other, they constitute the exploited class(es). As a productive force, they stand to gain everything by the performance of the first function of politics, whilst as an exploited class, they stand to lose everything by the performance of the second function of politics. It is this particularity of every mode of production, based on class differentiation, that gives way to a contradiction between the first and the second functions of politics.

To sum up the line of argument up to this point, if politics is defined as an activity whose object is the upholding of modes of production; if modes of production are composed of two main sets of elements; if the first set, the forces of production are served by the 'first function'; if the second set, the relations of production, are served by the 'second function'; if the appearance of class differentiation results in a contradiction between the two sets constitutive of all modes of production; it follows that political activity will always be contradictory in class divided societies. I must stress that it is **crucial** to keep in mind this constitutive characteristic of politics in class societies, for it will provide us with one of the main keys in our analysis of the nature of the state.

Our analysis up to now has thus furnished us with some elements of an answer to the question beginning with 'what'. We have already been able to single out two major functions of politics. We have also noted that these are contradictory in class-divided societies, transforming politics into an activity conflicting with itself. We may now extend this analysis by introducing the question beginning with 'who'. Politics being an activity, **who** is in charge of performing it? Or to put the same thing in different words, what are the roles and structures (**cf.** the introduction) through which political activity is carried out?

Politics being a non-productive activity, its performance on a permanent basis by a specialized group of persons, supposes firstly the emergence of a surplus product. It is only when a sufficient amount of products can be regularly diverted from the consumption of producers, without endangering the reproductive process, that such a group can be permanently sustained. The emergence of politics as a specialized activity presupposes, therefore, that society has already achieved a relatively advanced stage of development. Such a stage also presupposes that the social division of labour has now attained a fairly elaborate configuration. For, it is only through such a development that a continuous flow of surplus product can be secured. A relatively advanced division of labour and a steady growth of surplus product also point to the emergence of social classes. The objective condition which makes possible the appearance of class differentiation is, indeed, the existence of a reliable source of surplus product. A certain number of people thus reach a position where they can dispense with the necessity of working for their subsistence. These are the first elements of a superior class, and their emerging superiority is based on the privileged position they are able to secure with regard to the means of production.

Clearly, then, a society where political activity itself comes under the sway of the division of labour, is a fairly developed

one witnessing already the emergence of social classes. The growing complexity of communal affairs precludes their handling by society as a whole. Besides, a human grouping split by the emergence of social classes loses its ability to act spontaneously, and **in toto**. The time-old necessity of direction is now coupled with that of compulsion. A society where basic contradictions have emerged is incapable of defining its common needs, let alone caring for them in a concerted manner. A special group has therefore to assume the task of defining the 'common good', and of directing-compelling society towards achieving it. This special group now permanently assigned to political activity has necessarily to be sustained by the non-productive consumption of a part of the surplus product. This group then belongs inescapably to the superior class whose members are delivered of the necessity of productive work. Thus, political activity as a special branch of the division of labour is, at its very birth, a superior class activity.

However, the social role of the superior class(es) is not, and could possibly be not, limited to political activity. The major function of a superior class is to organize its exploitation of nature through the newly established relations of social exploitation. Thus, it has to carry out the time and energy-consuming task of managing productive activity. This burden requires the exclusive commitment of the major part of the superior class(es). Moreover, the division of society into classes compels the superior one(s) to assume all the general ideological tasks, and to organize them in such a manner as to support the new social order. All these obligations can only be met by a division of labour **within** the superior class(es). With the development of this division of labour, political activity is permanently entrusted to a specialized group within the dominant class.

The specific task of this particular group is to carry out political functions. Our previous analysis has already enabled us

to single out two of these functions: the first one, whose aim is to cater to the common good, and the second one, which is concerned with the promotion of dominant class interests. The first task requires a directing activity, and the second one, a compelling one. But these tasks are not independent of each other. Political activity inevitably combines them, and by doing so is transformed, as has been noted above, into a combined set of contradictory role performances. This contradictory role of the particular group entrusted with the task of carrying out politics, necessitates the evolution of particular structures capable of coping permanently with conflict.

The 'ruling personnel', i.e. those members of the superior class(es) whose particular task is to perform political functions, is indeed confronted with a series of conflicts. The necessity to abide by the first function and to care thus for the interests of the producers, drives it into conflict with the superior class(es). The necessity to back up social exploitation results in another conflict, this time with the producers. The necessity to define overall policies inevitably clashes with the particular interests of superior classes (if there are many) and/or with those of the different strata within these classes. Permanently confronted with conflict, the ruling personnel have to organize themselves in an apparatus strong enough to overcome all these challenges.

The strength of this structure is also greatly enhanced by ideological factors. A mere directing activity was already a source of considerable prestige in primitive classless societies. With the addition of compulsion, fear has merged with respect, so as to create a sense of fear-inspired allegiance towards the rulers. A suitable framework of mythical and religious beliefs were evolved in the meantime, surrounding the ruling personnel with a halo of sacredness, adding thus to their aloofness from society. In this way there emerged a compound structure, an apparatus, organizing within itself the contradictory roles of the ruling

personnel, in conflict with both the inferior and superior classes, and able to rely on force as well as on ideological factors. This apparatus was the state.

The state is thus the necessary form that political activity has to adopt when it becomes a specialized branch of the social division of labour. The nature of politics is such that necessity for the state arises when and where the second function is added to the first, i.e., as a result of the emergence of class differentiation. But once the state is born, it brings about **its own** logic. The accomplishment of political tasks through the state necessitates a clear division between state and society. Thus emerges the cleavage between the public and private spheres, between state and 'civil society'. This new differentiation is superimposed on the social class division rooted in economic exploitation. However, whereas productive activity divides society into social classes, political activity assembles all classes, inferior and superior alike, within civil society, which in turn confronts the state as a whole.

This estranged position does not mean, however, that the state is independent of society. Like all social structures, the state exists only through the activity of its personnel. This personnel has to be sustained out of the surplus product, and it is thus primarily dependent on the dominant class. Besides, it is itself a part of this class. The state's particular nature resulting from the contradictions embedded in political activity itself, however, inescapably drives ruling personnel into conflict, not only with the inferior classes, but also with the superior ones. State service cannot be provided without compulsion. It is out of this objective necessity that the strength, the power, and the authority of the state are derived.

This particular position of the state, above the rest of society, provides its personnel with special rewards. And like all the groups arising out of the social division of labour within the superior class(es), this personnel is induced to a permanent effort

in order to increase its particular privileges. It is important to note, however, that this self-interest of the ruling personnel coincides with a very **objective necessity**. The strength of the state is a **sine qua non** condition of its fulfilment of the first two major functions of politics. The state **must** be located above society if it is to provide at all for the general interest and for the interest of the dominant class. This objective situation is so binding that it is indeed the source of another major political function, which I propose to call the 'third function'.

This last function of politics is the product of a social situation where political activity becomes the particular task of a special group of persons permanently organized in an apparatus encompassing the whole of society. This apparatus, the state, has to enjoy power in order to be able to carry out its political tasks. Thus, with the emergence of the state, all activities aiming at the preservation and expansion of state power become a **permanent** feature of political activity. By fighting for their own privileges, state personnel abide objectively by the requirements of the third major function of politics. Accordingly, I propose to name this function: 'providing for the state's own interest'. The fourth chapter of this essay will be devoted to a more detailed analysis of this function.

The specificity of the 'third function' is that, contrary to the first two, its necessity does not derive directly from the object of political activity. This explains why it is scarcely noted by political scientists,⁵ while the first two functions are always pointed out: scholars biased to the Right stressing the first one, and those leaning to the Left insisting on the second. Political scientists are usually blurred by the subjective side of the coin: they underline the greed, the thirst for power, authority, the penchant for a lavish style, etc. demonstrated by the rulers. They do not see that these subjective phenomena have a very objective basis. The objective side of the coin is precisely the third function

of politics which posits the strength of the state as an inescapable condition for the accomplishment of other political functions.

The introduction of the third function alters radically the general picture of political relations. (The impact of this picture upon the nature of the state will be specially dealt with in the fifth chapter of this essay.) Whereas with the first two functions the protagonists were the inferior and superior social classes, the emergence of the third function adds to them the ruling personnel, thereby bringing into politics all the complexities of a **triangular** game. The state is torn apart, between its tasks towards the producers, the exploiters, and its own personnel. On the other hand, as an organization, it is compelled to retain a minimum of internal integration.

How does the state reconcile all these conflicting roles? This question leads us to the last of the preliminary questions asked earlier in this chapter in connection with political activity: what is done, by whom, and how? We have by now the first elements of an answer to the first two questions. To recall them briefly: political activity is composed of **three** basic functions which are mainly performed by the state (viz. providing for the general interest, for that of the dominant class, and finally for the particular interest of the ruling personnel). To be able to supply the first elements of an answer to the question beginning with 'how', we must now consider generally the **means**, the **styles**, the **mechanisms**, and the **forms** used by the state in the performance of its basic functions.

To cope with its social tasks the state has intruded in all spheres of social life. It necessarily intervenes in productive activity, in the management of social affairs, in the resolution of conflicts, in the organization of defence, in the definition of social rules of behaviour, in the enforcement of these rules (including its own decisions), in ideological matters, and so on. All these activities compel the state to use very different **means**:

economic, organizational, juridical, military, ideological, etc. Obviously, all these means depend on the level of development of the forces of production. It is this level which will decide the quality and quantity of the means that the state has at its disposal. The forces of production may provide the state with arrows or missiles, with human messengers or satellite communications, with organic energy or nuclear energy, with abaci or computers. Inescapably, the material appearance of the state will be shaped by the level of development of the society it rules over. On this point, the state is, neither independent, nor autonomous. It is totally subjected to the material constraints of its social environment. It is therefore impossible to give a general description of the means used by the state without taking into account the fundamental qualitative changes introduced by different historical periods.

This is not to say, however, that a scrutiny of the means used by the state is a sheer descriptive exercise irrelevant to its theoretical analysis. On the contrary, there is a lot to be learned by a study of these means. An accurate classification of the means may reveal the fields where the state interferes more readily. An ordering of the means according to their effectiveness may furnish us with a precise measure of the limits of state interference in specific epochs. Finally, the level of development of state means may indicate the prevalent mode of production, the nature of the dominant class, and consequently, the particular type of state that faces us.

The **style** of the state, and its particular manner of exercising power, depends on a series of factors. The first one is again the level of development of the forces of production. The style will necessarily be affected by the degree of refinement of state means which themselves reflect the relative progress achieved by society's productive capacity. A second factor is the cultural development of the dominant class. The ruling personnel is a part of this class

and its style will necessarily be shaped by the culture of its origins. It is obvious that the Japanese samurai, or the British gentry, or the merchants of Renaissance Italy will impart widely differing styles to their respective states. A third factor is the particular characteristics of the ruling personnel. For, in certain cases, these may differ to a large extent from those of the dominant class. A striking example is furnished by Nazi Germany, where the particular style of the state was largely influenced by the character of the ruling group, and owed little to the cultural environment of the dominant class. A fourth factor is the relative strength of the dominant class. When this dominance is threatened, the state is usually driven to adopt an authoritarian and sometimes ruthless style, whereas the states of well-established dominant classes tend to adopt a much more conciliatory or urbane style. Most probably, there are still other factors affecting state style, and it is particularly important to keep in mind all these factors when it comes to the analysis of **concrete** states.

The **mechanisms** used by the state are another important aspect, along with the means and styles already considered, which must be taken into account in order to determine 'how' political activity is exercised. In the course of history a wide range of specific mechanisms have been devised for the performance of politics. Some are related to the recruitment of ruling personnel, such as rules of hereditary succession, elections, nomination, examinations, etc. Some are related to the decision-making process, such as rules of unanimity, quorums, differently qualified majorities, secret vote, etc. Some are related to the enforcement of decisions, such as injunctions, requisitions, detentions, arrests, etc. Others are related to the resolution of conflicts, such as court decisions, arbitrations, appeals, etc. Yet others are related to the establishment of legal devices, such as constitutions, laws, decrees, orders, etc. Indeed, the variety is immense. All these mechanisms constitute the 'technical' aspect of politics.

Some of them were developed in an unintentional way in the course of history, some are the result of a very conscious 'constitutional engineering', others are adopted through imitation of foreign examples, and so on. Altogether they are important for the analysis of the state, because it is **through** these that the state performs its basic functions. These mechanisms shape the **empirical** reality expressing, on the surface of political life, the inner nature of specific states.

Finally, 'how' politics is performed depends also on the empirical **forms** of state structures. The means, the styles, and mechanisms of state power combine to form a series of specific structures. Considered in their interrelations with society as a whole, these are usually referred to as 'political systems' and/or 'political regimes'.

To be sure, according to Marx, the secret of the form of the state lies in the relation between the direct producer and the proprietor of the means of production.⁶ This is, indeed, crucially important for the unveiling of the nature of the state, but this 'secret' does **not** give us the form itself. Neither can the basic political functions analysed here, give us directly the concrete forms of the state. The passage from the abstract level of general functions to the concrete one of specific forms requires a series of particular analyses. This immensely complex problem, will be encountered in all the following chapters of this essay, but will be particularly emphasized in the last two.

Up to now, we have been considering some preliminary questions related to political activity with special attention to the role of the state. The focus of this essay being on the nature of the state, such an emphasis was legitimate. Nevertheless, it is also necessary to look at the problem 'from the outside', more concretely, to consider the state in relation to the **whole realm**

of politics, and also, to the main **non-political** social activities, in order to place it 'in perspective'.

Chronologically, the state is the first body to assume political activity as an exclusive and permanent concern. In the relative stage of development where each society finds itself ready for the emergence of the state, it is usually unable to sustain rival non-productive agencies dealing with politics. Later, however, this situation is bound to change. Different social classes and interest groups are able to develop all sorts of political organizations, that is, associations and parties. Yet, the state remains as the sole organization capable of dealing effectively with society as a whole. Politics being, in its full sense, an activity requiring a capacity of direction and compulsion on an overall scale, its division between rival institutions is, by definition, impossible. Had not a unique institution formed a monopoly over the means necessarily required for an overall exercise of direction and compulsion, this would have resulted in the rupture of society itself. Thus, the state has always retained a superior capacity for decision-making and enforcement in social matters, thereby becoming the supreme power in the field of politics.

Even so, it remains true that politics is **not** limited to the state. As we have already noted, politics in its first and most general function **antedates** the state. Whereas the state appeared at a certain stage of social development, some sort of political activity has always been present even in the most primitive societies. The first scientific account of the formation of the state was given by Lewis H. Morgan, in his **Ancient Society**, published in 1877. And it is indeed a scientific regression that Robert H. Lowie, writing fifty years later, could affirm in **The Origin of the State**, that the history of the state coincided with that of society. The ethnological studies accomplished for more than a century now have amply proved that the state is a specific social institution whose emergence dates from a relatively recent stage of human history. Actually, the accession to statehood

is such a recent occurrence for an important part of mankind, that many examples of state formation have been witnessed in our own lifetime. Moreover, the process is not yet completely terminated, and new states are still emerging in the contemporary world.

Thus, historically, the existence of politics and the emergence of the state do not coincide. Neither do they coincide **sociologically**. Political activity outruns the state in a multitude of forms. Some, like mob uprisings, may be very inarticulate, others, like political parties, may reach a high level of institutionalization. At any rate, their existence is beyond doubt. It does not seem proper, and correct, to equate all sorts of political (and even non-political) activities with state activities, as for instance does L. Althusser, when he defines religious, familial, professional, cultural, and still other structures as "ideological state apparatuses".⁷ It seems to me that such a confusion between state and society, not only contradicts our everyday experience, but also blurs the analysis of state and politics.

The state is, indeed, **distinct** from society. It has a relative autonomy, allowing for specific analysis. This is true for all forms of state, for a state can neither be totally independent of society, nor completely immersed in it. Complete autonomy is absurd: no social body can be totally estranged from the social whole to which it belongs. On the other hand, total submission is incompatible with the functions of the state, and consequently with its nature which necessarily places it in a position of command over the whole of society. Thus, the state is a particular institution relatively separated from the rest of society, the latter including a **whole range** of political activities carried outside the former. Besides, it is this externality which renders possible the existence of activities especially devised with a view of influencing the state. (Let me note that we will encounter these specific activities in the sixth chapter of this essay.)

Having established the difference between state and politics, we may now consider the place of political activity itself, in the **totality** of social life. Traditionally, Marxism divides social activity into three main kinds: economic, political, and ideological. The first field encompasses all productive activity as it is shaped by the mode of production, including therefore the forces of production as well as the relations of production. This field constitutes the sphere of the infrastructure. The ideological field comprises all aesthetic, cultural, philosophical, juridical, etc. activities with their related forms.⁸ The political field stands 'in between'. Like the ideological, it is a part of the superstructure, but it constitutes that part of the superstructure which is **closer** to the infrastructure.

A very interesting passage from Marx and Engels in **The German Ideology** expresses very well these respective positions of politics and ideology: "While the French and the English" write the authors, "at least hold by the political illusion, which is moderately close to reality, the Germans move in the realm of the 'pure spirit', and make religious illusion the driving force of history."⁹

Economy, politics, and ideology are not differentiated by the fact that one is structure, the other activity, while the other is thought. All three comprise activities, thoughts, roles, structures, forms, etc., at the **same** degree. All are equally real, material, and so on. They are only differentiated by their **place** in the social whole, or in other words, by their **functions**.

As a cluster of structures dealing with society as a whole, the state has to act in all fields of social activity -economic, political, as well as ideological. The means it uses are necessarily shaped by the field in which it intervenes (**cf.** the introduction). The objects and the forms of its intervention are determined according to the general pattern of the infra- and superstructure relationship (**cf.** again the introduction). Moreover, the state is under

the influence of its own past, of its present rulers, as well as that of foreign models. This complex totality of determinations cannot be generally dealt with at this level of abstraction. This is why I will try, in the following chapters, to sort out the concrete implications of these determinations, starting with the most abstract ones and trying to go as far as I can in the way of concreteness.

NOTES

- 1 In fact, politics have existed before the state and the range of its performance currently outruns state limits, but, it still holds true that since the absorption of politics within the realm of the social division of labour, the main burden of politics has fallen on the state. Indeed, what labels an activity (a decision, for example) as 'political', is either the fact that it is carried out by the state, or the fact that its object is the state. In the first case the relationship with the state is obvious, and it transforms any activity into a political one, even if its concrete content is not 'political' as such. When, for instance, a court decides to give the custody of a child to his mother, the substance of this decision is obviously out of the scope of politics. Nevertheless, due to the fact that it is taken by a court, i.e. an institution that derives its power from the law which gives it the right to make decisions in the name of the community as a whole, this decision is still political. Thus, in the first case, the mere fact that an activity is carried out by the state (through one of its agencies) suffices to label it as political. In the second case, the relationship with the state stems from the content of the activity. When, for example, a trade-union decides to go on strike with a view of imposing a definite policy upon the government, or families get organized to force upon a local council the adoption of a certain decision, these political activities performed outside the state still necessarily involve the state by always being directed at it. Political activity then, either performed through the state or outside it, is always related to the state. It is not erroneous, therefore, to consider the state as the privileged set of structures dealing with politics, and to seek out its nature by scrutinizing the functions of politics.
- 2 Such as, for example, revolutions and general elections.
- 3 It may be interesting to note that one of the meanings of politics during the Ottoman Empire was capital punishment.
- 4 The above definition may seem to exclude revolutionary politics as this brand of politics does not aim at the maintenance or development of a particular mode of production, but at its overthrow. The fact is, however, that revolutionary politics take always place within a definite social formation, and contribute **volens nolens** to its development by forcing the society they challenge to continuously adapt itself.

- ⁵ Though it should be acknowledged that in recent Marxist literature on the state, an awareness of this problem has started to emerge. Witness this statement by D.A. Gold, C.Y.H. Lo, and E.O. Wright, in "Recent Developments in Marxist Theories of the Capitalist State - Part 2", **Monthly Review**, V. 27, n. 6 (November 1975), p. 48: "The analysis of an interest of the state is undeveloped within the Marxist perspective. But it is a line a thought which we feel is worth pursuing."
- ⁶ Karl Marx, **Capital**, V. 3, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1977, p. 791.
- ⁷ Louis Althusser, "Idéologie et Appareils idéologiques d'Etat", **La Pensée**, n. 151 (June 1970), **passim**.
- ⁸ It must be noted that 'psychology' should not be included in this list. Marxism thus differs radically from the functionalist view of culture as the "psychological dimension of the political system". **cf.** Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., **Comparative Politics**, Boston, Little Brown and Company, 1966, p. 23. For Marxists, psychology is just the **individual form** of social ideology, the latter comprising the totality of human intellectual, moral, and aesthetical output, with the exception of the scientific output directly related to production. Strictly speaking, 'the psychology of society' is as meaningless an expression as 'the arms of society', or 'the brains of society', and so on.
- ⁹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, **The German Ideology**, Part One, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1974, p. 60.

CHAPTER II

THE GENERAL INTEREST

In the previous chapter politics was defined as an activity carried on an overall scale, whose purpose is to maintain and develop the prevailing mode of production. It followed from this definition that the first function of politics was to care for the forces of production, and thus, for the general interest.

There is no doubt that production is the basic condition for the existence of any society. However, production itself necessitates some extra-economic conditions, without which it cannot be carried out. For example, if the working population supplies the main force of production, it is vital to protect this population against external aggression, and also, against internal strife which may threaten it with self-destruction. Likewise, if certain natural resources are indispensable for a specific productive activity, it can be vital to provide these by organized barter or external raids. Thus, it is obvious that production cannot go on without some kind of extra-productive activity, and that the concrete content of this extra activity will depend on the nature of the prevailing mode of production, and on the level of development of its productive forces.

It follows that to be able to determine the concrete mode of realization of the first function of politics, we ought to consider the characteristics of different modes of production. Of course, in the limits of an essay, there can be no question of furnishing a detailed analysis of all possible modes of production. We will necessarily restrict ourselves to some general views about a

certain number of modes of production -those most studied up to now. Even so, we still hope to be able to single out a sufficient number of relatively concrete forms in order to illustrate the realization of the first function.

It is important to note, at this point, that societies do not follow a pre-established pattern of development, taking them through an invariant succession of modes of production. It is true that Marxism is frequently associated with such a conception, but this only proves how misunderstood it can often be. Marxism tries only to explain the working of different modes of production, to account for their particular logic, and to find out the conditions of the transition from one mode to another. It accepts, of course, a general line of development in human history, founded upon the level of development of the forces of production. But this line is not a straightforward ascension forcing every society to climb, in unchanging sequence, the same rungs of the same ladder. Hence, the method of exposition used in this, chapter should not be misunderstood. The modes of production considered here are not viewed as links of an unbroken chain, but merely as **solitary examples** of social organization permitting a varied illustration of concrete forms taken by political functions.

Let us remark, however, that in this way we will not be able to reach beyond illustrations of a general character. For, as we know, in historical reality social formations combine usually more than one mode of production. Strictly speaking, then, concrete forms of realization of political functions can be precisely singled out only from the unique experience of specific states with real historical existence. That is why, following the generalities concerning various **modes of production**, it will also be necessary to furnish at least some **historical examples** in order to illustrate in an unquestionable way the concrete realization of the first function of politics.

We know that the first and longest mode of production through which humanity has evolved is **savagery**.¹ A brief recollection of the peculiarities of this mode of production may be helpful. Its appearance coincided with the beginning of mankind. It is difficult to give even an approximate date for its emergence as estimates fluctuate largely with each discovery of new remnants of the 'first' species of man.² Its end came with the discovery of cultivation roughly around 10,000 B.C. The period of savagery, which in the scope of archaeology coincides with the Old Stone Age, therefore covers a very long span of time, a minimum of a million of years. During the major part of this period human evolution still continued, and humanity reached its present shape less than 100,000 years ago. Meanwhile, the geography of our world was also submitted to important changes. The Ice Ages succeeding each other by tens of thousands of years had significant effects on the earth's climate, causing fundamental changes in the flora and fauna surrounding our humanlike ancestors.

The most important means of production of the savage economy were small stone tools made by chipping flint. In addition to these, there were all sorts of sticks and cudgels, made from wood. These first tools were almost like the extensions of the arms and nails of these human-like beings. By learning to light fire from the spark of flint or the friction of pieces of wood, a tremendous leap was realized in the forces of production. Cooking greatly expanded nutritional facilities, and fire provided warmth and light. Thus appeared the possibility of penetrating colder climates. Fire was also a solution to keeping wild beasts away. Spears were made by chipping the ends of burned sticks, and owing to this innovation, hunting and fishing developed. It was gradually realized that beasts were not merely a source of food. Man learned to make clothes, shelters and even boats out of hides, and the fat was used as oil for stone candles. The bones and horns were easily sharpened by stone axes and used in making

all sorts of cutting and boring tools, spear-ends, sewing needles, etc. Finally, one of the most important discoveries occurring towards the end of the savage period, was the bow and arrow. Owing to this, hunting was greatly facilitated and it became a much more reliable source of food and livelihood.

Despite all these important developments, the main characteristic of this long period of savagery was that providing daily food remained the major activity consuming all the time and energy of our ancestors. To be able survive in these very tough conditions, they were compelled to gather in small bands and to incessantly stride vast lands in a constant search for resources. Division of labour was restricted only to that between generations and sexes. The men went hunting, and the women did all the rest of the work. The line of descent was determined by the mother. Group marriage was the rule, and its gradual progression was towards modalities forbidding sexual intercourse among close kin of blood. The fight for survival being particularly harsh, there was not much time left for extra-productive activities. Even so, towards the end of the period of savagery, activities like painting, dancing, and music made their appearance.

Following this brief outline of the general characteristics of the 'savage' mode of production, we may try to determine what concrete modalities could assume the first function of politics during this period. We know that the economy of savagery is based on gathering and hunting resources already available in nature. As these resources are not renewed by any kind of productive activity, their rapid exhaustion is inevitable, and it becomes vital to be permanently on the move in order to find new resources. Thus, the main non-productive activity conditioning a productive process shaped by gathering and hunting, appears to be permanent migration. This fact allows us to single out migration as the main concrete form assumed by the first function of politics during the savage period. It is obvious that

the maintenance of the forces of production, i.e. the realization of the reproductive process, was mainly dependent on the performance of this concrete form of politics.

Of course, politics was not a conscious concern for the savage man. For him, migration was an activity as 'natural' as gathering and/or hunting. Pottery being not yet discovered, he had to keep close to rivers and lake-shores which supplied sources of water. The scope of his migrations was determined by prevailing natural conditions. There was no separate body deciding on which direction and how far he had to go. The community made this most important political decision unconsciously, collectively, spontaneously. There was no formal decision-making process prior to execution. Political decisions were apparent only through their execution. The experience of natural conditions, which accumulated in the collective consciousness, was enriched by each generation and transmitted to the next, by mere tradition. With the invention of bows and arrows, it became possible, towards the end of the period of savagery, to relatively slow down this incessant movement. For, owing to these new means, hunting had become a much more reliable source of production. Nevertheless, migration still preserved its vital importance as the main condition of the economic reproductive process.

In savage times, the protection of the forces of production, i.e. the labour-power of the members of the community and the means of production, was not an important problem. True, cannibalism existed, but it was not the main source of food. As the level of productivity was very low, hunting for prisoners of war to be used as slaves was unknown. On the other hand, there was no accumulated wealth, and thus no booty worth fighting for. The chipped stones which constituted the major means of production were easily made and, therefore, caused no problem of transportation or preservation. Techniques of manufacturing were familiar to everyone. Chipped stones were discarded, and

manufactured anew with every migration.³ Communities could clash when they came across each other, but warfare like barter, was exceptional. Therefore, defence was not an important component of savage politics.

Concerning the maintenance of the forces of production, migration therefore appears as the major concrete form taken by the first function of politics during the period of savagery. However, according to our definition, this function is not limited to the maintenance of society's productive capacity. It also covers activities related to the development of this capacity. It follows that we must seek to find out if this last sort of activity played an important role in savage times, and what concrete forms it took. We know that the forces of production have two main components: the means, and the labour-power of the producers. The means used in savagery were mainly flint, sticks, fire, stone axes, canoes, spears, bows and arrows. There was no organized social activity aiming at the improvement of the means of production. These were renewed and improved through economic activity itself. Thus, political activity bore no significance in the development of this part of the forces of production. Had it, then, a role to play with regard to the development of the other part of the forces of production, namely that supplied by the producers?

A very important characteristic of the period of savagery was that the biological evolution of humanity continued during the major part of this long span of time. This evolution was not an independent factor. True enough, it was mainly due to productive activity itself. Man gained his identity by providing for his needs which were originally common with those of animals, through ways which led to changes in nature, including his own nature. In Gordon Childe's words: "man made himself." Thus, biological evolution was a derivative of social evolution based primarily on economic activity. But this was not enough for the

creation of a species ever more capable of overcoming natural conditions. Mankind had also to be preserved from the debilitating effects of close kin marriages. It is here that political activity played a crucial role in evolution. By developing rules of behaviour, taboos, and so on, savage politics was able to regulate sexual intercourse in order to gradually curtail relations between close kin of blood. Of course, these marital regulations and interdictions were not established through a conscious decision-making process carried out by a separate body. Like the traditions directing migrations, these evolved and developed spontaneously. It remains, nevertheless, that they bore a paramount importance for the evolutionary process. Sexual, marital, familial regulations were the concrete form of the realization of the first function of politics during savagery, in relation to the development of the forces of production.

Indeed, marital rules directed to the regulation of the reproduction of the workforce are an important factor in all social formations. What makes the specificity of the savage mode of production, is that this activity is not circumscribed with the reproduction of savages, but also plays a crucial role in their biological improvement. Whereas in all other modes of production marital regulations concerning the producers are part of the content of politics directed to the maintenance of forces of production, only under savagery, due to the fact that human evolution had not yet come to an end, these regulations constituted the main content of politics directed to the development of forces of production.

To sum up, migration and marital regulations⁴ appear as the main concrete components of the first political function of the savage mode of production, bearing in mind that at that time this function was carried out diffusely and unconsciously by the community as a whole. Thus, a brief scrutiny of a particular mode of production has already enabled us to single out two specific

forms of the first function of politics. We will now consider another mode of production, **tribalism**, in our search for specific illustrations of this same function.

By the year 10,000 B.C. the biological evolution of humanity had long come to an end. By this time, the physical appearance of contemporary man had been acquired. Environmental evolution was also almost completed. Even though another 1,000 years had to pass for the last Ice Age to come to an end, the earth had acquired its present appearance, except for minor details. Thus, despite small changes, the effects of biological and environmental factors were diminished to almost nothing, and social evolution became the overwhelming factor in the evolution of mankind. In this evolution, the discovery of agriculture which opened the phase of tribalism (or barbarism), bore the same importance as did the discovery of fire in the period of savagery. Through agriculture, and its inseparable partner, i.e., stock-breeding, man no longer sufficed with what nature itself offered, but started manipulating nature in order to force it to offer new resources. This was a tremendous qualitative advance.

During the age of savagery, the dog was the only animal to be domesticated. It was an aid to hunters, and pulled sledges on the ice. With the emergence of tribalism a large number of animals -sheep, goats, oxen, poultry, etc.- were tamed for the direct use of their products. Thus, a constant source of milk, eggs, meat, hides, wool, fat, and so on, was created. Together with stock-breeding, the first forms of tilling began to appear. This production which was carried out with stone axes, hoes, and digging sticks particular to the New Stone Age was, indeed, very primitive. But, due to the fact that it forced products out of nature, it was revolutionary in principle. Accompanying the agricultural revolution, pottery was born. When baskets and wooden pots made in savage ages were coated with wet clay, they became waterproof. Gradually, it was discovered that just the

coating was sufficient, and this discovery started pottery. After the technique of giving shape and hardness to soil was mastered, it was easy to also use it in brick manufacturing. Cultivation and stock-breeding had made migration seasonal, and necessitated therefore stronger shelters due to serve longer.

In the age of savagery, human expansion on earth had already been completed. Tribalism, by creating a gigantic step forward in the forces of production, brought about a great increase in the population of human communities, a relative settlement, a radical division of labour, and a steadily rising accumulation of wealth. The riches which accumulated with the highest speed were the herds. Due to the traditional allocation to men of the instruments of production outside the household, these new riches also belonged to the male. It became, therefore, more and more important to retain the male's heritage for their own line of descent. Thus, gradually, a transition from matrilineal to patrilineal descent occurred, and the foundation was laid for new forms of family based on the principle of 'eternal' fidelity of women to one man.

What could be the concrete content of the first function of politics in the barbarian ages, whose main features have just been outlined? The discovery of cultivation and stock-breeding had not suppressed the necessity of gathering and hunting. Agriculture was too primitive to yield a sufficient amount of products. Stock-breeding necessitated the periodical renewal of pasture grounds, and the invention of pottery now allowed a certain independence from the sources of water. All these factors combined to render migration more seasonal, but did not suppress its fundamental necessity. Thus, migration continued as a form of realization of the first political function in the period of tribalism. Moreover, due to the accumulation of thousands of years of experience, this activity had now become much more conscious. On the other hand, since herds belonged to men, they

were more influential in determining the direction, duration, etc., of migrations. However, in spite of these developments, there was not yet a separate body entrusted with the exclusive task of decision-making.

As mentioned above, at the start of tribalism the biological evolution of the human species had long come to an end. Therefore, marital regulations were no longer important for the improvement of the forces of production, though they were still important as rules organizing the reproduction of the workforce. They appear in this quality in the tribal mode of production, and it is inevitable that they should reappear in the same quality in all modes of production using labour power as a productive force. This concrete form of the first function of politics will only disappear with the realization of full automation in the productive process.

Thus, both migration and marital regulations outlive the savage mode of production as concrete forms of the first political function. But what is essentially new with barbarian politics is brought about by the emerging accumulation of wealth, and the division of labour between stock-breeding communities and the others. The wealth of one community becomes the target of the other, and warfare enters the stage as the new rule of inter-communal relations. It follows that with barbarism, defence becomes the main component of political activity, aiming at the preservation of the forces of production.

This new welfare accounts also for the content of the activity aiming at the expansion of the forces of production. Aggression now becomes an appealing activity, enabling one community to add the wealth of others to its own forces of production. Thus, with warfare, politics is not only able to preserve the economy from external assault, but also to supplement it with spoils from outside. It can then easily be seen that the accumulation of welfare expands, to a great extent, the scope of politics.

Besides, warfare is not the sole way open to politics by the new economic development accompanying tribalism. Peaceful means are also used. The most important one is barter, permitting the acquisition of specific kinds of wealth without producing them. Stock-breeding communities, in particular, are inclined to use this new means as an easy way of expanding their forces of production. It is true that barter will appear later as an economic activity when it is also carried out on an intra-communal basis. At the stage of tribalism, however, it is still a political activity.

Thus, a quick glance at the tribal mode of production furnishes us with a variety of new forms of political activity. We have already illustrated the realization of the first function, with the examples of migration and marital regulations. Now we are able to add defence, aggression, and barter. Already, from these examples, we see clearly that the content of political functions is determined by the mode of production and is bound to vary to a large extent according to the nature of the prevailing mode.

Slavery is a much more developed mode of production than tribalism. Tilling and stock-breeding are now systematically developed. The smelting of ore, which was discovered in advanced tribal societies, is largely used for the production of arms and tools. The manufacture of ploughs starting around 3,000 B.C., and the use of animal energy provoke an unprecedented progress in agricultural methods. The use of iron provides all branches of production with a variety of conveniently shaped and particularly solid tools. The rise in productivity is the source of a vast amount of surplus product, feeding a continuous trade. This causes an increased accumulation of wealth. Means of communication and transportation are systematically developed. The exchange of ideas, the broadening of experience, the extension of leisure time, the refinement of material and ideological means combine in the creation of a new phase in the development of humanity, usually summarized in the term 'civilization'.

The development of forces of production necessitates the extension of the social division of labour. Besides cultivation and husbandry, handicraft and trade become distinctly separate occupations carried out by specialized groups. The separation of town and country becomes a permanent feature of social organization. Specialization provokes, in turn, a new development of productive capacity, yielding increasing amounts of surplus product. The accumulation of wealth consolidates class differences which has started to emerge in developed tribal societies.

In the age of savagery people who were starving could nourish themselves with the flesh of other people, but productivity being very low, they could not compel others into slave labour. In order to survive, the winners in the occasional battles had to work as much as the losers. The relative prosperity accompanying the barbarian age realized the possibility of exploiting the labour of others. First prisoners of war, and later the impoverished members of the tribe, lost their freedom. By this way, one part of the population started to work for the other. With the transition to civilization, society became divided mainly into slaves and their owners.

Civilized society being a settled one, migration disappears from the content of political activity. With the development of the social division of labour within different communities, barter is transformed into an economic activity and loses, therefore, its political character. On the other hand, with the accumulation of wealth, defence and aggression gain even more importance. The society of slave-owners develops war as a separate branch of the social division of labour. Another field where the role of society increases enormously is the organization of communications. Actually, a net of communications of some sort is to be found in all societies, even in the most primitive ones. The peculiarity of civilization is that, facing the new necessities of an expanding market, it has to improve on a large scale and

systematically, all means of communication and transportation. Thus, with the attainment of a new stage in human development, some traditional forms of the realization of the first political function such as migration and barter disappear, while some like defence, aggression, and the organization of communications develop greatly.

These are, moreover, far from being the only forms assumed concretely by the first function of politics with the appearance of slave-ownership. What is really new in slave politics, directed to the preservation of the forces of production, is the emergence of the typical task of keeping internal social order. The sharp division of society between social classes, threatening society with internecine strife, makes it vitally important to preserve the workforce from internal destruction. Slave society ensures this by two ways. First, by the use of force. And secondly, by organizing the distribution of justice.⁵

Another important novelty of slave politics with regard to the forces of production, is the official creation of currency around the year 800 B.C. The official attachment of a standard value to a certain quantity of metal provided a tremendous help to the growing market forces, and did a lot in the way of increasing the forces of production. Moreover, the creation of currency was not the only official service offered by slave society to its economy. It evolved also a whole range of laws in order to regulate economic relations, thereby facilitating the expansion of the social productive capacity.

In short, the emergence of a mode of production based on slave-ownership brought about great variety in the forms of realization of the first function of politics. Here, only the most important ones have been pointed out. Up to now, we have been able to single out the following concrete forms of the realization of the first political function: migration, marital regulations, defence, aggression, barter, the organization of communications,

the keeping of internal order, the provision of an official currency, and other legal regulations aiming at the preservation and development of the forces of production.

Feudal society is one which is divided between small self-sufficient hierarchical units, relying mainly on agriculture. Production is carried out by serfs who are protected by their lords against ever-threatening external danger. In feudalism, besides human and animal energy, the power of water and wind is used. Owing to this, simple machines like windmills which take their energy from natural sources can be manufactured. A chain of servitude characterizes this order. The king is the highest lord. His vassals, the high lords, have their subordinate vassals. This chain of personal bondage ends with the serfs at the bottom rung.

Under the feudal mode of production, many forms of realization of the first political function reappear. Among these, defence now plays a conspicuous role, due to the uncertainties of the feudal social environment. Cultivation cannot be carried out without the forces of the lord protecting the fields. The keeping of internal order and the distribution of justice are also duties which retain their importance.

Nevertheless, what is most typical of feudal politics is the use of ideological instruments in order to enhance the productivity of the workforce. In fact, the ideological services of politics are as old as political activity itself. However, the new weight of ideology in the service of the economy is peculiar to feudalism. Society now uses religion as a means more important than naked force, in order to compel the workforce to work more. The cathedrals of the Western world are the fruit of a conscious and willing activity, and they illustrate the outstanding place of ideology in feudal politics. Thus, the provision of ideological services is another concrete form of the first function of politics that feudalism allows us to add to our list of illustrations.

The revival of the market economy, and the transformation of labour power into a commodity, sold 'freely' by the workers, resulted in the establishment of the **capitalist** mode of production. With it, the forces of production reached a level of development unprecedented in history, and not yet surpassed. Capitalism and socialism being contemporary modes of production, there is no need here to outline, even briefly, their characteristics. For the purpose of this chapter, it will suffice to briefly point out the main forms in which they realize the first function of politics.

Not only does capitalism retain the traditional forms of politics in relation to the forces of production, but it also adds important new forms. Traditional services like defence, the keeping of internal peace, the provision of an official currency, the organization of communications, the provision of legal rules, etc. are assumed and developed by capitalist politics. To these are added new services, like the creation of a free market, the establishment of standards of measure, education, welfare services, scientific research, and so on, which are all concrete forms realizing the first function of politics, and their new variety is sign of the importance acquired by this function under capitalism.

This function, however, attains its utmost importance only under the **socialist** mode of production. Socialism takes over from capitalism all the concrete forms of politics aiming at the service of the general interest, adapts these to its own system, extends these services to unprecedented limits, and creates new forms particular to its own mode of production - free medical care, sporting facilities, housing, extended cultural opportunities, protection of the environment, the right to work, etc. In short, all possible means for the liberation of the producers from the servitudes of both nature and society come, ideally, under the scope of socialist politics. With the socialist mode of production the first political function is swelled to such a degree, that our

list of illustrations become really **open-ended**. Socialist society does not confine itself to various aids to the forces of production, but by directly and consciously assuming the centralized direction of the economy, potentially transforms the first political function into the dominant one of politics.

Up to now, we have tried to illustrate a certain number of concrete forms taken by the first function of politics in various modes of production. The main conclusions of this very rapid and sketchy survey may be summarized as follows: 1) the concrete content of the first function varies according to the prevailing mode of production; 2) some concrete forms are common to different modes, though their relative importance may vary; 3) some forms disappear in the course of history, and new ones make their appearance; 4) due to the respective logics of these two modes of production, the first political function is particularly developed in capitalism and socialism; 5) the first function of politics reaches its peak only in the socialist mode of production.

Let us remember now that a scrutiny of various modes of production, though indispensable, is still insufficient for the purpose of illustrating the concrete forms of realization of political functions. In order to get an exact representation it is also necessary, as pointed out in the beginning of this chapter, to refer to a number of definite historical examples. In the case of the first function this necessity becomes particularly binding since the very existence of this function is often denied. The historical cases evoked below (ranging from Norway to Georgia, while encompassing the Old Egyptians and the Aztecs as well) are all taken from early periods of state life with the aim of emphasizing the conspicuous role played by the first political function in the formation of the state.

The establishment of political unity in Norway occurred in

the wake of the Viking expansion which took place at the turn of the ninth century.³ The takeover of communal defence by the king was a major step in this process. Prior to it, there was in each province an independent military force. As a consequence of the early clan organization, every male belonging to the local unit, the "bönder", had the inalienable right to carry arms, and was a natural member of the local military force. In addition, Norway being a maritime community, the population of coastal regions regularly equipped warships in order to defend themselves. History shows that in these conditions there could be no state. Throughout the ninth century, Norway was continually in danger from Danish and Viking invasions. In the course of the tenth century, military leadership passed gradually to the Norwegian king, and the population of coastal regions were organized into "ship districts" each of them providing one warship with its crew. It is this development that changed the nature of the Norwegian 'king', transforming the chief of the most venerated clan into a head of state. Thus, we see in this historical example, how defence, i.e. a specific form of the first function, plays a crucial role in the emergence of the state.

The Old Kingdom of Egypt, which lasted roughly from 3,000 to 2,150 B.C., provides another interesting example of the early exercise of another concrete form of the first function. We see there, how a nascent state plays an important role in supplying the producers with basic necessities. "Taxes were paid in kind and assembled in the storerooms of the royal residence (the 'Treasury') for later redistribution, in some instances after being converted into garments, etc., to a relatively large proportion of the population."⁷ The care for the general interest takes here, in the Old Kingdom of Egypt, the direct form of a periodical redistribution of the surplus product through a state agency.

This and many other forms of the first political function are also exemplified in the historical experience of the Aztecs, who

started to build their state in Mexico, towards the end of the fourteenth century. "Produce and goods were made available to the people through markets and by redistribution carried out through state bureaucracies and agencies. ... Redistribution by the state was based upon the collection of tribute from conquered peoples, taxes imposed upon Aztec citizens, and the trade which the state engaged with other nations. Although periodic doles of food, clothing, and other materials were made to the people, redistribution was most common in the periods of natural calamity which frequently hit Aztec society, such as famine due to drought or flooding."⁸

The keeping of internal order was also well exemplified by the Aztec state. "Laws were codified and enforced by police. Jails existed to detain criminals until trial. Courts were established in a hierarchy, which also comprised a routed appeal. Punishment of convicted criminals was carried out by state-appointed per-sonnel."⁹ The Aztec state provided still other concrete forms of realization of the first function. Besides defence, which was a form commonly found in early states, the Aztecs also developed a systematic education of their citizens. Along with particular schools for the education of the nobility, the state was also organizing specific schools for the commoners. These examples show clearly how diversified and developed politics could be in its first function of serving the general interest, even in the earlier stages of state formation.

The importance of the first function is also confirmed by the experience of state formation in Georgia. G. Koranashvili who, as a member of the Academy of Sciences of Tbilisi (USSR), has studied the process of state formation in this particular region, derives from his studies a conclusion very similar to the views held in this chapter. "The state in many places, among them Georgia" he writes, "originated on... [the] basis... [of] the satisfaction of the common interests of a fairly developed com-

munity. For the purpose of defence against other units and the retention of the prime conditions of production (land, pastures) it became necessary to unite the population into political units."¹⁰

These historical examples taken from very different times and places throughout human history, show clearly that, even in its early stages, one of the major concerns of the state was the fulfilment of the first political function. Of course, in concrete history, the realization of this function appears through very different specific forms. However, the important thing to note is that all these various forms have a **common** feature: the state's concern with the **general interest** of that society over which it rules.

The choice of our examples from the early stages of state formation was indeed deliberate. Any observer of the present world would readily concede that through activities like road building, education, medical care, cultural promotion, and so on, modern states show a far-reaching concern for the common interest. It would, however, be more difficult to admit that these kinds of tasks were also characteristic of more ancient states. By taking our historical examples from the very beginning of statehood, we have tried to show that, whatever its concrete forms may be, the performance of the first political function has **always** been a part of state activity.

Marxists are usually very reluctant to admit this simple truth. Notwithstanding all the historic and present evidence to the contrary, they reject categorically the basic conception of a positive role of the state towards society as a whole.¹¹ In their eyes, the notion of a 'general interest' is nothing else but an 'ideological mystification' in class divided societies. To put it in R. Miliband's words: "The starting point of the Marxist theory of politics and the state is its categorical

rejection of this view of the state as the trustee, instrument, or agent of 'society as a whole'.¹²

This commonly held 'Marxist' view is erroneous. It overlooks some basic facts, namely that: 1) society is not limited to the relations of production, and consequently, to social classes; 2) forces of production are also part of the basis of any society; 3) as a general superstructure the state cannot be restricted to the 'representation' of one or two dominant classes; 4) since society is contradictory, it cannot be considered very 'dialectical' not to admit the existence of a constitutive contradiction in 'its compound', i.e. the state, and to consider it as exclusively devoted to the servicing of a single major function.

It would, of course, be possible to appeal to the authority of a number of citations from the classics of Marxism in order to support the view held here. But this would be a futile exercise, as an equal number of citations sustaining an opposite view could also easily be gathered. Concerning the question discussed here, what matters is to see clearly that no major social structure can exist without performing **also** a positive social function. To express this view in Engels' words, not as a 'proof' but just because they are particularly illuminating, let us quote the following passage from **Anti-Dühring**: "Here we are only concerned" writes Engels, "with establishing the fact that the exercise of a social function was everywhere the basis of political supremacy; and further that political supremacy has existed for any length of time only when it discharged its social functions."¹³

Thus, even if the first function of politics as performed by the state were not so manifest in a multitude of concrete forms, we would have been logically driven to look for it. However, this function is so evident that no special effort is required to see it. Only when one thinks that such a view would be an unqualified 'heresy' can it be possible to blind oneself to the obvious: how

could the state be the state of the dominant class if it was not **also** that of everybody?

Of course, this is **not** to say that the state is **exclusively** devoted to the well-being of the ruled. It has been argued at length, in the first chapter, that the nature of the state is not determined by a single function. Besides, the following two chapters will be concerned with two other major functions of the state which curtail to a large extent its concern for the majority of the ruled. Thus, with the theoretical exception brought about by the specific logic of the socialist mode of production, the states of all other modes of production do not, as a rule, place the interest of the people at the top of their priorities. It remains, nevertheless, that no state can survive without fulfilling some basic duties in the general interest.

NOTES

¹ The historical material used in this chapter in connection with the early periods of human development is mainly drawn from William H. McNeill's **A World History**, 2 d., New York, Oxford University Press, 1971.

² Summing up the most recent developments in the study of early human fossils, Dr. Jack Harris writes: "By 1.5 million years ago early Homo or Homo habilis had advanced further and generated Homo erectus. ... Homo erectus later gave rise to Homo sapiens or modern man about 100,000 years ago." **cf.** "Digging up Early Human Behaviour", **The Guardian**, 2 June 1980, p. 14.

³ Incidentally, this explains why such an amount of remains are discovered all over the world.

⁴ Let us underline that in this chapter marital regulations are considered only in their relation to the producers. Obviously, in class divided societies, another function of these regulations is to ensure the reproduction of the dominant classes as well, by ensuring the transmission to the next generation of the existing pattern in the distribution of wealth.

⁵ As was the case with marital regulations, the keeping of internal order has, of course, another crucial function in class divided societies: the protection of the dominant relations of production. However, the present chapter being circumscribed by the first function of politics, this other aspect is not here taken into account.

6 For the process leading to the establishment of the Norwegian state cf. Aron Ia. Gurevich, "The Early State in Norway", in Henri J.M. Claessen and Peter Skalnik (eds.), **The Early State**, The Hague, Mouton-Publishers, 1978, pp. 403-23.

7 Jac. J. Janssen, "The Early State in Ancient Egypt", **ibid.**, p. 223.

8 Donald V. Kurtz, "The Legitimation of the Aztec State", **ibid.**, pp. 172-3.

9 **Ibid.**, p. 173.

10 Guram Koranashvili, "Early State in Ancient Georgia", **ibid.**, p. 260. 1 1 Not

all Marxists though, as brilliantly exemplified by Hal Draper, in the

following passages taken from his **Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution I: State and Bureaucracy**, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1977, where he writes (p. 190): "The rise of the state is **not** impelled simply by a thrust toward class oppression. There are two related impulsions: on the one hand, the basic need for an institution to take care of certain social tasks that had become more complex, without which the community as a whole could not survive; and on the other, the fact that this takes place within the framework of developed class antagonisms. The **socially** necessary institution becomes also **class** institution." The same view is emphasized elsewhere (p. 245): "The state does not appear out of the blue, simply in order to fulfil a class-repressive function. It is not simply invented out of nothing. On the contrary, ... the older public authority acquires a new function, a class function; the state comes into being as the transformation of an institution already playing a certain role. The state's beginning, its prototypical source, lies in indispensable functions of society." Unfortunately, the opposite view denying any basic positive role to the state is much more common among other Marxists.

12 Ralph Miliband, **Marxism and Politics**, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 66.

13 Friedrich Engels, **Anti-Dühring**, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1958 p. 248.

CHAPTER III

THE DOMINANT CLASS INTEREST

According to our definition, the second function of politics is concerned with the relations of production. Its aim is to promote those conditions necessary for the maintenance and development of these relations. When the mode of production is class-divided, the relations of production take the form of class relations. The position of each class is determined by its location with regard to the ownership of the means of production. The class in the best situation secures necessarily the most advantageous position in the relations of production. It follows that the preservation and expansion of these relations serve mostly the class on top. This is why in class-divided societies, the second function of politics can be accurately defined as the promotion of the dominant class interest.

It has already been indicated that to be labelled 'second', by no means diminishes the importance of this function. For the sake of logic and in order to gain a clearer understanding, the analyst is bound to use abstractions, and to present them in a certain order. This may create a doubly-mistaken impression. On the one hand, one may think that categories necessarily separated as objects of analysis are also separated in real life. Thus, one may derive the impression that forces and relations of production are actually separate entities, while in reality they are inextricably interlinked. Their separation is merely a theoretical one and this is due to the inescapable necessity of using abstractions.

On the other hand, one may think that the order in which

these abstractions are presented in theory reflects a concrete sequence, whereas in reality at any given time the various elements of a social whole exist, by necessity, simultaneously.¹ Thus, the attachment of ordinal numbers to political functions does not mean that in actual life, at a definite place and time, one political function 'waits' the stage to be cleared by its predecessor in order to make its appearance. It is true that chronologically one function precedes the other. However, this does not indicate a sequence. It simply means that in a definite historical period, there was only one political function. As it was unique, it could not be the 'first'. When it becomes the first, it is no longer unique, and in real life, it cannot be first, or second, or third, as it simultaneously coexists with the others. Thus, the ordinal numbers accompanying our political functions do not reflect a break in synchronicity -which is, besides, impossible. However, as everything cannot be expressed at the same time, theoretical exposition is bound to follow a sequence. It is clear, then, that in order to avoid any possible misunderstanding, one must keep in mind that abstractions and orderings are constraints exclusively related to the theoretical mode of exposition, and have nothing to do with real-life situations.

For the sake of analysis, production can be presented as a process 'starting' with a couple of basic elements, the labour-power of the producers and the means of production, which are 'subsequently' connected by the relations of production in order to function as forces of production. However, in actual life, producers and means of production are never separated. For, such a disjunction would mean a situation of non-production, i.e. a social impossibility. In reality, means of production, producers, relations of production, ownership of the means of production and social classes are combined elements, all indispensable to the functioning of a definite mode of production. It would be very misleading to visualize them as following one another chronologically. Incidentally, the same sort of mistake must be carefully

avoided in the analysis of the relations between infra- and super-structures.

This does not mean, however, that all elements of a social whole are equally important. As there is a difference between infra- and superstructures, according to the role they play in the maintenance, reproduction and expansion of social life, it is legitimate to seek to determine the relative importance of various elements composing the infrastructure, i.e. the mode(s) of production. Coexistence and simultaneity are not equivalent to 'social weight'. To take an example from organic life, the fact that the various elements combining in the constitution of an animal are necessarily present at the same time and all are indispensable to its wholeness, does not imply that the limbs, for instance, are as important as the heart for its survival. Thus, contrary to abstractions and orderings, which are distortions imposed by the theoretical mode of exposition, gradations according to relative importance are a genuine theoretical reflection of the real functional differentiation present in concrete life, be it organic or social.

Concerning modes of production, it follows from what has been just said, that the attempt to gauge their various elements is not only legitimate, but indeed indispensable in order to gain a proper understanding of their real functioning. This question is not, however, a simple one, as witnessed by the traditional controversy which divides Marxists as 1) those who attach more importance to the forces of production, and 2) those who put accent on the relations of production. 'Is man shaped by the tool, or is the tool shaped by man?' To outsiders, the controversy may seem Byzantine, since both affirmations are true, i.e., we are shaped (through skills, technical knowledge, etc.) by the tools we use, and tools are obviously manufactured by us. Nevertheless, these theoretical attitudes may have far-reaching practical consequences. When the accent is put exclusively on the forces

of production, one may be driven to think that technical progress will suffice to bring about social development. Whereas, an exclusive insistence upon the relations of production, may result in a blind faith in voluntaristic social engineering ignoring the material constraints of production.

Thus, both attitudes are mistaken when they are taken too far. To say that either the forces of production or the relations of production are exclusively important is manifestly erroneous. However, there still remains the problem of the relative importance of these elements: which structure bears more importance in social life, the forces of production, or the relations of production?

Let us first consider the case of the forces of production. The elements of this structure are the means of production and the human forces of the producers. Nature itself is a part of the productive process. Thus, in its essence, the conflict between nature and forces of production is a **natural** conflict, and its outcome is the transformation of nature. Human beings participate in this contradiction, more as natural forces than social beings. Moreover, the determination of who 'the producers' will be, has its source outside the structure of forces of production. It is the relations of production which divide people between producers and non-producers, and which, therefore, determine the human component of the forces of production.

If we now consider the relations of production, we see that this structure is totally different. Here we are no longer faced by a natural structure, but by a **social** one. The outcome of the confrontation between nature and relations of production, is not the transformation of nature, but the transformation of society. It is owing to this characteristic that relations of production are functionally more important for social life than forces of production.

Another major factor in gauging the respective weights of forces and relations of production is their role in social development. In G. Therborn's illuminating words: "The forces of production do not have an independent and faster tempo of development of their own that makes them the spearhead of historical development. On the contrary, one of the critical points of the Marxian analysis is that the rhythm of the forces of production is dependent on the relations of production."² That is why the driving force of history is class struggle and not technological development. The determination by the forces of production is a 'passive' one (**cf.** our introduction): their main impact being **limiting**. To use once again Therborn's forceful formulations, the forces of production "provide the stage and the cast of the drama of social life."³ Whereas the determination by the relations of production is an 'active' one (**cf.** again our introduction): their main impact is **creative**. They furnish social drama with a plot.

Nevertheless, one should still not forget that the separation between forces and relations of production is just an analytical device. In real life, these two structures are intimately interwoven. The **same** human beings who act as producers in the structure of forces of production, act as the exploited in the structure of relations of production. On the other hand, the level of development of the forces of production **affect** in various ways the structure of relations of production. Thus, there is no independence to be claimed by either structure.

Even so, it remains true that when one considers the core of the matter, relations of production appear as the really active social element. Hence, it seems to me that in the important controversy between Marxists referred to above, those opting for the relations of production are right in the main. Let us repeat, however, that the problem is far from being simple, and that too much emphasis on the relations of production is itself conducive to error.

The discussion about the relative importance of forces and relations of production has an obvious bearing on the functions of politics. Considering the particular interest of the second function pertaining to the relations of production, it has to be expected that this function will carry **more** weight than the first one which deals with the forces of production. It follows that state activity directed to the maintenance and development of relations of production, and consequently, of class supremacy, is more important than state activity aiming at the preservation and expansion of the forces of production.

Incidentally, this relative difference encompasses political activity outside the state as well. In that part of politics which is not performed by the state, all activities aiming at the promotion of class supremacy, and eventually, those challenging the established supremacy, will carry more social weight than the activities related to the forces of production.⁴ However, our concern here is limited to state activity. We will not, therefore, deal with the consequences of our conception of political functions on that part of politics which is performed outside the state.

It has already been pointed out that the second political function is **chronologically** more recent than the first one. As long as relations of production were such that the interests of the producers equated with those of society as a whole, there was no room for a second function of politics. This was the case in the period of savagery discussed in the last chapter. This was also the case in the major part of the tribal period, though towards the end of tribalism, the emergence of classes is a very common phenomenon.⁵ Once society begins to be divided between social classes, politics is inevitably subjected to inner divisions. It is no longer possible to satisfy everybody when one part of society exploits the other. With the appearance of class antagonisms, politics becomes really 'the art of dire choices'.

This development is brought about as the natural outcome of the expansion of the forces of production. The more society is successful in its battle against nature, the more it is pushed, towards social exploitation. The appearance of a permanently renewed surplus product, creates the objective possibility of removing a certain number of people from the obligation of productive work. Hypothetically, it is possible to imagine an alternative where society refuses to be divided into social classes, uses the surplus product in a concerted manner, augments the size of its investments with each economic cycle, and shares equally the fruits of its expansion. However, such a hypothesis is untenable, because it supposes a level of consciousness and awareness of indefinitely growing social needs, totally incompatible with the situation of primitive humanity. Actually, what would have happened if social cohesion were strong enough to impede class differentiation, would have been chronic **stagnation** in a primitive stage of development. What compels society to develop the forces of production is the necessity of satisfying ever growing social needs, which could only originate out of the concentration of all possible leisure opportunities and wealth, in the hands of a minority. It is the greed thus generated in this minority which pushes it to compel the rest of society to work beyond the level required by the simple satisfaction of common needs. Clearly then, the **key** to social development is **social exploitation**, due to class differentiation, created through the unequal partition of the surplus product, and based on the seizure of the means of production by a social minority.

When the means of production come under the control of a minority, these people have to assume the traditional task of directing economic activity. As Marx pointed out in **Capital**, every-time that production takes the form of a combined activity, it necessarily requires direction. Like an orchestra, it cannot perform its function without a chief. Thus, direction is a part of every combined productive process, and itself constitutes productive

work.⁶ With the emergence of private property in the means of production, this productive work has to be carried out by the new owners. However, the owners of the means of production use this activity in order to exploit the producers. From the point of view of the direct producers, working is no longer a natural activity carried out by the undifferentiated cells of a living organism. It is resented as an unpleasant obligation, imposed by the growing appropriation of the means of production, by a minority of exploiters. Such an unwilling workforce has to be kept under permanent control. It follows that in class divided societies, the direction of the productive process is **always** coupled with the supervision of a potentially rebellious workforce. What is important to note here is that compulsion is the form taken by a necessary directive activity. **Compulsion becomes possible because direction is indispensable.**

Exactly the same sort of relationship occurs at the political level, between the first and the second functions. Besides, this parallel is drawn by Marx himself. In the slave system, in the capitalist mode of production, as well as "in despotic states, supervision and all-round interference by the government involves both the performance of common activities arising from the nature of all communities, and the specific functions arising from the antithesis between the government and the mass of the people."⁷ Indeed, what Marx writes is not only true for slavery, capitalism, or despotism, but it holds generally for **every kind** of government based on class antagonism.

We see, then, that the second function of politics grows out of the matrix of the first function, and finds its source within the productive process. At the economic level, it is the form necessarily taken by the productive activity of direction. In a class divided society this specific kind of productive activity (direction) cannot be performed unless sustained by a non-productive compulsion. However, compulsion in the economic field

has to be backed by a centrally organized force if it is to be permanent. Thus, the parallel drawn by Marx is not at all fortuitous. There is not only a resemblance between the activity of economic supervision and the second function of politics, but there is actually a **structural link**. The performance of the second political function is a condition for the exercise of a permanent compulsion in the field of economic production.

Historical evidence amply illustrates this close relationship. Everywhere, the emergence of the state coincides with an incipient class differentiation. What is particularly interesting to note, is that the emergence of the state does not 'follow' the establishment of a fully-fledged class division. On the contrary, evidence suggests that the rise of the state is a necessary **condition** for the consolidation of class differences. The mechanism of economic exploitation is not strong enough to subdue the whole of society to the requirements of class antagonism. The second function of politics appears as the condition of the sustenance, the solid implantation, and the eventual expansion of economic exploitation. The state being indispensable for the performance of this function, it appears generally towards the end of the tribal period, when the society concerned is already somehow stratified, and social classes start to emerge.

Research conducted on a number of concrete cases of state emergence show clearly⁸ that states emerge usually in societies, where there is a fairly elaborate social division of labour (with tillers, herdsmen, artisans, traders, etc.), where access to the means of production is unequal, where there is a social stratification between at least two strata: a lower one (comprising the small holders, tenants, servants, and slaves), and a superior one (comprising the ruler, aristocracy, priests, military leaders, gentry, ministerials, traders, and artisans). It is clear, then, that some

sort of social differentiation is an indispensable condition for the emergence of the state.

But is this a clear-cut class differentiation? "Whether or not the strata distinguished by us should be labelled 'social classes' depends of the definition of 'class'. The upper and lower social strata can be equated with emergent social classes. However, no classes based on the control of the means of production -supposed to be a typical feature for societies with a mature state organization- were found. A class struggle, or overt class antagonism, was not found to be characteristic of early states."⁹

Indeed, historical evidence supports this view. Access to land, the basic means of production, is unequal but communal rights over land are still overwhelmingly predominant in all concrete cases studied. Furthermore, communal ownership is mostly followed by small ownership, leaving far behind big landed property.¹⁰ Thus, social exploitation through unequal access to the basic means of production is far from being conspicuous in the early stages of state emergence. This inequality is more often accentuated as a result of state rule, instead of appearing as its condition.

The evidence referred to shows clearly the particular importance of the second function of politics, which accounts not only for the expansion of relations of production, but actually for their implantation. There is a **reciprocal** relationship between state and economic exploitation. The state is not just the end result of a previously fully-grown exploitation. It is instrumental in the establishment and subsequent extension of this exploitation, which accounts in turn for its own emergence and development.¹¹

To outline briefly the argument of this chapter up to now: the second function of politics aiming at the preservation and expansion of the relations of production appears when society

starts to experience economic exploitation; due to the particular role of the relations of production, the second function carries more social weight than the first; forces and relations of production being inseparable, so also are the first and second functions; the performance of the second function necessitates the state, but the two functions being inseparable, the state has to take upon itself the first function as well; social classes establish their full supremacy after the emergence of the state which extends and guarantees unequal access to the means of production.

As was the case for the first function, the **concrete** forms under which the state performs the second political function depend on the prevailing mode(s) of production. Generally, everything the state does in order to protect and promote the social position of the superior classes falls under this heading. A multitude of examples may be given, from all modes of production based on class antagonism.

In **slavery**, the state provides the necessary force to keep the slaves under subjection; crushes eventual slave revolts (**cf.** Spartacus in Ancient Rome); establishes slave markets; regulates the exchange of slaves; systematically uses slave labour in ships, mines, etc. in the service of slave-owners; enslaves prisoners of war; elaborates legal rules guaranteeing the 'rights' of the slaveowners; establishes political structures in order to ensure the permanence of slavery; and so on.

In **feudalism**, the state keeps the serfs under control; ensures their permanent attachment to the land of their lord; promotes particular rules of behaviour to secure respect to the nobility; subjects freeholders to serfdom; enlists religious means to back up the social order; organizes wars of conquest for the enrichment of the nobility; enforces legal rules devised to ensure the continuation of noble privileges; and so on.

In **capitalism**, the state expands capitalist land property at the expense of the small peasantry; creates a mass of proletarians with no other choice than to work in factories; increases by law the working day;¹² prohibits workingmen's associations; crushes proletarian revolts (**cf.** the Paris Commune); outlaws 'dangerous' forms of left-wing politics; imposes colonial rule on foreign countries; pursues imperialist policies in the interest of its capitalists; transfers directly to the capitalist class part of the surplus product; nationalizes bankrupt enterprises by paying huge 'compensations' to their owners; hands over prospering state enterprises to private ownership; prohibits, limits, 'regulates' the right to strike; organizes a systematic denigration of Communism through state owned mass media; inculcates a conservative ideology through state education; uses its military forces to crush popular movements; establishes a whole panoply of legal rules protecting all aspects of a social order based on private property and governed by the search for private profit; uses police forces, courts, jails, etc. to trace, to neutralize, to punish all those endangering the capitalist order; and so on.

Indeed, the experience of different countries in various policies intended for the suppression of popular forces and the promotion of the exploiters is so 'rich', that one would have no difficulty in exposing page after page scores of other examples in the same vein. However, this aspect of state activity is already very well documented,¹³ and there is no need to allocate here more space to its illustration.

Clearly, then, the **major** part of state activity directed to the accomplishment of the second function, is concerned with the protection of the social order against the threat of the exploited, and also with the further expansion of this order. However, there is **another aspect** in this second political function, worth noting. The preservation of the relations of production necessitates,

furthermore, the regulation of the relations **among** the superior classes themselves, and eventually, among the various factions of the dominant class.

It has already been noted that in actual societies more than one mode of production usually coexist. As a rule, one is dominant, and it combines the elements of the other(s) according to its particular requirements. Nevertheless, history offers a vast array of various social classes, strata, groups, etc. which do not disappear with the change of the dominant mode of production, and manage to ensure a specific and privileged position under the new social order. It follows that in concrete situations, usually, more than one superior class is to be found. A typical example is provided by the transformed survival of feudal landlords in capitalist conditions. Thus, superior classes frequently constitute a 'coalition', united in a given order as exploiters, but nevertheless divided by their particular interests. One of the tasks faced by the state in the fulfilment of its second function stems from this concrete situation. As the guardian of the prevailing relations of production, the state is thus bound to preserve the equilibrium of this coalition of the powerful.

However, this specific role of the state is a source of further contradictions. For no social order can be kept static in the long run, and besides, the second function of politics compels the state, not only to preserve, but also to expand the relations of production. Such an expansion necessitates the further development of the most dynamic components of the ruling class coalition. It follows that existing coalitions are always threatened by the necessities of expansion. Thus, the state finds itself in the middle of another contradiction, being instrumental in disrupting an equilibrium which it is also bound to protect.

And this is not all. A further contradiction arises from the existence of different strata within the dominant class. Again, a typical example is provided by the capitalist mode of production,

where the interests of the industrialists often clash with those of the bankers. In its function of preserving the relations of production, the state has to look after the specific interests of all these factions dividing the dominant class. But a policy beneficial to one side may unavoidably harm the other. This adds pressure upon the state, which is already under the crossfire of conflicting demands arising from its obligations towards the producers (who are themselves divided between classes and strata with specific interests), and the other classes and strata.

This situation explains why the state has to stand **above** society (including the superior classes), in order to be able to perform a series of conflicting roles. If it lacked this relative autonomy, it would have been torn apart by all those contradictory tasks facing it. However, once this separation between state and civil society is acknowledged, one gets immediately confronted with a particularly **arduous problem**: if state and society are separated, what are the mechanisms which compel the state to perform the specific roles arising out of its functions, and especially, out of its **second function**? This question has been much debated among Marxists, who have tried to 'prove' by every means available the state's servility to the dominant class, but it must be admitted that a conclusive solution has not yet been reached.

Among the solutions proposed, the simplest one is to consider the state as an 'instrument' in the hands of the dominant class. The dominant class may either directly manage the state, or it can use 'pawns' for this purpose. Both views are expressed in the **Communist Manifesto** which says, on the one hand, that "political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another", while on the other, it affirms that "the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie."¹⁴ Indeed, this view of the state as the instrument of domination of the dominant class is

expressed again and again in the writings of Marx and Engels, both in their early works, and in their later ones. This conception is still most commonly considered, both by Marxists and outsiders, as the typical Marxian view of the state.

In this conception, the structures of the state are shaped and manned by the dominant class, and its policies reflect faithfully the directives of this class. The state is a sort of foreman, hired and fired at will by his boss. The assumptions necessarily underlying this view are that: 1) the inferior classes have no influence on the state; 2) the superior classes and strata are able to unite under the dominance of a single group capable of issuing coherent orders; 3) the dominant class can shape at will the structures of the state; 4) the structures of the state are homogenous so as to exclude any important clash among them; 5) the dominant class is free to designate the ruling personnel; 6) there is a strict congruence between state policies and dominant class interests.

It must be acknowledged that there are historical cases where this instrumentalist conception is actually vindicated. The two great revolutions of modern history, 1789 in France, and 1917 in Russia, provide a striking confirmation of this view. In both cases, a rising dominant class was able to speak forcefully with a united voice, to shape freely new political structures, to drive into power a ruling personnel of its own choice, to impose the adoption of policies suited most to its cherished aims -briefly, to create a state in its own image. However, this sort of historical confirmation appears strictly limited.

Frequently, the evidence clashes sharply with the assumptions of the instrumentalist conception. Interestingly enough, the founding fathers of Marxism themselves, are often ready to acknowledge evidence which contradicts their general assertions on this subject. We will give here some examples gathered from the particularly well-known political writings of Marx. In **The**

Class Struggles in France, Marx describes how, following the 1848 revolution, workers succeeded in imposing the admission of two of their representatives in the government.¹⁵ This contradicts the first assumption indicated above. He follows by explaining that the proclamation of the republic was "commanded" to the Provisional Government, by the workers' leader Raspail, threatening it with 200,000 workers. This contradicts the third assumption. Elsewhere in the same work, he says that the finance aristocracy ("the top of bourgeois society") was constantly clashing with bourgeois laws.¹⁶ This contradicts the sixth assumption. In **The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte**, Marx describes how the bankers (allied to the industrialists, merchants, etc.) and the big landed bourgeoisie were competing with one another for political power.¹⁷ This contradicts the second assumption. In the same work, he writes that the coup of December 1851 was "the victory... of the executive power over the legislative power."¹⁸ This contradicts the fourth assumption. Finally, he affirms that with the Bonapartist takeover, the "lumpenproletariat" had become the ruling personnel.¹⁹ This contradicts the fifth assumption.

These are only a few examples of scores of instances where Marx and Engels openly recognize that state reality is not a simple matter, readily explicable with an instrumentalist conception. Besides, as repeated throughout this essay, such a conception is incompatible with the basic principles of dialectical materialism. Moreover, it is permanently contradicted by our past and present experience.

In the face of these shortcomings, some other solutions have been considered with regard to the problem of the state being determined by civil society. It has been argued that every mode of production brings about a specific state structure which compels the ruling personnel, whatever their particular characteristics may be, to pursue policies favouring the dominant class. Thus,

to give an example derived from this point of view, it does not matter who the president of the USA will be, since the major policies of this state are the outcome of a state structure already determined by a specific mode of production. In this conception, individuals composing the social classes, strata, groups, ruling personnel, etc. are the mere supports of structural relations, and nothing else.

No doubt, there is much truth in this 'structuralist' conception, but it also contains some important flaws. A basic shortcoming is its refusal to admit the active part played by concrete human beings. Thus, in its fear of succumbing to subjectivism, it falls into the trap of **idealism**. It has no mechanism to explain the influence of one structure on another. Having refused to admit the existence of any 'subject', it is compelled to **consider structures as acting subjects**. As its structures are dehumanized, it can explain neither inter-structural relations, nor intra-structural change. On the other hand, it has no flexibility to account for the essential variability of actual life. This is why it is refuted by historical evidence. To refer to the above example, though it is true that the margin of manoeuvre of the American presidency is very limited, it is nonetheless undeniable that between a Franklin Roosevelt and a Gerald Ford, there is still a world of difference.

Another solution to the problem considered comes from a direct reaction to the shortcomings of the structuralist conception. While the structuralists refuse to admit the role of individuals, the 'subjectivist' conception puts the entire weight on them. It accounts for state activity favouring the dominant class in terms of the particular characteristics of the personnel of the state apparatuses. No wonder, it says, that the state should serve the interests of the superior classes, as it is directly manned by them. It can be seen that this conception is an alleviated form of the instrumentalist conception. The main difference between them is that while the instrumentalists view the **whole** of state structures,

personnel, and policies, as directly shaped by the dominant class, the subjectivists restrain their interest to the class origin and relationships of the ruling **personnel**.

The subjectivist conception is brilliantly illustrated in a recent book by P. Birnbaum.²⁰ Through a detailed analysis of the data provided by three editions of **Who's Who in France**, the author is able to show the high degree of overlapping between top state personnel and the 'almighty' of the private sector. Taking his samples from the three editions, separated by ten year intervals, he is, moreover, able to emphasize the rapid progression of this interconnection. His findings are striking. Let us only note that while one-fifth of the top civil servants went over to the private sector in 1954, more than one-quarter did the same twenty years later.²¹ The proportion is even higher among the military, with 41 % of the last sample joining private sector top management.²² And the movement is by no means one-way. More and more the offspring of big bankers, industrialists, etc. opt for a career in the state as the best preparation to assume the responsibilities of their fathers.

The case of the subjectivists is indeed vindicated by much evidence, not only in modern France, but everywhere. In a great number of states, past or present, the top ruling personnel and the magnates of civil society are brought up in the same schools; live in the same districts; marry within a limited circle; frequent the same clubs; speak the same 'language', share the same tastes, and so on. Either atop the state, or as managers of private concerns, they always serve the **same** interests.

Nevertheless, there is also much evidence which does not match with the subjectivist view. Thus, it is always possible to find many examples of ruling personnel who have not been faithful to their class by birth. Experience shows that being born into a certain social class does not guarantee compliance with the interests of this class, once a position of state power is achieved.

On the other hand, like the instrumentalist view, this conception presupposes a degree of homogeneity among the superior classes which is not sustained in reality. Finally, this conception disregards totally the structural constraints with which state activity necessarily circumscribes the ruling personnel. This is why it cannot be admitted as a satisfactory solution.

There is still another conception which tries to solve the problem of the state being determined by civil society. This last conception puts stress on 'external pressure'. It endeavours to explain state policies, as a direct result of the influence exercised on the ruling personnel by forces outside the state. This view holds that, whatever state structures and the class characteristics of the ruling personnel may be, they cannot resist the pressure imposed upon them by the interests dominating civil society. Since the superior classes firmly keep in their hands the main strings of social power, those holding political power have no other choice than bending before them.

It must be acknowledged that this conception also has much evidence to support it. Our everyday experience demonstrates undeniably that the most powerful interests are also the most vociferous, that, as a rule, they are able to mobilize enough means to extract from the state the decisions they want. Nevertheless, from a theoretical point of view, this conception is actually **the weakest** of all those considered up till now. It has nothing to say concerning the structures and the ruling personnel of the state, It does not explain how the state is so structured and so manned, that it becomes particularly vulnerable to outside pressure.

Moreover, it also overlooks the fact that claims rising out civil society are often contradictory. How is it possible to explain state policies carried in the face of conflicting demands, especially when these demands are formulated with equal power? In addition to these theoretical shortcomings, there is also the fact that the conception based on external pressure is also often falsified

by concrete evidence. Usually, state policies **do not** echo faithfully the voice of a single master, but they appear as a symphony synthesizing fairly different voices.

Then, where lies the truth? What is the correct representation of the mechanism governing the determination of the state by civil society? Obviously, there is no easy answer.²³ And, there is no way out by stating simply that the right solution lies in the 'totality' of the solutions presented above.²⁴ We are **bound** to try to reach an answer, even if we know that it will probably be merely **approximate** in the face of a highly complex reality.

It seems to me that the correct solution can only be based on an **amended kind of structuralism**. This point of view is summarized by Marx, in a famous passage of his in **Eighteenth Brumaire**. Here is what he writes with illuminating simplicity: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past."²⁵ The second part of this statement corresponds to the main thesis of structuralism: what shapes human history is the conditions of its realization. However, the first part of the statement seriously amends this rigid view. It asserts overtly that, all conditions considered, it is always men who make their own history.

Applied to the specific problem with which we deal here, this means that state structures are always concretely built by human individuals. However, they are built for definite purposes. The aims which govern their construction are furnished by civil society; by its needs from the state and by the objective necessity in which civil society finds itself -the necessity, that is, of yielding before the state in order to receive its services. The needs and the specific position of civil society are objective constraints

independent of human will. They are the necessary outcome of the dominant mode(s) of production in civil society. These objective constraints are expressed by the basic political functions outlined in this essay. Thus, the first limitation imposed upon human freedom in shaping state structures arises out of the existence of binding political functions. Of course, as explained elsewhere in this essay, the specific forms taken by these functions will limit in a different manner the range of possible state structures which can be built in order for these very functions to be performed. What matters here, however, is simply to note that the creation of state structures and their eventual reshaping is confronted with objective limitations finding their source in the political functions necessitated by civil society.

The first conclusion to be drawn then, is that state structures are built by human beings with a freedom limited by the necessity of responding to a number of **basic political functions**. Yet there are still other limitations restricting the range of choice enjoyed in the erection of state structures. In this activity of construction, human beings need material and ideological means, and they can only find them in **civil society**. It follows that there cannot be unlimited choice. State builders are necessarily restricted by the degree of development of their own society, and by the circumscribed number of foreign models they may eventually copy. This is the second set of 'conditions' in which they have to act. Thirdly, the establishment of the state being a process, the creation of any new structure will necessarily take place in a field **already structured**. This is another and very important impediment curtailing the freedom of state building. Fourthly and again most importantly, 'human beings' engaging themselves in the construction of state structures come from within civil society, and they are thus **already shaped** by the multitude of determinations acting upon them from birth to death. Fifthly, the already determined human individuals, who subsequently man the state structures, fall inevitably under the

constraints arising out of these structures, as well as being subjected to the influence of **previously established** traditions. Sixthly, and finally, the ruling personnel, acting within definite state structures, are under the **permanent stream** of pressures flowing from civil society.

It is clear, then, that the freedom enjoyed by human beings in the **construction, manning, and activation** of state structures, is circumscribed to a large extent by a wide range of limitations stemming out of civil society, as well as out of previously established state structures and traditions. It is due to this particular importance of conditioning factors that a kind of structuralism seems to be the most appropriate answer to the problem posed by the relationship between state and society. Nevertheless, it remains true that despite the weight of all sorts of "circumstances", it is still "men" who make their own history, and thus, also, the history of their own states.

Recalling what has been said in the introduction, it is particularly important to have a clear view of the kinds of **determinations** which are at work in the relationship between state and civil society. In the listing above, the so-called 'constraints' bearing upon the state, cover in fact **two** main sorts of determination: the 'passive' ones, which limit the range of ways open to action (or which circumscribe the number of possible choices), and the 'active' ones, which propel the action in a definite direction (or which impose a given choice).

. The determinations imposed by the basic structural arrangement of political functions, by the level of development of material and ideological means available in the indigenous or foreign environment, by the existing state structures previously shaped, are all of the **'passive'** kind; whereas the instalment of new structures, and the manning of these structures are the result of **'active'** determinations.

Finally, the concrete activity of the ruling personnel is shaped simultaneously by **both forms** of determination. On the one hand, this activity is **limited**: 1) by the basic structural arrangement of political functions; 2) by the means available; and 3) by the constraints of existing state structures. On the other hand, this activity is **propelled**: 1) by the class struggle which pushes definite kinds of persons to the top of the state; 2) by the ideology of the ruling personnel which drives it to pursue policies suiting the dominant class; and 3) by the positive (suiting the superior classes) and negative (suiting the inferior classes) pressures coming continuously from civil society.

This difference in determinations explains why in practice the second function of the state prevails **as a rule** over the first one, even if it is also prevented from totally suppressing it. The fulfilment of the **first** political function depends largely on a **passive** determination, and only on a limited amount of active determination. The state is hardly 'pushed' to perform its first function; it is mainly 'restrained' by the objective necessities of this function. The obligation falling on it is to refrain from a certain range of activities, harmful to the preservation and development of the forces of production. True, it also gets a small amount of active determination through the pressures put on it by the struggle of the inferior classes. But, as these classes are by definition in an 'inferior' position, the amount of pressure they can mobilize is understandably limited.

On the contrary, the fulfilment of the **second** function is not only determined passively, but is also pushed forward very **actively**. The state is not only bound to refrain from certain activities harmful to the maintenance and expansion of the relations of production, but is also strongly propelled in this direction. This active determination is primarily due to the **class struggle** which: a) gives the top positions of state mostly to the representatives of the dominant class; b) permeates the ruling personnel, whatever their origins, with the

ideology of the dominant class; and c) subjects the state to an incessant flow of strong pressures coming from the superior classes and strata of civil society.

The outcome of all this is a series of concrete policies serving the superior classes more than the inferior ones, although being unable to totally neglect the latter. These two aspects are usually **closely intertwined**, and it is the arduous task of the analyst to unravel them.

Furthermore, there is still another important element determining the substance of state policies. This last element is brought about by the **third** basic function of politics, and will be dealt with in the next chapter. It is only when this task is completed that it will be possible to get a general picture of state activity, and consequently, to face more squarely the particular problem of its concrete analysis.

NOTES

- ¹ This is what the structuralists express with the term 'synchronism'.
- 2 Göran Therborn, **Science, Class and Society**, London, NLB, 1976, p. 360.
- 3 **Ibid.**
- 4 For example, in the militant activity of a political party representing the producers, demands related with class positions will carry more weight than demands directed to the improvement of the material conditions of the working people.
- 5 Let us recall that there is no contemporaneity in the emergence of tribalism in different societies all over the world: some went through this mode of production many centuries B.C., while others could experience it as late as the nineteenth century -and even later.
- 6 Karl Marx, **Capital**, V. 3, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1977, p. 383.
- 7 **Ibid.**, p. 384.
- 8 H.J.M. Claessen, "The Early State: A Structural Approach", in Henri J. M. Claessen, and Peter Skalnik (eds.), **The Early State**, The Hague, Mouton Publishers, 1978, pp. 533-96.
- 9 **Ibid.**, p. 588.
- 10 **Ibid.**, p. 553.

- 11 This close imbrication is also noted by Engels who is so much impressed by it that he actually equates class emergence with state emergence reducing them to a **single** process, **cf. Anti-Dühring**, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959, pp. 247-8.
- 12 Thus, Marx notes in **Capital** that the intervention of the British state in order to increase the working day lasted 464 years from the 14th century to the 18th, **cf. V. 1**, Lawrence and Wishart, 1970, p. 272, n. 1.
- 13 **cf.**, for example, Ralph Miliband, **The State in Capitalist Society**, London Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969, **passim**, where the author demonstrates conclusively the partisan role of the state in advanced capitalist countries.
- 14 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, **Manifesto of the Communist Party**, in **Selected Works**, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962, V. 1, pp. 54 and 36, respectively.
- 15 **Ibid.**, p. 145.
- 16 **Ibid.**, p. 142.
- 17 **Ibid.**, pp. 2 72-3, and 312-3.
- 18 **Ibid.**, p. 331.
- 19 **Ibid.**, p. 330.
- 20 Pierre Birnbaum **et al.**, **La Classe Dirigeante Française**, Paris, PUF, 1978.
- 21 **Ibid.**, p.64.
- 22 **Ibid.**, p. 65.
- 23 It can be interesting to note that confronted with this problem in relation to the determination of the democratic republic by the power of "wealth", Engels draws on both the 'instrumentalist' and the 'structuralist' approaches. Here are the three factors he lists: a) corruption of officials; b) public dept; and c) universal suffrage, **cf. The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State**, in Marx-Engels, **op. cit.**, V. 2, pp. 321-2. As can be seen, the first two of these factors derive from an instrumentalist conception according to which the dominant class uses various 'strings' to direct the state, while the third is the consequence of a structuralist view according to which this determination is the structural consequence of the dominance of a definite mode of production,
- 24 As does, for instance, Ralph Miliband. **cf. Marxism and Politics**, Oxford, University Press, 1977, pp., 73-4
- 25 Karl Marx, **The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte**, in Marx-Engels, **op. cit.**, V. 1, p. 247.

CHAPTER IV

THE STATE'S OWN INTEREST

It has already been pointed out that the third and last basic function of politics is providing for the state's own interest. It must be noted that this function is not derived directly from our definition. For, contrary to the first two functions, this last one does not stem out of the basic structural needs of civil society. It finds its source in the particular position of civil society **vis-à-vis** the state. It is the inescapable outcome of the fulfilment of political functions through a special organism. The first function did not need such an apparatus. In fact, it was much better served when there was no state at all.¹ The second one, however, could not possibly be realized without a centrally organized force. In order to gain legitimacy, and as a result of structural constraints, this central organism had to also assume the tasks of the first function. By so doing, it found itself in the midst of unsolvable contradictions. The only possibility left to it was to place itself over and above society.² However, this could only be achieved through a permanent struggle against society. Thus was born the third function of politics as an inevitable component of political activity when performed by the state. :

In **The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State**, Engels writes that "an essential feature of the state is a public power distinct from the mass of the people."³ Actually, this view is a **leit-motiv** which appears again and again in many of his works.⁴ The line of the explanation he gives for this phenomenon runs usually as follows: confronted with the growing complexity

of social life, due itself to the increase of productive capacity, society feels compelled to entrust to a new branch of the division of labour the task of looking after its common interests; in time, these persons thus placed in an advantageous position within society, tend to steadily augment their privileges, and organizing themselves in a special apparatus they succeed in taking under their sway the whole of society.

It is seen, then, that Engels usually tries to account for the relative independence of the state by putting the stress on the subjective attitude of the first rulers in history. As an explanation limited to a historical event occurring only once, this 'treachery' of the first rulers, taking advantage of a unique objective position, may very well be admitted as satisfactory. This does not explain, however, why this supremacy could **continue** up to now. If state rulers served the community only in the beginning and later transformed themselves into useless usurpers, this would mean that they had lost their place in the social division of labour. What accounts then for their lasting dominance?

Is it force? Engels himself rightly dismisses this element as insufficient. Answering Dühring's "force theory", he writes : "The mere fact that the ruled and exploited have at all times been far more numerous than the rulers and the exploiters, and that therefore it is in the hands of the former that the real force has reposed, is enough to demonstrate the absurdity of the whole force theory."⁵ If it is not force, then what is it? Is it merely tradition? Obviously not, for such an explanation would be even less compatible with the materialist premises of the doctrine.

The only way out is to admit that the ruling personnel still **preserves** its place in the social division of labour. In other words, this amounts to an acknowledgement of the first function of the state. Indeed, we have already seen in the second chapter dealing with this function, that there are hints of such an acquiescence in Engels' works. Likewise, Marx too is sometimes driven to concede

this positive role of the state. In **The Civil War in France**, for instance, when he explains the political programme of the Commune, he writes that while the merely repressive organs of the state were to be amputated, its "legitimate functions" were to be restored to the responsible agents of society.⁸ What, can these "legitimate functions" be, other than the direct consequences of the first function of the state?

Nevertheless, both Marx and Engels are very reluctant to admit this positive role of the state. When the explanation of an original role for the state in the emergent social division of labour appears evidently insufficient, they prefer to confine themselves to underlining the role of the state as the instrument of the dominant class. Thus, they rely strictly on its second basic function. It should be obvious, however, that the state could not have asserted its authority on the whole of society if it were simply a kind of militia in the service of the dominant class. Besides, a state reduced to its second function would also be unable to dominate the superior classes themselves. It would be a kind of administrative, ideological, and sometimes military apparatus functioning like political parties, trade-unions, associations, journals, etc. which act as specific agents of particular classes.

Actually, Engels is sometimes aware of this central difficulty. He tries to resolve it by affirming that the state, besides being the organized power of the dominant class, is also bound to protect society from being consumed in a fierce class struggle.⁷ He is thus driven to affirm that in certain periods the state may acquire a position as independent mediator between warring classes. True, he admits this possibility only by way of an exception, but the examples he gives, "the absolute monarchy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, ... the Bonapartism of the First, and still more of the Second French Empire",⁸ show clearly that this 'exception' can easily last three centuries. Obviously,

a theory which admits such long exceptions must have some aspects needing correction.

The solution lies in the clear acknowledgement of the fact that the relative independence of the state cannot be accounted for by a theory reducing the state to the performance of a single major function. The state could not be independent if it were merely a social organism entrusted with communal duties by the social division of labour. Nor could it be independent if it were simply the political agent of the economically dominant class, or if its independence were the permanent consequence of an ever renewed ambition on the part of its rulers. It is because the state is structurally bound to look after the common interests of society, and at the same time, is passively and actively determined to serve the superior classes, and because this structural position revives permanently the ambition of its ruling personnel, that the state has to assume a place above society, and is able to secure the necessary means of such relative independence.

This structural necessity is provided for by the third basic political function. It is due to this function that, once formed, the state struggles incessantly and relentlessly to gain its independence from civil society -including the superior classes. The state is both passively and actively determined in this direction. The **passive determination** has its source in the objective needs of civil society, in the depth of the contradictions by which it is riven, in the expanse of its territory, in the density of its population and in the level of the development of its means of production. Obviously, the more a society is split, the more it is scattered, the more it will need a strong state.

Combined with this passive determination, however, there is also a whole range of **active determinations** which raise the state over society : 1) The superior classes often try to confer increased powers on the state in order to guarantee the stability

of the social order. Their inclination for more authority coincides, as a rule, with the weakness of their social position. 2) Often again, the inferior classes cry out for a strong state to protect them from the exactions of the exploiters. The less an exploited class is politically developed, the more it is inclined to entrust itself to the protection of the state. 3) Despite social classes, there is also a host of particular interests which fight for a strong state. From the religious hierarchy to the 'official' intellectuals, there always exists in every class society a quantity of particular interests thriving mainly on state privileges. These differ, of course, according to the characteristics of the society concerned. It remains that, everywhere, they never fail to combat fiercely for the authority of a state without which they would be reduced to social nonentities. 4) Finally, in every state, the ruling personnel itself is the most active determinant of state power. The structural position of the state (necessarily placed over society), never fails to breed an irresistible thirst for power in the ruling men (and women).⁹ The spiral between ambition-power-more ambition-more power is a general phenomenon noted since the emergence of the state. It has, of course, nothing to do with a constitutional defect in the personalities of statesmen. It is due to the objective situation of politics where it has to be performed through the state. Nevertheless, the subjective drive thus created, renewed, and increased, acts as the most important active determinant in securing a position of authority for the state over and above the rest of society.

It has often been claimed that this relative autonomy of the state is the particular product of the capitalist mode of production, which by separating sharply the respective domains of economic and political activities, paves the ground upon which an independent state may rise. Though it is true that capitalism fosters the emergence of strongly marked borderlines between all spheres of social activity, due to an unprecedented development of the social division of labour, it is theoretically

and practically impossible to view the relative autonomy of the state as a phenomenon particular to one mode of production. The theoretical impossibility stems out the fact that this autonomy is indeed an essential feature of the state. Without autonomy, the state could not exist. A state immersed within society is necessarily a state already dissolved. On the other hand, historical evidence has no support whatsoever for the view confining the autonomy of the state to the capitalist mode of production. As will be seen in some examples that we will consider shortly, the evidence is to the contrary. Let us only underline here that the relative autonomy of the state in thousands of years of Eastern despotic government, cannot be considered as less 'typical' than the autonomy of any capitalist state.

Separation between state and society is such an important feature of the nature of the state that logically and historically, it is the **single most important** phenomenon appearing in the formation of the state. The logical necessity is obvious: the communal organs could not preside over society and thus constitute themselves as a state, without first rescinding the bonds of their subservience. Of course, this could not happen in the absence of prior conditions like the sufficient development of the forces of production, and a social stratification based on an unequal distribution of the surplus product. But, given these conditions, the state could not be born as long as communal organs were kept with a status equal to the rest of society. Separation from society was therefore the crucial act accounting for state formation. This logical necessity is, besides, amply vindicated by historical evidence.

All nascent states resort to various devices in order to ensure their supremacy over society. And once they are born, they invariably struggle with all means at their disposal to deepen and broaden the allegiance they have already secured. To illustrate

this point we will first consider the process of state formation in Aztec society, already referred to in the second chapter. "In Aztec society the distance between social categories was stressed from the reign of Montezuma I (1440-1468) onward, and this was a critical period in the formation of an independent state. For example, the significance of this action is suggested by the first clause of Montezuma's law code which asserts that the emperor should not appear in public except on special occasions."¹⁰

Other devices were also used by Aztec rulers to establish and strengthen their supremacy. One such expedient was the dispersing of peoples throughout the territory in order to dilute ethnic affiliations. Or, the subjugation, by every means, of local groups such as lineages, clans, age sets, secret societies, etc. in order to stamp out any possible rival to state power. Or, the usurpation of local groups' functions, such as the education of children, punishment of criminals, regulation of marriage and divorce, to the benefit of state authority. Or, the imposition of particularly heavy taxes, and the monopolization of military power. Or, the systematic use of all sorts of ideological means, such as religious beliefs, myths, traditions, ceremonies, etc. to enhance the prestige of the ruler.¹¹

The gradual emergence of the state through a protracted struggle between central and local rulers is also well exemplified in the emergence of the early Norwegian state, again referred to in the second chapter. There, the chieftain of the most venerated clan, the head of the house of Harald Fairhair, is at the beginning a slightly more respected king amidst a host of local 'kings'. In order to establish the state, he has first to subdue all the local powers. To achieve this aim, he uses various devices, such as the continual reinforcement of his personal bodyguard, permanent travels from one part of the country to the other with the aim of enhancing the prestige attached to his person by the religio-magical traditions of the heathen era, the utilization of external

threat to gradually secure a monopoly of military power, the promotion of provincial assemblies in order to increasingly strip the local groups from their judicial powers, and so on. However, the fate of Olaf Haraldsson, the king vanquished by the local nobility in the battle of Stiklastadir (1030) and later assassinated, shows that this is no easy task. And the final establishment of the state in Norway could only be ensured after the mobilization of the Catholic Church, putting all its weight behind the sacral conception of kingship.¹²

Another interesting example is provided by the Ankole state, whose establishment in the southwest of the present state of Uganda started in the beginning of the eighteenth century. There, the process of state emergence appears to have been triggered off by the marriage of Ntare IV (1699-1727/26) with two daughters of the neighbouring royal house of Mpororo. By this matrimonial policy, the ruler of the central clan of Hinda was breaking the tradition of taking wives only among the Hima clans, and thus "the Hinda ruling house was making of itself a dynasty, separated from its subjects by blood as well as honors."¹³ This development provided the Ankole society with the main instrument of state formation, which was rendered necessary by the increasing social stratification between the cattle-breeding Hima, and the local farmers subdued by them.

The study of various cases of state emergence allows us to single out **a number** of important **factors** which account for the separation between state and civil society. One such factor finds its source directly in the **kinship** relations and the close **interpersonal bonds** of tribal society. The Ankole example shows very well the dialectical role played by kinship relations in the emergence of the state. What allows Ntare IV to found a dynasty which will finally achieve state power, is his kinship position as head of the most venerated clan; at the same time, it is only

through the **breaking** of kinship rules that he is able to start a dynasty.

This **double role** of kinship relations is conspicuous in all examples of state formation. On one side, they provide legitimacy to the emerging rulers, and they shape the pattern of the nascent administration. Everywhere, the emerging king has already a prominent position due to his kinship situation. (In the Norwegian case, for instance, only scions of the house of Harald Fairhair could pretend to the central throne.) Furthermore, the early state "was never so much concerned with territory, land or objects as with **people** as principal objects of value reference. It was first, and foremost the administration of people (a certain number, or a certain category of people in terms of ethnic or professional division) that counted in the early state."¹⁴ Thus, the early state was the typical product of tribal society based on kinship relations.

Yet, on the other hand, the early state was a total **negation** of these kinship relations. Already, the mere fact that the ruled were divided according to "numbers", "professions", etc., (**cf.** the above quotation), points to a stage of advanced dilution in clan formations. In his study of the formation of the Athenian state, Engels shows very well how the establishment of this state in the sixth century B.C. is accounted for by the transition from an organization based on tribes, to constitutions dividing numbers of people, first according to property, occupation, and so on, and finally, according to the place of settlement.¹⁵

The common structural features of early states confirm plainly this double role of kinship relations and personal bonds. These tribal characteristics are systematically fostered by the emerging state with the aim of creating a central agency strongly **united** within itself by ties of blood, whereas these same ties have to be **destroyed** among the ruled in order to prevent their unification against their new rulers. In early states the king is never alone: he is

always surrounded by an aristocracy which owes its privileged position to its connections with the sovereign's lineage. On the other hand, early states are particularly careful in severing all possible ties of kinship between the bloc of rulers and the mass of the ruled.¹⁶

These characteristics are not peculiar to early states. They are also to be found, to a large extent, in later epochs. The **medieval state**, for instance, was typically a power bloc organized around kinship and personal bonds, and this bloc was kept strictly demarcated from the commoners. The state machine was essentially an association between persons, the monarch finding his closest assistants and counsellors among his kinsmen.¹⁷

It is only from the beginning of the 14th century onward, that the feudal personal bond starts to lose its importance in favour of corporate organizations, representative bodies, and bureaucratic institutions.¹⁸ This was only a start, however, and a long period was still needed in order to reach an **abstract** conception of the state as a corporate entity or legal person.

A necessary step in this direction was the obliteration of the distinction between the ruler's public and private capacities. This is mainly realized by the transformation of the **royal** domain into a **public** domain. We clearly see this transition in 16th century France, where in 1523 a central treasury, the **Trésor de l'Epargne**, is established in order to collect all revenues, without distinction between extraordinary dues and the resources emanating from the royal domain.¹⁹ The transition is quite rapid, so for Bodin, writing only around fifty years later, the king is no more the owner, but merely the administrator of the royal-public domain.²⁰

Nevertheless, the ideology of the state as an impersonal and all-powerful organism whose interests must be served, not only by its subjects, but also by the king himself, is quite **recent**. In Europe, its unequivocal proclamation is owed to Peter the Great, and thus dates from the first quarter of the eighteenth century.²¹

Besides, even after the predominance of this new conception was generalized, the state still retained many of its 'personalized' features.

A quick glance at **contemporary** states will suffice to furnish us with a wealth of observations pertaining to these personal features. Indeed, 'charismatic leadership', 'nepotism', 'clientelism' attached to the person of certain leaders, the 'spoils system' bringing into office coteries united by personal bonds, the French ministerial 'cabinets' functioning like personal secretariats whose members usually follow the fortunes of prominent politicians, the 'personality cult', etc. are all modern examples of personal bonds. All these are contemporary versions of the kinship ties uniting the rulers of early states.

These ties may have disappeared (though there are still notorious exceptions like 'royal families', 'nepotism', etc.) and replaced mainly by oaths, pledges, common interests, and political affinities, but their function remains: the provision of **personal** bonds uniting the rulers among themselves. Even if in the modern state these personal ties have to be subordinated to the anonymous rules of administrative systems, they may never totally disappear as they are the cement which unites a ruling personnel, the members of which share a common objective interest in the preservation and expansion of state power and privileges.

Undoubtedly, then, personal bonds among the rulers (ties of kinship or of some other form) and a correlative loosening of close bonds among the ruled constitute the **first factor** securing and sustaining the separation of the state from civil society. However, there are also other factors contributing to this same aim, and they are just as important. The next factor that we will consider is **ideology**, which comprises religion, myths, various beliefs, traditions, and even specially devised 'theories'.

An invariant structural feature of all early states is the sacral status of the sovereign.²² As a rule, tribal societies confer religious

powers to definite lineages, and the sovereign is endowed with a special magical authority as head of the most venerated clan. This additional attribute is indispensable for the emergence of the state since a social superiority merely based on kinship would not be enough to ensure a sufficient degree of **centralization** without which no state can be established -and such a centralization could only be achieved around the person of the sovereign. It is in this context that ideological means are particularly instrumental, as they put the emphasis on the spiritual position of the king. His person is considered as sacred. He is often believed to be genealogically related to god(s). In any case, he is always accredited with magical powers. In the German tribes, for example, "the people regarded the king in the light of a mediator between themselves and their gods; he guaranteed success in war, abundant harvest, and domestic peace."²³ In all early states this exalted position was systematically enhanced by the priesthood, and by the sovereign himself, who regularly performed rites, paid offerings, presided over religious ceremonies, and so on.

This religious character of kingship has largely **survived** the early states. The role of the Catholic Church, as the guardian angel of the sacral conception of kinship, is well known. Likewise, in Islam, with all sovereignty proceeding from Allah, the sovereign is considered as God's trustee. This kind of religious backing for political power is very commonly found throughout history. The secularization of politics is a quite recent phenomenon, and by no means has it been completed around the world.

It is also important to note that, apart from religion, **many other** ideological means have been, and still are, instrumental in securing state supremacy over society. Throughout history the state has been associated with a 'father' figure, protecting his 'children'. Another image very often encountered is the 'shepherd' taking care of his 'flock'. Or again, the 'captain' always leading his crew to safe havens. And not only popular beliefs, but quite

elaborated doctrines, like Hegel's philosophy of the state, have been put to the service of this paternalistic ideology.

In his **Ludwig Feuerbach and the End Classical German Philosophy**, Engels aptly summarizes this ideological aspect of state power and the role it plays in the achievement of state supremacy. Like all ideologies, state ideology, once created, leads a seemingly independent life peculiar to itself. "Every ideology, ... once it has arisen, develops in connection with the given concept-material, and develops this material further; otherwise it would not be an ideology, that is, occupation with thoughts as with independent entities, developing independently and subject only to their own laws."²⁴ Thus, the mere fact that the state develops an ideology of its own serves to demarcate its distance from the rest of society. Furthermore, all state ideologies also serve this demarcation by their specific **content**, which always stress the 'public' character of state matters compared to the 'privatized' domains of civil society.

Another factor which must be considered in relation to the emergence of the state as an independent body, is the establishment of a **public power**. We have already noted that an important step in this direction is the transition from an administration patterned according to kinship relations to one based on territorial units. Thus, in all early states we find a three-tier organization which follows the national-provincial-local division. As a rule, there is one governmental centre which delegates some of its powers to the provincial and local levels. Usually, a division of labour appears only at the centre, where 'specialist' functionaries with different skills are employed, while on lower levels administrative tasks are performed only by 'generalist' functionaries. Although it is most often the aristocracy which holds power positions, commoners may also be employed as ruling personnel. Then -and this is a very interesting feature to note, as it illustrates the value of state power **per se**- "tenure of high office renders one eligible for classification with the aristocracy."²⁵

The formation of an administrative apparatus, however, cannot ensure by itself, the emergence of a public power. Such a power can only be established on a **double monopoly**: one, in setting the most general norms; and the other, in the general use of physical force. It is no coincidence that in all early states, the sovereign is considered as the formal law-giver, the supreme judge, and also, the supreme commander.²⁶ A common characteristic found in all early states in the monopoly they enjoy in the legal use of physical force.²⁷ This necessity is, obvious: there cannot be a public power as long as the communal organs are unable to formulate (or, at least, to validate), and sanction the most general rules of social behaviour.

In all our historical examples we see that the central authority makes relentless efforts to gain exclusive power in legal and judicial matters. On the other hand, first by supporting a personal bodyguard, and later by uniting all the local military forces under his own command, the king always tries to secure an unchallengeable physical supremacy.

This double exigency is so vital, that it is indeed inseparable from statehood. The present-day states, as well, are particularly possessive about these specific powers. The judiciary, the military, and the police, are the best guarded areas against any 'private' intruders, simply because, these monopolies together constitute the best guarantee of state supremacy over civil society.

One last factor which must be considered in relation to the rise of the state as an independent power, is the creation of **taxes**. No public power, no state administration can be sustained without a regular transfer of wealth from civil society to the state. As long as the sovereign has an estate of his own, the royal domain is an important source of revenue. Later, as noted above, with the obliteration of the distinction between king's and state's property, this private source of income disappeared. Besides, it was never sufficient. Right from the beginning of statehood, the rulers have

always resorted to exactions from the ruled. Taxes are as old as the state.

Actually, they are even **older**. For, preceding the emergence of the state, tribal traditions had already elaborated specific ways of transferring wealth from the direct producers to the privileged strata. Most often these transfers would take the form of gifts. The magical powers attached to the heads of certain kinships would induce local groups to regularly entertain them, as well as the members of their retinue. Through these and similar ways, the upper strata were able to secure for themselves an already important flow of products and services.

The process of state emergence, however, created an unprecedented increase in these transfers. In our discussion of the second function of politics it has already been noted that such an institution as the state had been rendered necessary by the emerging class differentiation which could not be consolidated without the backing of organized political power. Nevertheless, what is particularly interesting to note is that as soon as the state was created, the emerging **superior classes themselves** had to pay taxes as well, proving in this way the inevitability of the third function.

"In all early states commoners have the obligation to pay taxes, tribute, or comparable levies. In early states commoners have the obligation to perform menial services for the state, the aristocracy or functionaries. In all early states the obligation to pay taxes existed, which obligation in most cases the aristocracy also had to fulfil. In the early state the sovereign travels through his realm in order to exact allegiance and tribute."²⁸

The emergence of taxation is mainly due to the evolution from **voluntary** to **compulsory** gifts. As noted above, originally it found its source in the tribal tradition consisting of voluntary offerings to the members of definite lineages particularly venerated. These early gifts could also take the form of occasional labour in the service of the king, or of his local agents. Alongside these voluntary transfers, forms of direct appropriation

like pillage by members of the aristocracy could also be witnessed in tribal societies. The nascent state took advantage of these existing institutions and gradually imposed a compulsory regular tribute, as well as labour for its own benefit. It also added to these regular transfers occasional levies and taxes, and sometimes also a direct confiscation of spoils. The final step in this evolution was the establishment of a fiscal machinery backed by military force and entitled to exact from the ruled regular taxes as well as extraordinary levies.²⁹

Taxes originated sometimes with tribute paid to **foreign invaders**, which was later transformed into a regular tax by the local king. This is well exemplified by the English Danegeld institution. "It had started as tribute paid to the Vikings; later it was collected to avert Viking invasions; and finally it became a general contribution to the defence of the realm, as in 1013, when it was levied throughout England to meet the imminent danger of invasion. The Danish kings transformed the levy -still under its old name- into a national tax."³⁰

In the beginning, taxes were collected in kind, and the subjects were also compelled to perform services for the state. With the development of trade, payment in money first coexisted with, and later prevailed over, payment in goods. In time, taxation has developed to the extent of constituting one of the main pillars of any sort of government. It is only with the appearance of socialist states that taxation started to lose its importance, as the economy as a whole was now absorbed by the state.

Services for the state were first developed in the form of compulsory labour. This was greatly extended in the early states. Later, this kind of service lost its importance but never disappeared. Another form of compulsory service for the state, namely the military obligations of the subjects, was also extensively used in early states, as can be seen, for instance, in the Aztec case.

This kind of obligation thrived throughout the subsequent course of history. In every epoch, the subjects have been compelled to give, not only their money, but also their life for the state. And military service is still flourishing in the major part of the world. Thus, taxation in goods, in labour, or in life has been a permanent characteristic of statehood. It has been instrumental in raising the state above the rest of society, and in keeping it in this privileged position.

To sum up, the **main factors**, contributing to the separation of the state from civil society are: 1) The concentration of kinship relations at the top of society and the loosening of these in the remaining parts of society (hence the prevalence of territorial bonds over kinship bonds among the subjects). 2) The mobilization of ideological means (myths, religions, traditions, popular beliefs, full-fledged 'theories', etc.). 3) The establishment of a public power (taking advantage of a double monopoly over judicial and military powers). And, 4) the institutionalization of taxation (in kind, in money, and with the addition of compulsory services imposed upon the subjects for the benefit of the state).³¹

It must also be noted that the factors bringing about, and consolidating the emergence of the state, as an independent body, constitute, **at the same time**, the substance of the concrete forms taken in the course of history by the third function of politics. Let us add, that it should be kept in mind that these specific forms are further determined by the characteristics of different **modes of production**, and by the particularities of various **social formations**.

It would be erroneous to think that history displays a straightforward development of this third function. Like the other two, the third political function is realized through a **continual struggle** which results in ups and downs. Sometimes, as

was for instance witnessed at the end of the Roman Empire, the third function may reach a level of hypertrophy fatal to the state itself. "The Roman state had become an immense complicated machine, designed exclusively for the exploitation of its subjects. Taxes, services for the state and levies of all kinds drove the mass of the people deeper and deeper into poverty."³² So crucial are the imperatives forcing any state to keep a minimum equilibrium among its three major functions, that the over-growth of even the one function which appears to be the most advantageous for the state, drove the Roman state inexorably to its collapse.

It will be apparent, then, that the path followed by the state in its fulfilment of the third function is not only important for itself, but can also bring about far-reaching consequences for the **whole of society**. This again is very well exemplified by the two conflicting trends in the realization of the third function which became noticeable towards the end of the Roman Empire.

One trend, the dominant one, was towards an unbridled inflation of bureaucratic power. This trend had the upper hand and, as indicated above, resulted in the collapse of the empire. There was also a countervailing tendency, however: "the big landed estates of this age established themselves more and more as self-sufficient units, which tended to erect a barrier between the tenants and the public authorities, and consequently restricted the scope of bureaucratic action. The conflict of these two elements of social organization is the key to the understanding of the state in the Early Middle Ages. ... On the whole the two principles were represented by Orient and Occident."³³

In the East, first Byzantium and then later the Ottoman and Russian empires developed their states within the bureaucratic tradition, thus hindering enormously the autonomous development of civil society. In the West, however, the very weakness of the scattered feudal political organization allowed a much less inhibited development of private social forces. On one side, the

state could easily plunder society, whereas on the other, relatively weak kings were obliged to court the bourgeoisie in order to enlist its active support against the feudal lords. There is no doubt that one of the main factors explaining the subsequent differentiation between East and West, which over-shadowed modern history, must be looked for in the conflicting paths adopted by their **states** for the performance of the **third** political function.

The first two major political functions were already the source of a series of contradictions between the state and different parts of civil society. These were due to conflicting passive and active determinations acting on the state. The peculiarity of the third function is to place the state on one side of the contradiction, against the rest of society including the superior classes. The result of this is the creation of an objective situation of conflict even where the state genuinely dedicates itself to the service of this or that particular social interest. For, such is the nature of the state that **it cannot serve without subjugating**.

Moreover, contradictions are always and inevitably reflected **within** the state itself. This was already the case with the first two political functions. The conflicting demands they were putting on the state resulted in tensions among and within state structures, ruling personnel, and state policies. This situation is exacerbated by the third function. For the various state structures, and categories of state personnel, have a direct stake in this function.

To refer, for instance, to a well-known situation, both the executive and the legislature will back policies enhancing the prestige of the state, but they will still fight against each other in order to retain or expand their respective powers. It is seen, then, that the state is not only a battle-ground where conflicting external (i.e. 'civil') interests struggle against one another through the state structures and personnel, but also the ground upon which these

various agencies and categories of ruling personnel try to secure the best place for themselves.

This aspect of the third function has been rendered particularly conspicuous by the **modern** extension of state machinery, due to the tremendous development of the forces of production. It is enough to recall the impact on administrative structures of the giant leaps realized in communication and transportation technologies. A host of state agencies had to be created in order to cope with the new requirements stemming out of these technological advances. The growth of state administration has been accompanied by an even more elaborate division of labour within the state itself. This has resulted in the emergence of scores of state agencies manned by different people, whose particular position within the state, and therefore within society at large, depends on the specific powers attached to their own agency. The inevitable result of such a situation is a permanent strife between the state, **and itself**. Thus, the third political function does not only create a general contradiction between the state and civil society, but also engenders a situation of general conflict within the state.

This is, of course, reflected in state policies, and, alongside the effects of the other two major political functions, accounts for their **bewildering complexity**. These policies are not merely the outcome of the passive and active determinations emanating from civil society, but are also shaped by the conflicting demands of various state agencies. Those demands themselves find their source in structural necessities, state traditions and ideologies, and also, in the subjective interests of this or that part of the ruling personnel.³⁴

This explains why the task of the analyst confronted with a mass of state policies is particularly arduous. Different policies -and, more often, different aspects of the same policies- must be

classified according to the major political functions they serve. As long as only active determinations are taken into account, this first operation is relatively easy. For it can be assumed that state activities responding to the demands of the exploited, or the superior classes, or the state personnel, are respectively directed to the first, second, and third functions. One must be well aware, however, that one important **presupposition** underlying this approach is that all social groups reflect their objective needs in their demands. Obviously, this will not be the case when and where 'false-consciousness' (i.e. a mistaken view of one's own interests) interferes with objective assessment.

Another approach is also possible, but much more difficult. This second operation consists in bringing into the general picture the **passive determinations**. This necessitates an objective assessment of the **structural requirements** of the forces of production, of the relations of production, and of state supremacy in any given society.

Even when all the basic determinations are taken into account, however, it would still be unrealistic to expect a rigorous scientific explanation for **every** single detail of definite state policies. For, as will be seen in the next two chapters, political structures are not exclusively shaped and activated by basic political functions. Alongside them, **other functions** are also operative. Although these are of secondary, tertiary, or lesser importance, it is still true that many peculiarities appearing at the surface of political life are also due to their specific effects, and thus cannot be totally explained with sole reference to the major political functions.

NOTES

- 1 The emergence of the state denotes a radical social split precluding an unhindered care for society's interests as a whole. Yet this statement needs some qualification, because it is also true that a total social mobilization aiming at the

- development of the productive capacity of any society can only be organized by the state. Thus, even the first political function needs the state when society reaches a comparatively advanced stage of development.
- 2 In the context of this chapter, the term 'society' is used in the sense of 'civil society', i.e. that part of the social whole which remains outside the state.
 - 3 Friedrich Engels, **The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State**, in Marx-Engels, **Selected Works**, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962, V. 2, p. 272.
 - 4 **Anti-Dühring** (Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959, pp. 247-8); **Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy** (Marx-Engels, **op. cit.**, V. 2, p. 396); "Letter to C. Schmidt, 27 October 1890" (**ibid.**, p. 492); "Introduction" to Marx' **The Civil War in France** (Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1966, p. 15).
 - 5 Friedrich Engels, **Anti-Dühring**, **op. cit.**, p. 246.
 - 6 Karl Marx, **op. cit.**, p. 69.
 - 7 F. Engels, **The Origin...**, **op. cit.**, p. 319.
 - 8 **Ibid.**, p. 321.
 - 9 It is interesting to note that this thirst for power and, consequently, the imperious necessity of checking it, were already underlined in the very first work produced by Ancient Greek prose, namely Herodotus' **The Histories**, (trans. by Aubrey de Sélincourt, Penguin Books, 1972, pp. 238-40), where the merits of different political systems are discussed. By the time of Aristotle, the politician's greed was a commonplace. Let us only quote here the following passage taken from his **Politics**: "...the profits to be gained from holding office and administering public property make men long to be permanently in authority; so much so that you might think the rulers were prone to sickness and could only maintain their health by continuing in office, so eagerly do they go place-hunting." **cf.** John Warrington (trans.), **Aristotle's Politics and Athenian Constitution**, London, J.M. Dent and Son Ltd., 1959, p. 77.
 - 10 Donald V. Kurtz, "The Legitimation of the Aztec State", in Henri J.M. Claessen and Peter Skalnik (eds.), **The Early State**, The Hague, Mouton. Publishers, 1978, p. 175.
 - 11 **Ibid.**, **passim**.
 - 12 Aron Ia. Gurevich, "The Early State in Norway", **ibid.**, pp. 403-23, **passim**.
 - 13 Edward I. Steinhart, "Ankole: Pastoral Hegemony", **ibid.**, p. 138.
 - 14 Peter Skalnik, "The Early State as a Process", **ibid.**, p. 600.
 - 15 F. Engels, **The Origin...**, **op. cit.**, p. 319.
 - 16 Henri J.M. Claessen, "The Early State: A Structural Approach", **op. cit.**, pp. 548-83. The structural characteristics referred to are numbered: 11, 23, 35, 37, 43, and 49.
 - 17 Heinrich Mitteis, **The State in the Middle Ages**, North-Holland Publishing Company, 1975, p. 308.

18 **Ibid.**, p. 393.

19 J.H. Sherman, **The Origins of the Modern European State 1450-1723**, London, Hutchinson and Co. Ltd., 1974, pp. 50-1.

20 **Ibid.**, p. 74.

21 **Ibid.**, p. 65.

22 **cf.** above n. 16, structural characteristic numbered: 22.

23 H. Mitteis, **op. cit.**, p. 9.

24 **cf.** Marx-Engels, **op. cit.**, V. 2, p. 397.

25 **cf.** above n. 16, p. 568. The other structural characteristics referred to in this paragraph are also taken from the article here quoted.

26 **Ibid.**, pp. 560 and 563.

27 **cf.** above n. 14, p. 608.

28 **cf.** above n. 16, pp. 572, 573, 553, and 585.

29 **cf.** above n. 14, pp. 603-4.

30 H. Mitteis, **op. cit.**, p. 154.

³¹ It is the particular merit of Engels to have been the first to attempt a theorization of these characteristics of the state. **cf. The Origin...**, pp. 318-20.

32 **Ibid.**, p. 299.

33 Ludo Moritz Hartmann, **The Early Mediaeval State**, London, George Philip and Son, Ltd., 1949, p. 7. 34 This bureaucratic 'privatization' of the public interest is very well expressed by Marx in his **Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law**, where he writes: "In the bureaucracy the identity of state interest and particular private aim is established in such a way that the **state interest** becomes a **particular** private aim over against other private aims." **cf.** Marx-Engels, **Collected Works**, V. 3, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1975, p. 48.

CHAPTER V

THE NATURE OF THE STATE

The last three chapters have been devoted to a scrutiny of each of the basic functions constituting the composite political function. I have tried to analyse each function separately in order to underline the inevitability of its emergence, to describe its particular nature, and to illustrate the variety of its forms of realization under different modes of production and in specific social formations. The aim of the present chapter is to draw an overall picture of the nature of the state. For this purpose I will **first** recall the fundamental characteristics of all three major functions, and the necessity of their intimate coexistence. **Secondly**, I will try to briefly spell out the consequences of this combined threefold impact on the basic nature of the state. **Thirdly**, I will attempt to construct a more elaborate view of the state by supplementing this basic conception with one which makes room for all sorts of subsidiary determinations. **Fourthly**, I will try to show the peculiarity of this conception in comparison with some other approaches. And **finally**, I will briefly discuss the problem of the practical recognition of the empirical effects of the major functions.

It will be recalled that the first function of politics consisted of the provision, on an overall basis, of conditions necessary for the maintenance and development of the forces of production.¹ The necessity of this function is rooted in the most fundamental characteristic of any society, and it is as much inescapable as production itself. If it is kept in mind that the labour-power supplied by the labouring classes themselves is the most impor-

tant productive force,² it is obvious that the performance of this function is really in the general interest.

Historically, the state grows out of communal organs, established at a certain stage of development of the social division of labour, in order to cope with the tasks deriving from this first function.³ Even after its definite establishment as a result of the combined necessities of the other two major political functions, the state is still structurally bound to retain its first function. Contrary to a widespread opinion this is **not** only or even mainly due to the need of gaining legitimacy.⁴ Basically, it finds its source in the structural position of the state within society.⁵

No state can ignore the necessity of providing, even at a minimum level, the conditions for the preservation of the forces of production at its disposal. A society which cannot ensure the regular reproduction of its material basis is doomed. But the collapse of society also implies the destruction of the state which rules it. The state is therefore always compelled, to some extent, to carry out a set of activities aimed at preserving the general interest.

In fact, even in the most exploitative society, there is a convergence between the interests of the state and those of the lower classes. Indeed, within certain limits, the strength of the subjects also constitutes the strength of their economic masters and political rulers. But, on the other hand, it is also true that there is an objective limit to what can be done by the state in the general interest. Beyond this point no state can go. For then, two possibilities arise which can both prove fatal for the existing state:

One possibility is that disruption in the relations of production results in the rise of a new dominant class. This necessitates the emergence of a new kind of state, and in turn entails the disappearance of the previous one. Another possibility is that the forces of production reach such a level of development that class

differentiation becomes redundant. Then, with the emergence of classless society, any form of state is doomed to disappear. Thus, there is not only a minimum level for the fulfilment of the first function of politics, but there is also a maximum one that the state cannot trespass without endangering its very existence.

Forces of production are always enmeshed in a net of relations of production. It is these relations which ensure the specific form of the combination of the main factors of production, i.e. labour-power and its means (including its conditions), without which no production is possible. Relations of production, since the dawn of civilization, have always been **marked** by class cleavages. Social classes which have found themselves in a position to command the means of production, have always been in a position to dominate other classes. Production being always carried out within definite relations, its very existence has thus been always dependent upon these relations, and consequently, upon the class(es) dominating these relations. In this sense, class supremacy determines the manner of survival of society as a whole, gaining by this vital position the right to say the last word in all important social matters. The second function of politics derives from this reality and this is why the state finds itself inescapably bound to serve the interests of the dominant class too.

In all class societies there is a lower limit that the state must observe in its dealing with the dominant class. For beneath this minimum amount of service, the dominant class will not be able to sustain its dominance. Either it will react and change the old state to replace it with a more suitable one, or it will collapse, dragging in its wake the old state it was sustaining. In either case it is the end of the existing state.

Thus the state is always compelled to serve, to some extent, the dominant class. In fact, it will be willing to do so if one bears in mind that the state is sustained by the surplus product extract-

ed by the dominant class. It then follows that the more intense the exploitation, the greater the well-being of the state. For one should not forget that in class societies the surplus product generated -which is also the source of the strength of the state-is, as a rule, in the hands of the dominant class.

Yet, there is also an upper limit to this servility of the state. If it is driven to trespass this point it cannot survive. For, either exploitation reaches a point incompatible with the maintenance of the forces of production, this entailing the depletion of human and physical resources of society, and thus of the state itself; or the dominant class maintains the forces of production at the expense of depriving the state of any share in the surplus product. In the latter case, the state, thus deprived of the means of guaranteeing a minimum level of supremacy, will necessarily collapse.

Finally, it is also important to bear in mind that power and supremacy are structural needs of any state. As underlined above, they do not stem from any irresistible drive for power enshrined in 'human nature'. The exact opposite is true. Human beings become politically ambitious because power is an objective prerequisite of the fulfilment of political duties through the state. The third function of politics, which consists in 'providing for the state's own interest', stems out of this structural necessity.

No state can carry out its tasks without being placed over society, without enjoying authority, without power, and without the means of power. The state has, therefore, to fend for itself to be able to carry out its functions. This functional necessity traces a lower limit under which altruism is deadly for any state. And this limit is the minutest possible difference between state and civil society. When this line of demarcation disappears the state dissolves into society and ceases to exist.

It is also obvious that this self-seeking cannot be boundless. The state cannot totally ignore the needs of society, in general, and those

of the dominant class, in particular. In the first case the non-reproduction of the forces of production would mean the end of society and, consequently, that of the state. In the second case, the non-sustenance of the social order would bring about the collapse of the dominant class, and that of the state itself. Thus, whatever its self-interests, the state is always bound to serve even to a minimum extent the interest of the lower, as well as those of the upper classes.

It is therefore apparent that there is a **minimum** limit below which no state can afford to neglect the various tasks imposed upon itself by the major political functions. At the same time, there is also an **upper** limit which the state cannot trespass in pursuit of any of its tasks. Beyond these limits, either one function would disappear, or it would reach such an hypertrophy as to render impossible the fulfilment of the other two. The concrete nature of these limits will of course depend on the prevailing mode of production, and on the characteristics of the social formation concerned. At this stage, what is important to note is the necessary existence of such objective limits. These are the **borderlines** outside which no state can venture without facing its own doom.

It will also be seen that the area delineated by these limits is necessarily and permanently torn by **contradictions**. The surplus product which can be used for the implementation of the various tasks induced by the major functions is always limited. On the other hand, the interests involved in the performance of each function are divergent. It follows that the distribution of limited resources among conflicting interests inevitably creates a contradictory situation. And as all three functions are equal **constituents** of politics, it is unavoidable that this conflict should last **permanently**.

The state being the main structure charged with the obli-

gation of carrying out political functions, it is natural that it should reproduce within its corporate body and various activities all the limitations and contradictions attached to the basic political functions. Thus the state will **always** appear as a **self-contradictory** entity. Although this is the **most important** characteristic of its **basic nature**, it has not been sufficiently acknowledged. There are, nonetheless, some exceptions. Witness this statement by L. Krader who has devoted much research to this subject: "The agencies of the state ... [act] ... both in the interest of the state and that of the social whole. It is a double interest, conflicting internally within itself; on the one side, it is the interest of the state as the representative of the social class in whose interest it is organised, on the other, the interest of the social whole."⁶

Another important characteristic of the basic nature of the state has been pointed out in the third chapter of this essay. It will be recalled that the problem of the relative importance of the major political functions was discussed there. The conclusion reached was that the so-called **second function**, i.e. providing for dominant class interest, carried **more weight** compared to the other two.

Let us remark, however, that this was a consequence derived from the **general theory** of historical materialism, and that it did not constitute a unique peculiarity of the state. Actually, the thesis of the pre-eminence of the dominant class is advanced for all spheres of social life. What makes for the **specificity** of the state is the manner in which this general rule is systematically contradicted by the combined effects of its two other major functions. As a specific social structure, the originality of the state finds its source in its **particular way** of 'reflecting', 'translating' (and thus necessarily 'distorting'), and, to a certain extent, 'counter-balancing' a basic determination which is valid for **all** social structures.⁷

The principal flaw of current Marxian political thinking is to have concentrated **exclusively** on the main function of the state to the extent of totally neglecting the other two functions. It is due to this insistence that 'vulgar Marxism' has reached the conclusion that the state is nothing more than the instrument of domination of the dominant class. This statement is obviously erroneous when it pretends to be the **summum** of the Marxian theory of state.

In fact, it can be easily shown that such abbreviations contradict **historical materialism** at its very basis. According to historical materialism, the conception of the state, as a part of the superstructure, inescapably entails the reproduction of the contradictions of the infrastructure in this part as well. Now, at the core of the infrastructure is the mode of production which is always moved by the contradiction between its forces of production and its relations of production. The labouring classes are not only a part of the relations of production, but also -as suppliers of labour-force- a constitutive element of the forces of production. Isn't it therefore meaningless to pretend that they will not have any effect on the superstructure and especially, on that part of the superstructure where political class battles are fought?⁸

On the other hand, Marxism has always acknowledged that every social structure, be it kinship, juridical, aesthetic, etc., has **its own** logic. It may then be asked on what grounds can one deny a particular logic to the political structures?⁹ Thus, confronted with the basic principles of Marxism itself, the reduction of the state to one function of class domination is scientifically untenable.

What then is the real nature of the state? Limiting ourselves to basics, we can briefly propose that the state is a cluster of roles and structures performing the three-fold political functions analysed and depicted above. These functions being contradictory, the state itself it always tangled in a nest of contradictions. As a

rule, these contradictions tend to be resolved in the interest of the dominant class. But they appear and reappear persistently. The dominant class has therefore to fight again and again to assure its supremacy in the political field. Yet, this supremacy can never be total.

Now, as indicated in the beginning of this chapter, there is still another important theoretical question to be considered. Concerning the basic nature of the state, what has been said up to now should suffice; however, the theory of the state cannot be reduced to that of its basic nature -even if this constitutes its most crucial component. To gain a more complete view this must be supplemented with an analysis of the **subsidiary** determinations acting on the state. The remaining part of this chapter will be devoted to this question.

Since Aristotle, and especially after Locke and Montesquieu, political scientists have provided us with a range of exclusively political functions. Traditionally these were three: rule-making, rule-implementation, and rule-adjudication. Modern political analysis has added some other functions like interest-articulation, interest-aggregation, and communication.¹⁰ How then do these other functions relate to the functions claimed in this essay as the basic constituents of politics?

In the first instance, the **technical** functions referred to, differ from the basic functions studied here, mainly in the **degree of abstraction**. These are the relatively more concrete channels through which the basic functions of politics are realized. To use the terminology of the structuro-functionalist approach, it is by these "output functions" that the state, being activated through these "input functions", realizes its basic functions. Or to put it more clearly, the state serves the dominant class(es), the lower classes, and itself, through laws, decisions, activities, judgements,

etc., carried out in response to concrete demands, and enjoying different kinds of supports.

It must be strongly emphasized that the three functions of the state that I have proposed, are of a general and highly abstract character. Everyday-life is always of a particular and concrete nature. One should not therefore expect to encounter **as such** the basic functions of the state in everyday political life. In fact, neither do we actually 'see' the technical functions of the state, such as rule-making, rule-implementation, and so on. What we perceive instead are always **unique** bodies resolving **particular** questions.

Nevertheless, the technical functions require a lesser degree of abstraction than the basic functions, for they are not primarily related to the inner structures of politics. Most typically, the technical functions show us 'how' the state works. But they cannot explain 'why' this work is carried out and consequently, where it is directed. When, for example, as is often seen, the state chooses to ignore the most strongly-formulated demand and implements a less conspicuous one, the technical functional approach has no explanation to give. And it is here that clarity about the basic functions of the state gains its real importance.

The basic functions have their sources in the constituent structures of society. In this sense, **they are inescapable in exactly the same way as economic production is inescapable**. They do not depend on the will of this or that ruler: they **must** be performed if social life is to continue. That is why they have been referred to as 'basic'. On the other hand, technical functions relate to the **ways** of realizing these basic functions. To use an analogy, the basic functions are like the need to be fed, and technical functions are like chewing, swallowing, sucking, etc. The first one is inescapable, whereas the second ones can be used alternatively -and even replaced by artificial means. In everyday-life one does not come across 'the need to be fed'; one only sees living bodies nourishing themselves in a variety of ways.

In the introduction I have already discussed the fundamentals of the method used in this essay. Let it suffice to recall once again that to be able to understand the nature of the state -and thus the respective roles of basic, technical, and other political functions- it is of paramount importance to be clear about categories like structure, function, and determination. In the context of this chapter, it is particularly important to further clarify the concept of 'structural determinism'.

A particularly dangerous pitfall to avoid is a kind of approach which reduces all social life to a conditioning process between various structures. This approach is at a loss when it comes to explain social change, the formation of new structures, the decay of the old ones, and so on. It cannot see that the structures **themselves** are shaped by the social activity they determine. Let us emphasize once again, that there is no such thing as a structure acting **in place of** concrete individuals. It is always individuals who act, but because they do so in definite conditions they tend to reproduce patterns of behaviour which mould their subsequent activity -thus rendering it structurally determined. Activity determined in this way constitutes a 'function'.

When, in its everlasting struggle against nature humanity reaches a level of development permitting class differentiation and specialization in the handling of communal affairs, political activity comes under the constraint of a new structural arrangement whose survival depends on the fulfilment of the outlined basic functions. And this situation will last as long as society is structured by class differentiation.

But the limits of this constraint are **very broad**. Within these parameters, political activity has an immense range of variation. Nevertheless, it should also be kept in mind that human activity is **always** creating **new** structures which bring new constraints upon it. Thus, in fact, political activity is **not** random even within its basic structural borders. It is conditioned by its social environment

and by its own history, engendering as a result of this whole range of determinations, a continuous flow of new structures which tend to limit it. The **technical** political structures are the **main** kind of these **medium range** structures. Like the basic structures, they determine political activity on a level which corresponds to their particular social weight. Moreover, this still does not exhaust the variations which are possible. For, as in all spheres of social life, political activity **never** ceases: beyond the limits of the technical functions themselves, new structures -ever less binding- are created, reshaped, dismantled, and replaced.

The outcome of all this is a hierarchy of structures, each of them requiring specific functions. This creates **also** a hierarchy between functions. What differentiates each level of structures and corresponding functions is **the strength of the constraint** they put on human activity. Since these rest on more compelling conditions, basic structures and functions are much more difficult to alter than those of the upper levels. On the other hand, it must be noted that the structures and functions of a certain level act as the **means of realization** of the structures and functions of the deeper level.

To avoid any confusion let us remember that the hierarchy which is at issue here is neither ontological, nor topological. Human activity carries the **same degree** of reality wherever it is performed. The hierarchy is between the **constraints** compelling different kinds of human activity. Some are more difficult to escape, others allow a much wider choice. **The more an activity is determined, the more weight it carries in social life.** Since basic political functions are rooted in the infrastructure, it is natural that these will be more binding than technical or other political functions. It can be easily noticed that here we are actually faced with a hierarchy of infra- and superstructures, which are both very real but differ in their relative importance in the determination of social reality.¹¹

The most conspicuous consequence to be drawn out of this approach is a categorical rejection of any **instrumentalist** conception of the state. Many reasons can be offered for this. First of all, the state's contradictory and heterogeneous nature forbids its use as an 'instrument'.¹² True, some parts of the state may serve this purpose, but the state is composed of a whole range of structures competing among themselves and within themselves. The social class battle is **also** fought within the state.¹³ If the state carries such a weight in the class struggle, this is not due to its use as an instrument, or as a weapon. It is due to the exceptional position of the state as regards society, a position which endows those successful agents in the continuous struggle carried out on its stage, with political power and means.

A second consequence is the rejection of the **systemic** approach, again for very similar reasons. In the approach developed here, the state is not an homogenous organism which will be automatically affected by a change in one of its components. Neither is it an integrated body whose well-being depends primarily on the solving of its contradictions. It is rather a series of "fortifications"¹⁴ **for** which and **within** which social groups fight to gain access to the commanding posts of society. The degree of integration of these fortifications is very variable and will depend mainly on the nature of the society they head.

A third consequence is the rejection of a **sterile structuralism**. For, according to the conceptions of this essay, structures cannot be separated from the individuals who man them. Structures exist only through the activity of social actors. State structures, likewise, exist only¹⁵ by the activity of the state personnel in their inner or outer relations. An artificial separation between structures and concrete individuals is conducive to a 'sterile structuralism' which can be very damaging, as witnessed in the otherwise very valuable work of Nicos Poulantzas.¹⁸ Having sharply separated structures from social relations the author never

succeeds in bringing about a clear picture of their reciprocal conditioning.

A fourth consequence is the rejection of a **functionalism** which ignores the importance of structures. Indeed, functions are **always** determined by structures. It follows that not only their nature, but also their relative importance, depends on the nature and importance of the structures to which they are related. This explains why we see so many different lists of 'political functions', all **arbitrary**, because they are unrelated to a set of structures whose relevance is demonstrated by an adequate theory.

According to the approach developed **in this essay**, the state is a cluster of structures animated by the ever present participants of the political game: 1) the lower classes which promote the first function by their struggle for their own interests; 2) the upper classes which push in the direction of the prevailing social order; and 3) the state personnel who by preserving and strengthening their hold over society render possible the fulfilment of the third function -which, as indicated, is also a condition for the other two.¹⁷

The political game, antagonistic by nature, is further complicated by the fact that the protagonists themselves are not homogenous bodies. The lower classes as well as the upper are divided into factions with relatively different interests. Similarly, there are obvious discrepancies between the interests of state personnel according to their hierarchical ranking. Finally, all partners being composed of human beings, they may well be misled in their representations of their real interests (**cf.** the problem of 'false-consciousness').¹⁸

On the other hand, it is most important not to forget that the structures shaping the political game, not only differ in their respective strength, but are also subject to changes generated within the everlasting political struggle. The strength of a structure depends on its degree of compulsion. Some structures, like those

corresponding to the basic functions -which are rooted in the vital activity of society- can only be altered in the very long run. Others, however, are much flexible. They may thus be reshaped or replaced by conscious ('false' or not) human volition. This explains the immense diversity which can be witnessed at the surface of political life. What leaves scope for a scientific inquiry amidst all this phenomenal diversity is the fact that these more flexible structures function as means for the more rigid and durable ones.

A class differentiated mode of production necessarily implies the performance of politics through the state. The basic functions of politics are determined by the common features of all class differentiated modes of production. This is why they do not vary as long as class antagonism lasts. But each mode of production determines differently the **forms** of these functions, the **specific structures** needed for their performance, the **degree of autonomy** of the state from the rest of society, the **relations** of political structures to other social structures, briefly, all the specific features of politics.¹⁹

This determination is accomplished through the activity of social classes, strata, and groups, pursuing different ideologies and using various material means, all depending on the nature of the prevailing relations of production, and on the level of development of the forces of production. On the other hand, structures are not confined to the foundations of politics. They shape political activity from top to bottom. However, their binding force diminishes in the process, so as to render them less and less imperative. This increased malleability allows for a wide range of restructuring activity at the surface of political life.

The last question that remains, in this chapter, is the problem of the **practical recognition** of the operation of the basic functions of the state, amidst the complexities of everyday-life.

It has already been indicated that a series of difficulties await us here. Let us briefly recall their sources: a) Like all major social functions the basic political functions cannot be 'seen' with a naked eye, they are always realized through a series of 'mediations' where structures and functions ever of a less binding force culminate at the bubbling surface of everyday political life; b) The form of appearance of their effects depends on the practical forms taken by the state and related political structures (since we know that any effect is shaped not by its determinants but by the determined structure -**cf.** our introduction); c) In practical life, 'effects' (these may be structures, agents, policies, or events) do not usually appear in pure forms but in combined ones.

There is not much to be said about the **last** of these difficulties. In all branches of social science the analyst is faced with the task of disentangling a mass of empirical data in order to single out the specific aspects which constitute the object of his (or her) research. There is no privilege to be claimed here for the political scientist. Everything will depend on his (or her) skills, and theoretical knowledge. (It can only be hoped that the present essay will stimulate the latter.)

The **second** source of difficulty will be dealt with in the **next chapter** of this essay devoted precisely to an exposition of the practical forms taken by political structures, and especially by the state. When this is done, the question of the recognition of the empirical effects of major political functions will be further discussed at the end of the next chapter.

Here we will concentrate on the **first** difficulty. Our aim will be to devise practical guidelines permitting us to recognize, through the whole series of mediations, the specific effects of each of the basic political functions.

We know that the first basic function of politics was the maintenance and development of the forces of production. For purposes of practical

analysis, the first step will therefore be a concrete listing of the elements of the productive forces of the society considered, followed by a second step aiming at the unravelling of the complex whole of state activities, in order to differentiate those related to the concrete elements previously listed.

Forces of production can be enumerated in general as follows: 1) The workforce (the physical, intellectual, and moral forces of the producers). 2) The skills used in productive activity. 3) The technical knowledge (that part of scientific activity available to the service of economic production). 4) The practical organization of productive activity (modes of combination of the workforce, cooperation, and technical division of labour). 5) The natural resources (comprising not only those ready at the surface of the earth, but also those underground). 6) The produced means of production (all the tools, machines, factories, buildings, etc., produced by human labour in order to be used in subsequent production). And 7) the means of information, communication, and transportation (ensuring the mobility of the forces of production, be they physical or intellectual).

To illustrate our practical method, the general list of the forces of production established above may be used to formulate hypothetical examples of state activity directed to the first function. Thus, everything the state does in order to preserve, to reproduce, or to develop: 1) the physical, intellectual, or moral forces of the producers, such as protection from external and internal aggression, medical care, preventive medicine, sport and physical activities, healthy nutrition, all sorts of cultural facilities, etc.; 2) skills used in production, such as training, technical competition, the spread of particular methods to all producers in the same branch, etc.; 3) technical knowledge, such as specialized education, adult education, retraining, scientific research, foreign scientific exchanges, technical spying, etc.; 4) the organization of production, such as experimentation in various forms

of cooperation, work in small units, chain production, the spread of information about their relative advantages among the entire workforce, etc.; 5) natural resources, such as protection of the environment, preservation of water resources, opening of new land to cultivation, prospecting minerals, annexation of foreign resources, etc.; 6) the produced means of production, such as the construction of factory buildings, the exploitation of mines, the importation of means of production, etc.; 7) the means of information, communication, and transportation, such as the organization of mass media, the building of roads, bridges, tunnels, the provision of postal services, railways, airways, etc.; will serve the first function of politics.

It will be remembered that the second basic political function consisted in the protection and expansion of the relations of production. The elements of this second structure can be grouped under three headings: 1) Ownership (of the means of production and also of the means of consumption; principal forms of ownership: private, collective, municipal, state and so on). 2) Labour relations (management, administration, leadership; relative position of cadres, technicians, workers; relations between owner, manager, cadre, technician, foreman, skilled worker, unskilled worker; role of trade-unions; forms of workers' participation; and so on). 3) Distribution of commodities (different kinds of revenue, effects of induced income differentiation, role of the material and ideological incentives, and so on).

Thus, everything the state does in order to: 1) protect the dominant forms of ownership, to expand their scope, to develop new forms suiting particularly the most powerful section of the dominant class, such as the suppression of small property, confiscations, nationalizations, colonization of foreign countries, etc.; 2) reinforce the existing relations of production, such as the enactment of new labour laws, the regulation of the activities of trade-unions, the curbing of 'subversive' political movements, etc.; 3)

regulate the distribution of commodities, stocks, money, etc. in the interest of the superior classes, such as the broadening of the market, the imposition of 'fair' rules in stock dealings, tax exemptions, devaluations, etc.; will serve the second function of politics.

Finally, as we know, the third basic function of politics relates to the preservation and extension of the state's own interests. As noted in the fourth chapter, these interests rest mainly on four factors: 1) The cohesion of the state, as contrasted to the disjunction of civil society; 2) the ideological supremacy of the state; 3) a central authority based on a double monopoly in the distribution of justice and the legitimate use of physical coercion; and 4) taxes (and services).

It follows from this listing that everything the state does in order to preserve and increase: 1) the unity of the state against the ruled, such as the setting of structures for a swift resolution of eventual frictions among the ruling personnel, the pursuit of systematic policies aimed at impeding democratic forms of popular participation, etc.; 2) the unique ideological position of the state, such as the prohibition of political currents threatening to weaken the state, a continuous propaganda in schools, in the media, etc. with a view of enhancing the 'glory' of the state, and particularly of traditional state institutions like the monarchy, Parliament, etc.; 3) the authority of public powers, such as the enactment of laws against 'subversion', the recognition of increased powers to the military and the police, the granting of aggrandized discretionary powers to the judiciary, the expansion of the penitentiary system, etc.; 4) the power of tax collection, such as the imposition of new taxes and services, the expansion of the fiscal machinery, the extension of the taxman's powers, etc.; will serve the third function of politics.

These hypothetical examples take, of course, different **specific forms** in the concrete activity of states, depending on the prevailing mode of production and the particular features of

the social formation in question. What matters here, however, is to be clear about **the logic** of the practical method just outlined. Once this logic is grasped, it should be relatively easy to classify the mass of state activities according to their relation to each major political function.

Finally, it has already been indicated that a **subsidiary** technique is also available. It consists in classifying state activities according to the preferences voiced respectively by the lower classes, the upper classes, and the state personnel themselves, expecting that each of these groups will mark a preference for the fulfilment of the one major function aiming at their particular service. Nevertheless, this practical method is much less reliable than the one presented above. For, as pointed out at the end of the last chapter, this subjective method assumes a 'perfect' awareness on behalf of various social groups, whereas in reality these are often very blurred (cf. 'false-consciousness'). Thus, this last method can only **supplement** the objective one depicted above, and should never be allowed to replace it.

NOTES

1 To avoid any possible confusion it should be repeated here that this activity must be external to production so as to be considered 'political'. For, it is obvious that forces of production are mainly reproduced and enlarged by **productive activity itself**. This falls under the heading of 'economic' activity and it is out of the scope of politics. Some examples may help to underline this difference. The transmission of a technical skill through productive work is an economic activity. But the organization of its systematic teaching in a net-work of schools is a political activity. Likewise, the digging of an oil well is an economic activity, but the annexation of wells through external aggression is a political activity.

2 Karl Marx, **Misère de la Philosophie**, in **Oeuvres**, Gallimard, Bibl. de la Pléiade, 1963, p. 135.

3 In Engels' words: "In each such [primitive classless] community there were from the beginning certain common interests the safeguarding of which had to be handed over to individuals, true, under the control of the community as a whole: adjudication of disputes; repression of abuse of authority by individuals; control over water supplies, especially in hot countries; and finally, where conditions were still absolutely primitive,

religious functions. Such offices ... are naturally endowed with a certain measure of authority and are the beginnings of state power." cf. **Anti-Dühring**, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959, p. 247.

⁴ Thus the 'public service' is not merely an ideological cover. Like money, it performs a real role, even if this role serves also to hide other important social relations.

⁵ It has already been noted that Marxists are extremely reluctant to admit this view. But sometimes, they cannot help confronting this question if only in a somewhat desperate manner. Witness this statement by E. Balibar, in a recent work: "comment penser le caractère **structurel** de l'intervention étatique sans lui conférer pour autant, de façon apologétique, un caractère **fonctionnel**?" cf. Etienne Balibar, Cesare Luporini et André Tosel, **Marx et sa Critique de la Politique**, Paris, Maspéro, 1979, p. 133.

⁶ Lawrence Krader, "The Origin of the State Among the Nomads of Asia", in Henri J.M. Classen and Peter Skalnik (eds.), **The Early State**, The Hague, Mouton Publishers, 1978, p. 94. Let us remark, however, that Krader's statement is not totally accurate as it fails to further differentiate between the interests of the dominant class and those of the state itself. Nevertheless, his main view concerning the self-contradictory nature of the state is correct. This is also confirmed by both editors of the important work just quoted, who, drawing the conclusions of twenty-one concrete case studies of state emergence, write in their last common article: "Our data justify Krader's emphasis on the dual concern of the state agencies, namely, to promote the interests of the rulers on the one hand, and those of the society as a whole on the other." **Ibid.**, p. 649.

⁷ Incidentally, one may note that in a sense what is true of the state is true of all other social structures in their relative domains. According to historical materialism they are all determined by the same economic factor. To stress, therefore, only this component of their function does not tell us anything about their real nature. To claim, for example, that the dominant ideology is the ideology of the dominant class, or that the prevailing system of law is a class law, is not at all adequate to explain the **particular nature** of either ideology, or law. What is needed for every sphere of the social formation is an analysis of its specific function(s) and modality(ies), as well as emphasizing its constitutive links with the economic factor. I believe that, in this sense, the approach to the problem of the state developed in this essay may be the source of suggestions worth considering in other fields of social research.

⁸ That theoretical misconceptions can blind people to the most obvious evidence is strikingly exemplified in this passage by Etienne Balibar: "... the fact that representatives of the working people are elected to public bodies (Parliament, municipal councils) ... certainly does not entail that the workers thereby hold **the least scrap of State power**, as if State power could be divided into a number of ... powers, ... and thus cease to be absolutely in the hands of the ruling class." cf. **On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat**, London, NLB, 1977, pp. 77-8. In fact, there is a **double** misconception here. The author is not only held back by

his one-dimensional conception of historical materialism, but is also driven astray by a most 'bourgeois' conception, viz. the so-called 'indivisibility of sovereignty' coined by thinkers like Bodin, Hobbes, etc. in order to ensure the unmitigated supremacy of the Crown over the feudal lords. Especially when one remembers that Marx had emphatically stated that "**comprehending** does not consist, as Hegel imagines in recognising the features of the logical concept everywhere, but in grasping the specific logic of the specific subject." **cf. Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law**, in Marx-Engels, **Collected Works**, V. 3, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1975, p. 91.

⁰ **cf.** for example, David Easton, Gabriel Almond, and James Coleman. "For a characterization of that difference **cf.** the excellent article by Maurice Godelier, "La Part Idéelle du Réel", **L'Homme**, V. 18, n. 3-4 (juillet-décembre 1978), pp. 155-88.

² It is of interest to note that Communist Parties too have begun to sense the limitations of such an instrumentalist approach. **cf.**, for instance, this article by a member of the Political Committee of the British Communist Party: Jack Woddis, "The State-Some Problems", **Marxism Today**, November 1976, especially pp. 334-8.

³ As also noted by Nicos Poulantzas. **cf. L'Etat, le Pouvoir, le Socialisme**, Paris, PUF, 1978, p. 145.

⁴ This expression belongs to Gramsci.

⁵ "mainly" instead of "only", would be more accurate, because structures often comprise material means as well, as indicated in the introduction. But "only" stresses better my purpose here.

⁶ **cf.** particularly his distinction between "relations of production" and social relations of production", in **Political Power and Social Classes**, London, NLB and Sheed and Ward, 1973, pp. 64 ff.

⁷ This definition of political protagonists converges with the views expressed by Fred Block, in a most interesting contribution to the theory of the state: "The Ruling Class does not Rule: Notes on the Marxist Theory of the State", **Socialist Revolution**, n. 33 (May-June 1977). (The title of this periodical has since changed to **Socialist Review**.)

⁸ False-consciousness' on any level is subsequently 'corrected' by means of **crises**, as Gramsci very accurately observed.

⁹ Thus the 'state derivation' approach recently developed in W. Germany is correct in putting the emphasis on the determination of the form of politics by the mode of production. But they seem wrong when they carry this determination to the point of denying the relative autonomy of the state. Hence their misplaced attacks on Poulantzas and Miliband, who quite rightly accord some degree of autonomy to the state. For the point of view of the 'derivation' approach in this debate, **cf.** John Holoway and Sol Picciotto, "Introduction: Towards a Materialist Theory of the State", in **State and Capital**, London. Edward Arnold, 1978, pp. 1-31.

CHAPTER VI

FORMS OF THE STATE

The aim of this chapter is to observe the state as it appears in concrete form. Up to now we have considered the state as a specific entity, charged with a range of functions passively and actively determined by its social environment. This was indispensable in order to grasp the nature of the state. Since the basic functions are common to all class societies, their analysis necessarily had to be carried on a general -and thus, abstract- level, resorting to concrete examples only as illustrations.

In the last chapter, with the introduction of 'technical' (and other more superficial) functions, a first step was taken towards a more concrete analysis. But still, the state was strictly considered from the point of view of **what it does**. Now, we will try to see **how it looks**. This will necessitate, **first**, an analysis of state morphology, and **second**, a discussion of political systems and regimes which constitute the specific social context within which the state functions. This will take us, **finally**, to a more concrete reconsideration of the relationship between state and society.

What do we 'see' when we look at the state in everyday life? It seems to me that mainly four categories of elements can be singled out as constitutive of a state's anatomy, and therefore accounting for its morphology: 1) buildings; 2) state agents; 3) norms (or, 'regulated behaviour'); and 4) means. Indeed, any state is concretely constituted by a certain number of people, acting according to definite rules, working in various premises, and using different means in their activities. This is, of course,

a descriptive listing and does not denote any priority based on importance. The nature of each category and its place in the anatomy of the state can only be revealed by specific analysis.

Any social group functioning as an institution necessarily needs more or less permanent offices for its members, and may also require various premises for its specific activities. In this sense, buildings are in no way unique to the state. However, the fact remains that all states use buildings and that there is a lot to be learned from their study. Some examples may help to clarify this point:

Pyramids are indicative of the nature of the old Egyptian states. Big temples, cathedrals, etc. may point to the existence of an official religion. The number of prisons compared with that of schools may demonstrate the nature of a political regime. The concentration of state buildings in the capital city and a pronounced neglect of the provinces may be the sign of an over-centralized state. The seclusion of official residences behind thick walls may betray the rulers' fear to face their own people. The existence of summer and winter palaces may reveal a seasonally-migrating governmental structure. The existence or non-existence of fortifications during definite historical periods, may provide a clue to assess the relative importance of central bureaucracies.¹ The splendour of a building, housing this or that agency, may show the relative importance of that particular agency among the state structures. Castles and manor-houses may point to a feudal state... Obviously, many other examples can be found. What is important to note here is that the location, the size, the shape, the functions of buildings may provide important clues about the type of state they shelter or otherwise serve.

The second element of state anatomy is a set of people in their capacity as state agents. The age, the sex, the number, the origin, the education, the recruitment, the promotion, the replacement, etc. of these people can be the object of interesting studies.

As persons, state agents enter all sorts of relations with one another, as well as with outsiders. Being members of different organizations, all the devices elaborated by the organization theory can be usefully employed for their detailed study.

However, what characterizes state organizations most, is a **basic inequality** within and among themselves on the one hand, and in their relationship to outsiders on the other. State agents are always placed in a hierarchy among themselves. On the other hand, facing the rest of society, they are always in a privileged position. All states provide, as a matter of principle, and whatever the particular form this may take, a special protection to all their agents, including the most modest ones.

The hierarchy which divides state personnel is manifold. Many of its aspects are worth considering. The most conspicuous one is the division created by the difference in **political power**. According to this criterion state personnel can be grouped under three broad categories: 1) the men at the top; 2) the middle-rank officials; and 3) the rank-and-file. In all states the most important political decisions are taken by a handful of powerful people. What matters here is not their legal status, but their real power position. Historically, the greatest amount of power has usually been concentrated in the hands of the heads of states. These powerful people, however, may also be prime ministers, cabinet members, party secretaries, church officials, or simply advisers.

They are supplemented by the middle-rank officials who are their lieutenants. In earlier forms of the state these posts were mostly filled by the sovereign's kin. With historical development this aristocracy of blood has been superseded, but the 'power aristocracy' remains. It has a particular importance in bureaucratic states. In the centre, this staff is usually composed of highly skilled specialists, while it is mostly 'generalist' functionaries who occupy power positions in the provinces.

Finally, the third group of state personnel, the rank-and-file comprise mainly people lacking any significant power within the state. This, however, should not diminish their importance. On the one hand, they provide the troops without which the higher ranks of the hierarchy could not implement their decisions. On the other, though powerless within the state, they hold a great amount of power in their relations with outsiders. Actually, in the eyes of civil society, they usually embody the ugliest aspects of state dominance.

The conspicuous role often played by the state leaders in the course of history requires a specific explanation. Why is it that this particular element of state anatomy can exercise such an outstanding influence on the development of social life? After all, history is always made by the masses, only they being capable of providing the necessary energy (cf. the introduction) for developing and reshaping both the forces and the relations of production. The reason for this is that the masses need direction, and this direction is usually provided by a handful of persons manning the commanding heights of the state. Of course, these individuals are far from being totally free in performing this function. However, in certain periods of history their subjective characteristics may be allowed to play an outstanding role in driving the masses towards definite goals.

This is also the context within which appear 'great men'. They are 'great' in the sense that, perceiving the future course of history, they are able, owing to their charisma, to rapidly direct the masses towards this future path. In fact, great men need not be 'prophets' foreseeing the future. It is enough that their personal ambition drives them in the historically 'right' direction. Napoleon, to take a striking example, was a madly ambitious man striving to become the emperor of Europe. What made him 'great' is that in his incessant wars across the continent he provoked a rapid collapse of the feudal structures, thus opening the way to a swift development of capitalism.²

Apart from political influence, state personnel is also divided along the lines of the **official division of labour**. In the modern state this has reached a highly elaborate level. Although parts of the same state, the presidency, the government, the parliamentary assemblies, the administration and the police, the judiciary, the military, the local governmental units are all institutionally differentiated. Moreover, under this broad classification, many institutions still encompass hosts of sub-units. State personnel thus find themselves divided into a large number of different agencies, requiring specific qualifications, breeding specific interests, pursuing specific goals, and so on. The status of these agencies differ according to the political system. Thus, the presidency in particular, or the government, or Parliament, or the judiciary, etc., may be placed in a relatively privileged position. Added to this difference in political status, every agency may secure for itself a larger, or lesser, share in real power according to the ability of its particular leaders. The result of all this is that in real life state personnel are not only vertically graded according to the amount of power they command, but are also horizontally divided along the state agencies among which they are distributed.

And this is not all. Another source of inequality among the members of the state personnel is their **legal status**. In all state structures the incumbents are graded according to their legal prerogatives (which may or may not correspond to their real power), depending on the particular nature of their official functions. Thus, they may be directors, advisers, clerks, members of higher courts, police officers, simple soldiers, etc. Clearly, then, the overall picture presented by the state personnel is one which is deeply marked by a far-reaching differentiation. From the point of view of state anatomy, inequality is the most conspicuous feature of the state personnel.

This basic inequality, however, is not limited to state structures, but is also the most striking characteristic of the relationship

between state personnel and **civil society**. Here, state personnel are considered as a whole, notwithstanding the internal divisions underlined above. In this context, state personnel constitute the most powerful group of people within society. They owe this particular position to the independence of the state, both from its own society, and in relation to other states. Their jurisdiction covers the whole of state territory, with all its inhabitants, and extends in many respects to citizens living abroad. Within the constraints imposed upon them by the basic political functions, the scope of their power depends on the magnitude of state territory, on the size of population, and on the level of technological development.

Tax collection is a unique prerogative of state personnel, and coupled with their monopoly of legal coercion it places them well above the rest of society. State personnel are able to exact wealth and services from the ruled, to set freely norms of behaviour, to implement them by means whose legality is again defined by themselves, to judge and punish people, to drive them to war, to impose peace, and so on. Indeed, the amount of power nominally or practically enjoyed by state personnel is truly frightening, and this points to a real gulf separating the rulers from the ruled. As an element of state anatomy the ruling personnel is mainly characterized by an overall inequality. First within itself, and most importantly, between the 'officials' and the other members of society.

The third element of state anatomy is a set of norms. Like the members of any institution the state agents have to abide by certain rules, both among themselves, and in relation to outsiders. Such an officially established pattern of behaviour is to be found in all states. Nowadays, this takes mostly the form of a system of law, but it needs not. For a long time these norms were not codified, although they had always existed. These can take the form of ideologies, beliefs, traditions, periodically renewed orders by the sovereign, etc.

What is important here is to note that no state ever existed without some rules of behaviour controlling the internal, as well as external activities of its personnel. The pervading inequality dominating this personnel, within itself and with regard to civil society, could not be sustained without such a set of norms. That in reality these norms are often violated does not negate their existence: on the contrary, it only confirms it.

Finally, the fourth element of state anatomy is constituted by a set of various means, material as well as moral. State officials may wear special dresses, uniforms, feathers, necklaces, medals, etc. They may use various titles, forms of oral or written address, specific formulae, signatures, seals, and so on. Of particular importance are the means of communication, and the military means they can rely upon. A state using horse power and human messengers to convey information, and armed simply with swords, spears, and arrows, will inevitably differ largely from a state using telephones, telexes, satellites, and armed with submarines, tanks, missiles, etc. As was the case with buildings, there is indeed a lot to be learned by a study of the various means at the disposal of different states throughout history. It is obvious, as pointed out in the first chapter, that the quality and quantity of the material and moral means used by the state will closely depend upon the level of development of the productive capacity of the particular society involved.

We have thus rounded up the main categories of elements constitutive of the anatomy -and thus, shaping the morphology-of any state, viz. buildings, people (the ruling personnel), norms, and various means. These elements are the 'hardware' with which all state structures are built. They do not define the state. They are merely the 'supports' of its activities. That is why **none** of them is vital. The state may lose all its buildings and still survive. It may lose its personnel, but as long as civil society is able to provide new recruits, this element also is replaceable. It may grossly violate its

code of behaviour, or it may be deprived of much of its means, and still survive.

There is only one aspect among the elements of state anatomy, which constitutes an exception. And this is not a 'thing' but a **relation**. Indeed, the state cannot survive without the relation of dominance-subordination which characterizes both its own structure and the pattern of its relationship with society. This characteristic, however, is not a constituent element of state anatomy: it is imposed upon it by the state's nature, or to pursue the organic analogy, by its physiology. The hierarchical position of state personnel, both within itself, and in confrontation with society, is the outcome of the conflicting functions imposed upon the state by its unique social position. The state is the state, not because it houses a number of people, bound by certain norms and using various means, but because it performs definite, unavoidable functions. And all the elements of its anatomy (including their hierarchical aspects) can ultimately be considered as simple tools used by these crucial functions in order to achieve their conflicting aims.

The next step in the concrete analysis of the state requires considering political systems and regimes. The state -whose anatomical configuration (or morphology) has just been described- functions always as a part of a broader political environment. The state's concrete functioning cannot be understood as long as this extended political field is not brought into the picture. 'Political system' and 'political regime' are the terms generally used to depict this larger domain. Unfortunately, these expressions do not possess commonly agreed and rigorous definitions. In political science literature they are often used interchangeably. Thus, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, a preliminary explanation is here needed.

In this essay, 'political system' refers to the technical aspect of politics. It encompasses all the strictly political mechanisms, like elections, nominations, decision-making processes, rule-implementation devices, etc. What has been termed as 'technical' political functions in the last chapter refers thus to the political system. 'Political regime', on the other hand, is here understood as a larger field, comprising not only the political system but also all social structures which relate to politics in one way or the other, although not being exclusively political. The state is part of the political system, and the system is part of the political regime. Thus, this last term refers here to the largest political field in the social whole. These are first indications, and it must be hoped that these terms will become clearer below, when their content is described in more detail.

The elements of a political system are: 1) the state as such, and also, in its relationship with political structures and forces outside it; 2) political parties; 3) political associations and pressure groups; and 4) norms and related ideologies. We have already described the anatomical components of the state. However, no state functions in a vacuum; as a rule, it is in a constant manifold relationship with a particular political system.

First, the very structures of the state are continuously **shaped and reshaped** under pressure exercised upon them by outside forces. In this way, the state may be compelled to discard, for instance, its monarchical form for a republican one, or to replace its unitary structure by a federal one, or to establish regional sub-governmental units, or to form new agencies (commissions, committees, advisory councils, supervisory bodies, etc.), or to abolish existing ones, and so on. Briefly, the structures of the state are under constant remoulding pressures imposed upon them by various forces located in the political system.

Secondly, the **respective position** of state structures is also determined by the political system. Thus, the latter may be based on

the preponderance of the executive, and this will then be reflected within the state in the form of presidentialism, or despotic monarchy, or dictatorship, etc. Or, the legislative function may be favoured by the system, and this will entail a parliamentary, or a 'Convention', 'Soviet', etc., form of state organization. Or, the system may impose the dominance of the military structures of the state over its civilian ones. Or, the system may push towards decentralization, and then the sub-governmental units of the state may reach a better position in their relationship with the centre. Clearly, the political system not only moulds the state structures, but also determines their relative position within the state anatomy.

Thirdly, the incumbents of state structures, i.e. state personnel, are **supplied** by the political system. This can take various forms. The system may or may not include elections. These can be general, or partial, or both. Their timing may differ considerably. They may be based on national (thus unique), provincial, regional, or local constituencies. They may allow a single list (with or without outsiders), or several lists. They may altogether reject lists for uninominal candidacies. The mode of selection may favour 'official' candidacies, or may prohibit them. The system may limit the access to certain state offices, thus excluding for instance non-members of a certain kin. It may admit hereditary succession (with a whole range of possible variations), or may totally discard it. It may impose the adoption of a 'merit' system with examinations, etc., or may admit an extended 'spoils' system. It may reserve certain positions to definite classes, castes, groups, or may opt for open competition. It may or may not adopt conditions related to age and sex for accession to this or that state office. And so on.

Fourthly, the political system is the source of all forms of **pressure** imposed upon state policies. Various political groups outside the state may impose the adoption, the alteration, or the abolition of legislation concerning this or that matter. They may force

state agencies, from the presidency down to local governmental units, to adopt or to repeal certain decisions. They may tilt the balance of the adjudicative mechanisms, or they may resist their independent decisions, or they may force the adoption of amnesties, etc.

Indeed, the state is just a skeleton when analytically abstracted from its political environment. It owes its specific morphology and its determinate functioning as a **body politic** to its close relationship with the political system. On the other hand, the scope of the political system and its influence on social life, though deeply marked by the characteristics of the state, still outrun the limits of the state apparatus. A brief examination of its other elements will suffice to underline the importance of this particular aspect of political life.

A major component of the political system outside the state is the set of **political parties**. The phenomenon of modern political parties, which originated in Great Britain in the course of the nineteenth century is, next to the state, the most important element of contemporary political systems. The progressive extension of the franchise, the emergence of mass parties, the widespread use of this instrument by radical movements in order to conquer the state, and many other factors have contributed to push political parties to the forefront of the political stage.

As a consequence of this fact, political systems present a great number of variations related to the characteristics of their party system. Some allow, legally or practically, only one party. Some permit the constitution of several parties, but keep them strictly under the shadow of a permanently dominant one. Some are based on a two-party system, which may or may not be complemented by smaller parties. Others rely upon a large number of parties, with infinite possible variations in size, influence, etc. Others still, impose strict rules on the creation, the functioning, the financing, and the organization of parties instead of

letting them free. Some prohibit parties attached to this or that ideology, whereas others tolerate a large spectrum of political ideologies.

Apart from political parties and the state, political systems also have a variable number of **political associations**, pressure groups, broadcasting agencies, political newspapers, journals, etc., whose common aim is to influence political life. Political systems may differ to a large extent according to the number, size, scope, influence, etc., of these organizations. The United States furnishes the most extreme example of the institutionalization of pressure groups. Such an institutionalization, however, is far from being indispensable to the performance of their particular roles. In all political systems there are always some groups outside the state apparatus, and the political parties, which try to exert some kind of influence on politics. Certain systems may partly or totally ban their activity, but this only bears witness to their importance.

Finally, all political systems have a set of **norms** and related **ideologies**. Norms and ideologies were also to be found within the state. But there they were related to, and thus limited by, the functioning of the state, whereas norms and ideologies have a larger scope in the political system. Norms serve, on the one hand, the purpose of setting definite rules to regulate the relationship between the state and the other political components of the system. On the other, they establish specific rules of operation for all the political structures and forces outside the state.

Among these norms, and due to their particular importance, constitutions must be specially mentioned. These are the set of higher norms regulating the functioning of the political system. The state being a part -indeed the most important part- of the political system, constitutions are primarily concerned with norms related to the state apparatus. They establish the legal rules defining the state structures, the recruitment of various state personnel, and the respective powers attached to these structures. Moreover, they define the limits within which state power can be legally exercised,

and they protect the fundamental rights of the ruled. Thus, the scope of their regulations is far from being limited to the state apparatus, and it readily covers the whole field of politics. That is why they are mentioned here, among the norms governing political systems, and not before, among those strictly confined to the state. Besides, historically, the first written constitutions were promulgated with the explicit aim of guaranteeing the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. In other words, constitutions have acquired their real political significance only when they have ceased to be clusters of rules regulating the devolution of state power, and have become written documents establishing the basic norms governing the political system as a whole.

Of course, norms are never sufficient to ensure the smooth running of any political system. That is why these are always supplemented by specific ideologies. As it will be expected, the content of these ideologies differ according to the structure of the political system. If, for instance, it favours the military, the dominant political ideology will accordingly have a martial flavour. If it is based on a multi-party system, the prevailing ideology will be pluralistic. In short, the dominant political ideologies will reflect the values of the political system. And, as there are inevitably conflicting tendencies in all political systems, the dominant ideologies will always be more or less challenged by rival ideologies.

As a rule, the focal point of any political system is located in its relationship with the state. All political systems are necessarily dominated by the state, but the degree and form of this domination may present large variations. This being the most important question for a political system, its **values** are generally centred around this relationship. Accordingly, ideologies related to particular political systems will reflect these specific values. It is as a consequence of this fact that political ideologies vary usually along an ideal chain, whose one end reaches extreme

political liberalism, while the other is held by extreme political authoritarianism, all possible hybrids of liberalism and authoritarianism appearing in the middle.

The next step in the concrete analysis of the state is concerned with the largest political environment of the state, viz. with political regimes. In the connotation adopted here, the term 'political regime' covers the whole domain of politics, thus including the state and the political system, and also, all features of social life in their relation to politics. The main factors differentiating political regimes are the relations of production, the forces of production, the political system (including the state), and the whole of the ideological superstructure of society as far as it influences political life.

Among these, the basic factors are the relations and forces of production. They provide the main criterion for the classification of political regimes. To take the contemporary world as an example, it is according to this criterion that political regimes are divided into three broad categories: 1) Advanced capitalism; 2) Socialism; and 3) the Third World. The remaining factors, i.e. the political system and the other ideological superstructures, provide criteria which serve mainly to refine this broad classification by introducing sub-categories. However, the mode of production being the single most important factor, these subsidiary criteria do not alter the basis of this classification.

A closer examination of the above classification may be helpful in assessing the particular significance of political regimes. The countries in the first group are dominated by the capitalist mode of production. Furthermore, the most advanced kind of capitalism prevails here. These two features taken together have far-reaching consequences in the realm of politics. The first one is that the bourgeoisie, in general, and different factions of this class in particular, have an outstanding influence in these coun-

tries. The state structures are mostly shaped to suit the interests of this class. State personnel, especially top leaders, originate from this class and/or are dedicated to its ideology. State policies are directed to the fulfilment of the needs of this class, and particularly of its dominant factions. According to historical situations these can take the form of colonialism, mercantilism, laissez-faire, protectionism, imperialism, nationalism, regionalism, etc. The second important consequence derives from the high level of development of productive forces. This is reflected in the refinement of the national culture, in the sophistication of technologies, especially in the fields of communications and armaments, in the development of fine arts and literature, in the elaboration of their political superstructures, and so on.

The political regimes adopted by the countries of advanced capitalism take place in a continuum, starting with extreme political liberalism, and ending in ruthless fascism. All these regimes rely on the bourgeoisie and require a relatively high degree of productive capacity. What introduces a qualitative difference between libertarian and dictatorial bourgeois regimes is the **political system** - supplemented by the remaining ideological superstructures. As a rule, a developed bourgeoisie will unhesitatingly prefer a kind of neo-classical democratic regime, organized into specific political structures which best match its particular historical traditions. Nevertheless, due to the militancy of the working classes, it may happen that a bourgeoisie feels compelled to opt for an authoritarian regime. This is the origin of the phenomenon of Fascism, and it explains why it could only appear after World War I, when the Russian revolution raised the first deadly challenge from the camp of the proletariat against bourgeois supremacy.

The second large group to be considered in view of the above classification of contemporary regimes, comprises the socialist countries. Their common basic characteristic is the dominance of

their working classes in the relations of production. However, upon this common basis **very different** political regimes can emerge, varying according to the degree of development of the productive capacity, and the characteristics of the political system.

In socialism, the first two major functions of politics tend to coincide. The more backward the country, the more has to be done in order to direct the economy towards the remote goal of abundance. Such an enormous task necessarily needs stringent methods -and thus, inflates out of proportion the third basic function. Moreover, the relative backwardness of the forces of production means that the new ruling class is a minority in the population, that it therefore needs to develop an authoritarian political system in order to retain its ever-threatened supremacy. Finally, such a proletariat is by definition very limited in its ideological, philosophical, theoretical, aesthetic, etc., sophistication, and this is inevitably reflected in its way of handling politics. The result is very likely to be a more or less brutal dictatorship.³

Socialism in an advanced country will necessarily be of a very different kind. The tremendous expansion of productive capacity has already rendered objectively possible the satisfaction of all the basic needs of every member of the community. Economic abundance is no longer a distant utopia. It follows that in these developed societies a fierce effort directed by the state towards the increase, at any cost, of the forces of production is not required any longer. What is needed, instead, is a state activity strictly limited to the coordination of differently organized groups of people in order to ensure an equal share for everybody, in the fruits as well as the inescapable burdens of the economy.⁴ In such societies the proletariat is already the majority. The former exploiting classes, which amount altogether to a very tiny minority, can easily be coped with, and do not necessitate the use of authoritarian methods. Finally, the proletariat is the

living representative of the high level reached by society, in technology, science, philosophy, and arts. It is inevitable that its political rule will take specific forms much more refined than those presently found in socialist regimes.

The most complex grouping in the classification of contemporary political regimes is also the largest one, and as shown by its denomination, the 'Third World', it comprises all countries which are neither advanced capitalistic, nor socialist. The main characteristics of these countries can be listed as follows: 1) none is dominated by the socialist mode of production; 2) the vast majority is dominated by capitalist relations of production, but very often this relative superiority is challenged by precapitalist forms of production; 3) a minority is still under the supremacy of precapitalist relations; 4) their productive capacity is -qualitatively and quantitatively- in a position of marked inferiority as compared to the developed societies (be they capitalist or socialist); 5) their independence is more or less limited by the advanced capitalist countries, or by the socialist bloc.

The state forms, the political systems, and the specific political regimes adopted by different Third World countries will differ only within the limits listed above. This puts many serious constraints on them. As a rule, they cannot rely upon an undisputed class superiority, and this opens the way to disorderly competition among different groups in order to seize hold of state power.⁵ The bourgeoisie, although in a dominant position in most cases, is still relatively weak and therefore favours authoritarian political structures with the aim of consolidating social order. Even in countries which are extremely rich owing to their monopolistic position in certain commodities (like oil), the overall productive capacity is relatively low. The wealth of material means, which is often witnessed, is never accompanied by what matters most: highly qualified personnel, and efficient organization-management.

These broad considerations about contemporary political regimes were intended to underline the particular significance of the relations and forces of production in the determination of the political life of a country. It is only within this binding social context that factors like the political system, state forms, and other super-structural influences can play any role. This fact has important methodological consequences often overlooked in political science. The mode of production and its relative development being the fundamental factors, they have to come first in any scientific study or comparison of political regimes. Thus, it is utterly meaningless to compare the British and Moroccan regimes just because both are monarchies, without first putting each 'monarchy' in the context of its particular social environment. Indeed, one will necessarily see that even the same words take different meanings. The fate of the term 'democracy' is a striking proof of this fact. Let us only recall that in Ancient Greece and Rome, 'democracy', which implied an increased burden on the slaves -having now to take charge of the productive work performed until then by the peasants-, was in fact a more exploitative regime than 'aristocracy'.⁶ Thus, comparisons which strip political structures of their social context are devoid of scientific value.⁷

If the state is 'lifeless' in the absence of the political system, the political system itself loses all its social colour, its very significance, once abstracted from the political regime. On the other hand, a political regime considered outside its state and political system, is an almost totally worthless abstraction. Therefore, when proceeding to analytical differentiations between these categories, their constitutive interrelationship must never be overlooked. This is particularly necessary in the context of more concrete approaches, as is the case in the present chapter. It is also necessary, however, in more abstract analyses.

In this essay, even at the most abstract level, the state has always been considered in the totality of its relationships, both

with the political system, and the political regime. The nature of all the basic political functions bears witness to this intimate imbrication. All three basic functions derive their aims from the specific configuration of the mode of production, and the totality of their particular forms are shaped by political regimes, systems, and concrete state structures, all of them again determined by the prevalent mode of production. If the emphasis has been put on the state, this is because the state is indeed the **central** apparatus through which the most basic political requirements of the modes of production are realized.

Having now the main elements at hand, we may try to trace step by step the way of realization of each basic function, from the most abstract level, to the concreteness of real political life. This will enable us to complement the 'practical guidelines' of the last chapter with an even more concrete representation of the relationship between state and society. Any mode of production based on class differentiation can serve as an example. Here we will take the capitalist mode of production, in order to illustrate this process.

It will be remembered that the aim of the **first** political function was to provide the necessary conditions for the preservation and expansion of the forces of production. In the capitalist mode of production, the main forces of production are the labour-power supplied by the members of the labouring classes, and the material, intellectual, and ideological means used in the productive process. The problem is to reach a correct representation of the **mechanism of reflection** of this objective basis, in each particular field constituting the general political domain. We know that these fields are mainly the political regime, the political system, and the state. We also know that each field is composed of particular structures with related functions, and again, specific ideologies. As it is impossible to follow the process in the

aggregate, we will choose a single element in order to illustrate the mechanism referred to. Let us, for instance, take the technologies used in capitalist production.

In the field of the **political regime**, we will necessarily encounter a host of structures (diverse organizations, such as professional associations, research groups, institutes, universities, etc.), all with related functions, and breeding altogether specific ideologies valuing all social efforts directed to the reproduction and development of technology. Thus, the political climate will be permeated with technological values. A step further, in the **political system** proper, this interest will be upheld by specifically political structures (such as, associations and pressure groups) whose explicit purpose is to impose the adoption of specific policies aiming at the promotion of technologies. Added to these, we come across programmes, platforms, policies, etc., followed by different political parties, all directed towards promoting technologies. Again, in the political system, we will face diverse technocratic ideologies, whose common purpose is to enhance the prestige attached to technology. Finally, the place occupied by technologies in the productive process will also be reflected in the structures, the functions, and the ideologies of the **state**. For instance, the state will establish institutes devoted to technological research, will organize a system of technological spying in foreign countries, will finance research carried outside its own apparatus, will promote technocrats, will promulgate legislation for the preservation and further expansion of the technological assets, and so on.

All these developments will be carried out under the constraints of a **double determination**: a) The passive one, which is rooted in the objective necessity of technologies and which will hinder people not directly related to technologies -such as politicians, journalists, writers, etc.- from holding views contradictory to technological values; and b) the active one, which will directly work through the efforts of workers, technicians, engineers, etc., in

order to voice their subjective interests -which will thus serve an objective cause.⁸

The result of all this will be the realization of the first basic political function with regard to one element of the productive forces. It is clear that the basic function itself can never be 'seen'. And this is easily comprehensible, for no basic function has an independent existence: it is always realized **through** a series of specific and, consequently, different functions in all fields of political activity.

The same holds true for the **second** basic political function. It will be recalled that its specific aim is the preservation and expansion of the relations of production. In our example, i.e. in the capitalist mode of production, these are composed of different kinds of ownership (related to this or that means of production, and consumption), of various sets of labour relations (between owners, managers, engineers, foremen, workers, shop stewards, etc.), and of a series of relationships governing the circulation and distribution of commodities (commerce, banking, credit, speculation, stock exchange, interest, rent, profit, wages, etc.). Let us take again one example in order to illustrate the mechanism referred to. This can be, for instance, the ownership of finance capital.

First, in the **political regime**, there will be a host of structures - banks, insurance companies, stock exchange, diverse associations, clubs, etc.- grouping owners, managers, brokers, dealers, agents, and so on, all performing specific functions in the social division of labour related to financial capital, and generating altogether various ideologies enhancing the social prestige attached to money dealing. In the **political system**, these same interests will be directly represented by specific associations, pressure groups, and even political parties. Furthermore, they will find a privileged place in all sorts of party activities, and among particular political ideologies inculcating awe and respect for big money ownership.

These interests will also be directly represented in the structures, functions, and policies of the **state**. The central bank will often be a state agency. The state will have stakes in many private banks, and will issue bonds allowing the transfer of huge amounts of tax money into the pockets of financiers, in the form of interest. The state will also provide special protection to the banks, will entrust high administrative posts to bankers, will issue special legislation to protect their interests, and so on.

As was the case with the first function, it is clearly seen that the second basic function will also be realized through a wide range of different specific functions, performed within various structures, and situated in all fields of political life. Again, the realisation of this function is due to a **double** -passive and active-**determination**.⁸ The position of strength objectively held by financial capital in the relations of production, induces people who are not directly related to it, to nonetheless take its interests into account in the accomplishment of their particular social tasks. On the other hand, it is directly promoted by people whose private well-being is tightly linked to the social success of this brand of capital.

The **third** basic political function is realized through a similar process. It will be remembered that the aim of this last function was the protection and promotion of the state's own interest. In a capitalist environment, as indeed in other class societies, the realization of this function requires the strengthening of the unity and power of state personnel, the promoting of the state's ideological supremacy, the preservation of the state's monopoly on the judiciary power and on the use of legitimate violence, the sustenance of the uninterrupted transfer of revenue from the ruled to the rulers (through tax collection and other means). Let us take, as our example, the higher civil service, in order to illustrate this third function.

Within the **political regime**, a variety of people tied to this

service, either by familial bonds, or professional interests, will unite in various social gatherings, associations, clubs, etc., and will foster an ideology insisting on the devotion, disinterestedness, and unique skills, of the higher civil service. Located in the **political system** we will find particular associations (trade-unions, groups publishing specialized journals, bulletins, all kinds of informative material, associations, pensioner societies, etc.), party activities, and all kinds of ideological endeavours with the aim of voicing, securing, and enhancing the interests of the higher civil service, and of promoting the values attached to it. Finally, the higher civil service will be in a particularly favourable position to directly use the **state** apparatus for its own interests. It will contribute to shape special structures, to reshape existing functions, and to create new ones, to promote specific policies all directed to the same goal: the relentless improvement of the material and ideological status of its members.

Thus, the same mode of realization through a multitude of various specific functions, carried out by different structures, in all fields of the political domain, holds true for the third basic function as well. Again, the **two** major modes of **determination**, the passive and the active, are both at work.⁸ The first is the outcome of the objective supremacy of the state within society, and it expresses itself through limitations imposed, both on the ruled and the rulers. The second is directly activated by the members of the higher civil service and by their **entourage** who struggle very consciously in order to maintain and expand their social standing.

This is **the farthest** we can go, within the limits of this essay, in illustrating the mechanism of reflection which accounts for the concrete realization of the basic political functions. Before terminating this chapter, it is appropriate to note that in real life the process illustrated here will inevitably present a more

complex configuration. This is due to two main objective reasons closely related to the nature of politics, and already touched upon.

The first one is that politics is an inherently **contradictory** activity. The realization of each basic function -which covers, of course, the whole range of the elements involved, and not only a single one as was chosen here for the sake of a simple illustration-takes place in continual conflict with the other two. This conflict covers the whole process, it is active in all particular fields of the general political domain (i.e. in the political regime, the political system, and the state), and it is the outcome of a series of contradictory determinations acting on the various elements of the economic and political structures.

The second objective reason of complexity is also related to the nature of politics, and it is brought about as the outcome of the first one. The **superposition**, upon one another, of the processes of realization of the major functions results in concrete structures, functions, and policies usually **amalgamating** the effects of various determinations. An example again taken from the capitalist mode of production may be helpful in illustrating this last point:

Let us consider a current state activity aiming at the improvement of the system of communications. Such a policy will: a) serve the first function, by developing the productive capacity; b) serve the second function, by increasing the rate of profit owing to the shortening of the period of circulation of capital; c) serve the third function, by expanding the scope of state involvement in civil society. Thus, in real life, very different determinations will be realized **together** in the **same** state activities.

NOTES

1 In his comparison of Eastern and Western states of Christian Early Middle Ages, Hartmann notes that, as opposed to Byzantium, the West was unable to build extended fortifications due to its inability to sustain strong central

bureaucracies. cf. Ludo Moritz Hartmann, **The Early Mediaeval State**, London, George Philip and Son, Ltd., 1949, p. 14.

2 Another good example is Stalin. His 'greatness' comes from his objective role in the spreading of socialism. That he has acted out of ambition, greed, fear, or luminous foresight is politically much less relevant.

3 The term 'dictatorship' has a **double** meaning in Marxist terminology. On one hand, it means simply supremacy (or 'sovereignty'). This is what is meant by Marx when he affirms that even the most liberal bourgeois democracy is in fact a dictatorship of the bourgeois class. In this sense, all modes of production with class differentiation are dictatorships, and socialism is no exception. On the other hand, dictatorship also means a particular manner of ruling a country. It relates to harsh methods, to the suppression of all kinds of political opposition, to the subjugation of the judiciary by the executive, to a certain lack of institutionalization, to inevitable crises accompanying every important change in leadership, etc. It is, in this second sense, more related to the political system than to the regime, that socialism in a backward country seems to be condemned to some kind of dictatorship.

A good example of the perils of a confusion between these two meanings was supplied by the bewildering discussions which accompanied the decision to drop the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', taken at the 22nd Congress of the French Communist Party. From the Marxist point of view, it is obvious that such an option makes sense only if dictatorship is understood in its second connotation.

4 cf. Jean Fabre, François Hincker, Lucien Sève, **Les Communistes et l'Etat**, Paris, Editions sociales, 1977, p. 167: "Dans le socialisme, **les travailleurs disposeront et l'Etat organisera.**"

5 In the light of his recent study of the Third World's social formations J. G. Taylor demonstrates that in these countries state power is often exercised by classes, factions, or alliances, **differing** from the socially dominant class. cf. **From Modernization to Modes of Production**, London, The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1979, p. 120.

6 L.M. Hartmann, **op. cit.**, p. 6.

7 Unfortunately, this is the dominant trend in 'comparative government' studies in the West. The vast majority of handbooks divide political regimes between "liberal" and "authoritarian" ones, putting on one side the advanced capitalist countries with neo-classical democratic regimes, and grouping on the opposite side all sorts of dictatorships: socialist, fascist, military, civilian, etc. Indeed, one cannot escape feeling sorry for an approach which claims to be scientific while it readily puts in the same basket, Cesar, Attila, Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, and many others.

8 It will be remembered that both passive and active determinations can be of different kinds, such as positive/negative, direct/indirect, selective/overall, etc. (cf. the introduction).

CONCLUSION

THE FUTURE OF THE STATE

The aim of this essay was to contribute to the construction of a theory of the state as such -not this or that kind of state, not the feudal, the capitalist, or the socialist state, but state in general. What made possible the choice of such a subject of analysis is the fact that all states, whatever their particularities may be, have in common some constitutive features without which no state can exist. It is evident that a general analysis of this sort cannot replace specific studies of various types of states differentiated according to the prevailing mode of production and further determined by the peculiarities of the particular social formation to which they belong. However, our contention is that the general theory proposed here constitutes a necessary preliminary for these specific analyses.

According to the basic conception of this essay any society is composed of an ensemble of individuals whose social nature and practices are determined by a series of structures moulding human activity in a corresponding series of functions. To borrow von Bertalanffy's simple formulations, a structure is an order of parts, while a function is an order of processes.¹ These two orders do not exist outside human beings. On the contrary, their existence is only demonstrated by the practical activity of individuals or groups of individuals occupying different social positions.

The relationship between structure and practice (or function) is often the source of grave misconceptions in social science. Such

a mistaken approach has lately been developed by Louis Althusser and his disciples. In their obsessive fear of the category of 'subject' they ended up with dead structures and phantom practices. Their structures are dead because they are left without energy.² Nicos Poulantzas illustrates this conception by defining a structural effect merely as 'limitation'.³ If this were true, one would then legitimately wonder from where the 'activation' comes?⁴

Actually, the relationship between structures and practices (or functions) need not be clouded in metaphysics. A very simple example may be illustrative. Let us imagine that the topography of a hill induces people to cross it along a certain line. After some time this continued practice would result in a definite footpath. The track thus created would survive these people and it would mould the practice of their children. We clearly see here how a structure created by a practice determines subsequent practices.

This simple example may enable us to draw some conclusions concerning the relationship between structures and practices: 1) Any structure can function, as such, only as long as it is effectively used. But people must **know** about the path to be able to use it. Thus the path must also be present in their language, their psychologies, their habits. 2) It follows that the structure in our example is not limited to a track on a hill, but is also constituted by the awareness of people, by their willingness to use it, in short, by their socially moulded psychologies. 3) Besides, it is also due to these ideological elements that the structure can be transmitted to subsequent generations. For, it is not only the track, but the knowledge of the track which must be transmitted. 4) The strength of idealism lies in the fact that it has understood that structures are activated by their simultaneous location in human psychologies. Its weakness is to fail to see that a) the constitution of psychological structures is due to the existence of external (i.e. material) structures; b) psychological struc-

tures can be activated and eventually modified only through a social practice determined by the external structures.

Social life as a whole is the combined outcome of an infinite number of social structures. The fact that production is the most fundamental human practice derives from the structural position of the human species confronted with the inescapable necessity of exploiting nature in order to survive. This exploitation is carried out by human labour (the producers), using the means of production. It is this structural composition of the forces of production which necessitates the performance of some very important social functions, namely a) determining who the producers will be; b) allocating the means of production to the producers; and c) distributing the products between producers and non-producers. But the performance of these functions pre-supposes the existence of yet another structure, i.e., the relations of production, this structure being the outcome of the objective interrelations woven by human beings in the course of productive activity. One consequence of this last structure is to divide individuals into definite social classes according to their structural position *vis-à-vis* the means of production. Classes being rooted in the most fundamental social functions, members of the same class tend to develop similar attitudes and activities in all fields of social life. They thus furnish the elements of a multitude of various structures, all performing related functions.

This then is the basic conception underlying the theory of the state developed here. An important characteristic of this conception is the differentiation it introduces among structures according to their binding force. Marx expressed this mainly by the dichotomy between infrastructure (the base) and superstructure. This should, by no means, be taken to imply an equal social weight for all structures of the base, on the one hand, and for all structures of the superstructure, on the other. An obvious example is the difference in social weight between forces and

relations of production, although both are elements of the same base. The same sort of difference occurs, in fact, among all structures and consequently among their corresponding functions.

The more a structure (or a function) is closely related to the relations of production, the more weight it carries in social life. This 'weight' expresses itself in the force of the determination it exercises over other structures and activities. As a result of the complexity of social life, these determinations can present themselves in a great variety of modalities (**cf.** our introduction). Nevertheless, it is still possible to group them into two main categories, namely the passive ones whose effects are 'limitative', and the active ones whose result is the 'activation' of their object. Structures and functions being always supported and performed by human beings, the practical result of the first type of determination is to hinder people from choosing a definite path of action, while that of the second type is to induce people to choose a definite course of action. The strength of this impediment or propulsion, as the case may be, will of course depend on the binding force of the structure (and function) acting as determinant.

This means that human beings enjoy **different amounts** of freedom, varying relative to the determinations to which they are submitted. That people may believe that they have total freedom, or, conversely, that they are just powerless pawns pushed around by social forces, does not obviously make any difference. The truth is that they do have a large area of choice in certain matters, and no choice in others, with all possible combinations between these two poles.

As indicated, the theory of the state presented in this essay is based on the views just outlined. The state is the inevitable product of a definite stage in human development. It appears in mature tribal societies which begin to be torn apart by an increasing class cleavage. In such societies the establishment of a

separate structure in order to fulfil the necessary tasks flowing out of communal life is an unavoidable necessity. But in a society already split by class antagonisms, such a structure cannot last unless it puts itself to the service of the dominant class. Finally, the conflicting necessity of serving society as a whole, as well as its exploiters, cannot be met unless the state establishes itself as a supreme power over the whole of civil society.⁵

This triple function of the state necessarily reflects itself in its structure. In order to perform basic functions which are contradictory, the state has to develop a contradictory nature. These contradictions permeate its constitutive structures, its agents, its policies, and the whole of its activities. Thus, very often, the politician himself/herself is torn between what he/she sees as his/ her moral obligation towards the masses, his/her sense of class priorities, and his/her own professional interest.⁶

This basic contradictory nature of the state is inherent, and is therefore **invariant**. It will last as long as societies are ridden by class antagonism, and continue to require the performance of certain communal tasks in order to survive. In this respect, the fact that this or that class dominates is immaterial. The existence of class differentiation is sufficient to warrant the existence of the state, and no state can survive unless it performs the three major political functions analysed above. It is this fact that gives credence to a general theory of the state as the one presented in this essay.

As already indicated, in real life the state is never reduced to a basic structural position set for the execution of three major functions. In reality, it is a cluster of structures, enveloped in political systems and regimes, activated by various kinds of personnel, performing a whole range of 'technical' (and other) functions. Of course, when one has to analyse such a concrete state all the wealth of various social determinations must be brought into the picture, starting with the nature of the dominant class

and the characteristics of the social formation. Besides, this point has been amply illustrated throughout this essay, and particularly in the last chapter.

It is obvious that the fact that social life is constituted by a hierarchy of structures (and functions), should also be reflected in our methodology. The crux of the matter in this respect is to be clear about the **level of analysis** contemplated. No level can **a priori** be considered as theoretically irrelevant. A particular political decision, to give an example, may well be explained by the subjective character of the decision-maker, by the logic of the organization over which he (or she) presides, by the technical necessities of political life, by the compulsion of the basic functions of politics, etc. None of these explanations ought to be considered as 'wrong' from the outset. What makes them eventually erroneous is their claims overrunning their specific level of analysis. And this is true, not only for the limited and concrete explanations, but also for the most general and abstract ones as well.

Politics, in this essay, is considered at the most abstract level. One cannot move from this to everyday life, thinking that one holds readymade explanations for everything. The ladder which goes from general to particular (or from abstract to concrete) has many rungs (as particularly illustrated in our sixth chapter), and each step will require a different kind of analysis with the use of tools of a different degree of abstractness (or concreteness). One major concern of this essay has been to abide by this methodological principle.

The big question raised by the sort of approach developed here is its **theoretical status**. A widespread opinion among scientists, an opinion most strikingly expressed by Karl Popper, would deny any scientific claim to a theory which cannot be readily falsified. This view which can be very appealing at first sight may, however,

reveal a doubtful soundness in many cases. How do you 'prove' for instance, a general theory such as historical materialism? Some theories have such broad objects that it is impossible to test them satisfactorily with empirical data. Moreover, when the object under study has contradictory aspects which tend to neutralize one another, the degree of verification will inevitably be very low. In such cases, it may be quite impossible to apply Popper's 'falsification principle'.⁷

How can one then assess the value of a 'qualitative theory'? One first obvious criterion would be its inner consistency. Another one would be the fruitfulness of its problematic. An approach which can stimulate others into new research by bringing into the limelight aspects not already noticed, should be considered as more valuable than closed systems precluding further questioning by their sterile and ostentatious completeness.⁸ It is hoped that the present essay will stand this double test. It is of course the reader who will be the ultimate judge.

The accuracy and fruitfulness of a theory can also be gauged by the soundness of its predictions. The trouble with general theories is that their predictions are inevitably of a general character. Even so, they may provide a basis for an eventual future assessment, and no serious theoretical endeavour should be afraid of facing this ultimate test.⁹ It is to comply with this necessity that the present essay will be concluded with some generalizations concerning the future of the state.

It is clear that forecasts about the future must be based on the concrete situation of existing states. As already indicated in the last chapter, contemporary states are broadly divided into three groups (developed capitalist, socialist, and Third World), according to the characteristics of the relations of production and to the level of development of the productive forces upon which

their political regimes are based. In the light of all that has been said in this essay, the first step in discussing the future of the state ought to consist of an attempt to assess the likely trends of development of the three basic political functions within each group of contemporary states. As each group lives necessarily with others, however, a global appraisal must obviously follow as a second step.

The first group to be considered are the states of the developed capitalist countries. After two hundred years of industrialization and a widespread experience in social welfare, the role of these states in the fulfilment of the first function is virtually over. As regards this function, they are now reduced to a conservative role which is rendered more and more difficult by the constraints of their dominant mode of production. Deprived of this basically positive role, these states are rapidly losing their social legitimacy, since they are reduced to the defence of vested interests within the relations of production and in the political structures. This position is untenable in the long run. Some of these states may try to resist this trend by inflating their third function. But, confronted with the high level of development of their forces of production, these authoritarian endeavours are ultimately doomed to break down. At present, the crisis of the capitalist system has so matured that the most probable outcome is socialism, of a truly democratic kind, which rapidly transfers all state functions to the community itself, and thus renders increasingly obsolete the necessity of any kind of political coercion.

The second group to be considered embraces the socialist countries. Concerning the future of the state, this must be divided into two very different sub-groups, according to the degree of development of their forces of production. The states of the most developed socialist countries are faced with prospects very similar to those of the developed capitalist countries. Like their Western counterparts, these states are heading towards the end of their

legitimate role in the promotion of the forces of production.¹⁰ They too may try to resist change by clinging desperately to their third function. But developed socialism is even more incompatible with a purposeless state dictatorship. It therefore looks as if the state in developed socialist countries will be dragged **volens nolens** to being increasingly subdued by democratic forms. These states will either wither away or they will be 'withered away' by the increasing pressures of their ever better educated working classes.

The fate of the less developed socialist countries, however, will be very different. In these formations, one should expect a steady strengthening of the state due to the requisites of the first, and also second basic functions. For not only is state rule indispensable for the development of the forces of production, but since socialism is still fragile in a backward country, the state's coercive force and propaganda machine is also needed for its consolidation.

The third group of nations, the so-called Third World, presents a much more complex configuration for the future of the state. This is due to the existence of vast differences in their modes of production, in the level of development of their forces of production, in their historical experiences as nations, tribes, etc., and also, in the constraints imposed by their relationships with both the capitalist and the socialist blocs. In some of these countries the state is the guardian of a decayed social order whose suppression is a **sine qua non** condition for social progress. Here the state will have to be replaced, by revolution or -if inescapable-even by external intervention. In other countries, the problem is one of state building. Indeed, before the state can perform any of its roles, it needs a minimum of efficient administrative structures. Thus the first task becomes the construction of such structures. Yet other countries lack even national integration, or their borders are so artificially traced that some form of regional unity is their only chance of survival. Finally, another prob-

lem of all these underdeveloped countries is the dilemma they face concerning the question of independence-dependence. The paradox is that these countries need both. They must be independent to perform their main state functions, but on the other hand, the fulfilment of these same functions depend largely on the means they can get only through their international relations.

It can easily be seen that the picture presented by the Third World is of a very complex and variable nature. Even so, at least two broad generalizations seem possible in relation to the future of their states. The first one is that, for a long time, all these countries will need strong states. They cannot escape this fate if they are to develop their forces of production. And obviously, this is a life-and-death matter for all concerned. The second forecast is that violence and coercion will be the common characteristic of these states. Not only because strong states always carry some sort of violence, but more significantly, because they will necessarily need brutal means to establish the state structures which suit them most, to protect these structures against internal and external threats, and to use them for a rapid overall social change.

Within these broad generalizations a sub-group of the Third World, the -often newly emerged independent- nations with a very low level of development of productive forces need special treatment. These countries are neither socialist nor capitalist. Usually, some kind of pre-capitalist mode of production prevails, often coexisting with a few capitalist enterprises inherited from the colonial past, such as mines, plantations, etc. These enterprises are generally estranged from their environment: they are like islands in deep waters.

In a world where both developed capitalist and socialist countries command a tremendous amount of productive forces, these

weak nations are inevitably tangled in a net of contradictory influences. They do not have any chance to develop a national capitalist class capable of inducing independent industrial development. The paths followed in the past by modern capitalist countries are closed to them for ever. They do not have colonies, they cannot exploit their workforce as today's developed countries did in the conditions of the last century, they do not have a large market to enter freely in a world already dominated by the fierce competition of the giants, and anyway, they are not in a position to wait for that period of time which took developed capitalist countries to attain their present level.

This explains why, in these weak nations, the first function of the state becomes conspicuous. Their only chance to develop their indigenous productive capabilities is to use **the state** in organizing total economic mobilization. But when the state is so heavily involved in social life, its third function also develops like a devouring cancer - particularly faster, if not checked by an economically and socially dominant modern class. The 'traditional' classes, as far as they exist, cannot provide such a check, because the realization of the first function presupposes that they have already been crushed.

These efforts towards development carried out by backward countries, can have two very different outcomes. They may breed an indigenous capitalist class which starts to challenge the state as soon as it gets some strength. What we then witness, however, is not an independent capitalist development. These neo-bourgeoisies, deprived of the slightest chance of competing with the giants of the world market, are inescapably driven into the orbit of the existing dominant capitalist countries. Their only choice is between getting subjected to the capitalist powers, or getting wiped out by the socialist ones. No wonder that they always choose to hook themselves to the world-wide net of imperialist exploitation.

Another possible path for these countries is to opt for what has been labelled a 'non-capitalist way of development'. This path envisages the establishment of industry under the monopoly of the state, the eradication of all sorts of pre-capitalist relations in the countryside and their replacement by peasant cooperatives linked together by a state-controlled marketing system, the establishment of a very strict independent foreign policy protecting the country from any possible encroachment, and finally -and most importantly- a gradual transfer of state power to the representatives of the working class as this class gathers strength.

One can then see how crucial the role of the state may be in the weak and backward countries of the Third World. The development of these societies will depend **exclusively** on the nature of their **state**. It should be noted that this curious situation, where governing intellectuals are in a position to choose the class they will rely upon in the future, is a modern phenomenon rendered possible by the division of the world between equally developed capitalist, and socialist camps. Without this sort of world balance such choices would have been impossible, as indeed they have been prior to the emergence of socialism as a world power. On the other hand, these choices may bear a decisive importance in the constant reshaping of world balance, and this fact gives a tremendous responsibility to the leaders of backward countries.

These considerations take us to the second stage of our discussion on the future of the state. It has already been underlined that the fact that each group of states must cohabit with the others has an inescapable bearing on their future development. The more so, indeed, that the new shortage of energy resources, the increasing dependence of all the national economies on world trade, the growing constraints on raw materials supplies, the overpopulation of the globe, the spreading of nuclear weapons,

the increasing threat to the environment, the tremendous advance in the means of communication, and many other factors, contribute to strengthening the impact of the global environment on every state.

Constraints arising from the world system may have dramatic effects on states in the **near future**. Even if one discards a suicidal nuclear apocalypse, it can be expected that states of developed countries, be they of the West or the East, will not accept their death, without harsh resistance. Those of the capitalist camp will be pushed in this direction, not only by their state personnel, but also by their dominant classes. This may easily trigger off a defensive aggressiveness from the socialist camp. On the other hand, the shortage of energy and raw materials, and the spectre of a global challenge by the Third World, may well drag the states of developed countries -of both camps- into fierce confrontation with one another. And this can be particularly dangerous for world peace since all sides aiming in this case at the maintenance and expansion of their forces of production by means of external intervention (**cf.** the first basic function), may be able to enlist the dedicated support of their respective peoples. This means that equally strong policies -as they would eventually be able to lean upon all of the three basic functions of the state- will confront one another in a nuclear environment.

Indeed, all these possibilities are for the near future. But **if** humanity survives this probable turmoil, some time in the future the states of the developed countries will have to yield to their respective societies. However, as no state can disappear when faced by a challenge by other states, the developed countries will first have to solve the problems of the underdeveloped world, ensuring by this way the obsolescence of their own states too. Basically, this means a generally agreed and controlled disarmament, and a sustained policy of real aid to the Third World,

taking it to the level of the developed countries themselves. This assumes, finally, the emergence of new world-wide political structures capable of carrying out such an overall transformation.

Before concluding, it should also be underlined that all these forecasts are based on a reckoning of the probable effects of definite social structures on future human practices. However, as has been repeatedly stated, human beings are not simple tools in the hands of blind social forces. It is ultimately human beings who -within definite conditions- will build their future, just as they have already made their own history. In an epoch where science itself is directly becoming a productive force, it is to be expected that humanity will be increasingly able to shape its own social environment by means of its own conscious activity.

In the long run, the disappearance of the state can only be realized with the establishment of a world community living in peace and abundance. But such a society presupposes a new humanity. As in the period of savagery the main political task was the creation of a **biologically** new man, the main political task of the future will be the creation of a **socially** new man. And this new humanity will only come about if we all unite in the building of a new world having no need for any kind of statehood.

NOTES

¹ Ludwig von Bertalanffy, **General System Theory**, New York, George Braziller, 1968, p. 27.

² As they refuse to acknowledge the role of individual energy, and as, therefore, they are left with no source of social energy (**cf.** our introduction).

³ In Poulantzas' own words: "What is the mode of determination by the structure of the political practice which acts upon it? We can find the reply when we see that the interrelations **between** structures and class practices are of the same type as the relations **in** each of these fields. With regard to the relations between the instances, their so-called 'interaction', which is in fact the mode of intervention of one level on another, consists of the **limits** within which one level can modify the other." **cf. Political Power and Social Classes**, London, NLB and Sheed and Ward, 1973, p. 94.

⁴ Poulantzas would undoubtedly reply that the activation comes from practices. The problem is, however, that having sharply separated structures from practices, his 'activation' is left **without** any structural determination.

⁵ This combined nature of the state is very well expressed in the current meaning of the term 'state', pointing not only to an apparatus, but also to a community. However, this term also plays the role of an ideological covering, for it hides under its communal aspect the exploitative and oppressive nature of the state.

⁶ Let us note, however, that neither the state in general nor the politician in particular systematically differentiate between their activities grouping them according to the function they perform. Such a conscious distinction would be totally incompatible with state ideology: it would actually result in paralysis.

⁷ cf. Raymond Boudon, **A Quoi Sert la Notion de "Structure"?**, Paris, Gallimard, 1968, p. 192.

⁸ In Ernesto Laclau's judicious words: "We must, in this respect, bear in mind that a theoretical approach is fruitful to the extent that it is revealed as a multiplier of spontaneous creativity arising in particular areas which could not have fully developed for lack of a principle of systematization, that is to say, the possibility of theoretical incorporation into the framework of a problematic. A narrow or inadequate problematic, on the contrary, hides the true problems instead of clarifying them, and creates an insuperable antagonism between general theoretical formulations and the knowledge of particular ambits and concrete situations." cf. **Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory**, London, Verso Editions, 1979, pp. 51-2.

⁹ Anatol Rapoport expresses this necessity with much wisdom: "It goes without saying, that **ultimately** the findings of theory must somehow be translated into real predictions and observations. But to demand this too soon is not wise. It would be like demanding cash payment in every transaction. ... Theory, then, is like a system of credit. One has a right to demand that **somewhere** there are assets to back up the transactions. But, as often as not, these assets may be in the future, and the very act of questioning their existence may set in motion a chain reaction which will preclude their existence." cf. "Various Meanings of 'Theory'", in Nelson W. Polsby, Robert A. Dentler, Paul A. Smith, **Politics and Social Life**, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963, p. 984. By endeavouring to formulate some predictions, in spite of all the perils attached to such an attempt, this essay hopes that Rapoport's warning will not prove ominous.

⁰ It must be acknowledged, however, that developed socialist societies have still a relatively important gap to bridge before reaching the productive capacity of the developed capitalist nations. This may somehow delay the obsolescence of the first function. Nevertheless, the trend is the same in both groups.

