

The State

A Criminal Organization

Tome 2 : Ideologies & Myths

Edited by

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Tome 2: Ideologies & Myths

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Ideologies & Myths

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Introduction

There are many ideologies promoting and supporting the State. They are all made of and leading to one overriding and interconnecting Meta-Ideology: Statism.

This Meta-Ideology was and is expressed by every existing politician who succeeds in reaching Power in a common dominating form: Opportunism.

All State Politicians justify also their role on the basis of two myths: Politics and Democracy.

Politics portrayed as the noble art of debating problems by enlightened individuals who associate in parties according to their views.

Democracy presented as the noble practice of managing problems through selected-elected individuals who take decisions for the general welfare.

These are just myths covered by a patina of presumed respectable conceptions, namely the political ideologies. The reality is a State Power that, whatever the ideology and the forms in which presents

itself, dominates in an absolute and stringent manner the life of everybody living in a territory under State sovereignty.

As lucidly expressed by a political commentator:

A State is absolute in the sense which I have in mind when it claims the right to a monopoly of all the force within the community, to make war, to make peace, to conscript life, to tax, to establish and disestablish property, to define crime, to punish disobedience, to control education, to supervise the family, to regulate personal habits, and to censor opinions. The modern State claims all of these powers, and, in the matter of theory, there is no real difference in the size of the claim between communists, fascists, and democrats. (Walter Lippmann, *A Preface to Morals*, London, 1929)

Conservatism

Conservatism is a term that qualifies many, even opposite, social and political positions concerning State Power.

Here is intended to refer to those philosophical thinkers and political agents who held and promoted the following views:

1. Total diffidence if not utter disparagement towards human nature (making exception for a few enlightened human beings)
2. The need for an authoritarian all powerful tutor to guide and protect the masses from their own follies and bad choices.
3. The imperative to obey a powerful master (the King, the State Ruler) having divine qualities and divine prerogatives (because chosen by God) as the only way to live in a civil society and enjoy proper security.

Besides that, Conservatives are also the first promoters of the paternalistic Welfare State with the aim of fighting socialist parties and ideas.

Thomas Hobbes

The Citizen under the Leviathan (1651)

In these passages, taken from *De Cive* and *Leviathan*, Hobbes' absolutistic vision of State Power emerges very clearly. A psychological trauma experienced at birth probably contributed to the formation of that vision. He was born prematurely when his mother heard of the coming invasion of the Spanish Armada. Hobbes later reported that "my mother gave birth to twins: myself and fear." And fear grew stronger in him by witnessing the destruction and violence of the English Civil War from 1642 to 1651.

Fear then led Hobbes to be utterly mistrustful of human nature and so of the common human being seen as constantly prone to violent aggression and deception against everybody. For this reason, he advocates the existence of a superior power capable of protecting everybody by imposing on all human beings a docile submission.

However, as remarked by the historian A. J. P. Taylor

"In the state of nature which Hobbes imagined, violence was the only law, and life was 'nasty, brutish and short'. Though individuals never lived in this state of nature, the Great Powers of Europe have

always done so.” (*The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, 1848-1918, 1954)

Source: Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive* ('On the Citizen'). This work was published originally in Latin in 1642. The English translation made its first appearance four years later (London, 1651) under the title *Philosophical rudiments concerning government and society*.

Part II: Dominion

Chapter 5: Of the Causes and First Beginning of Civil Government

VIII. He who submits his will to the will of another, conveys to that other the Right of his strength, and faculties; insomuch as when the rest have done the same, he to whom they have submitted hath so much power, as by the terror of it he can conform the wills of particular men unto unity and concord.

XI. In every city, That Man, or Council, to whose will each particular man hath subjected his will (so as hath been declared) is said to have the SUPREME POWER, or CHIEF COMMAND, or DOMINION; which Power and Right of commanding, consists in this, that each Citizen hath conveyed all his strength and power to that man, or Council; which to have done (because no man can transfer his power in a natural manner) is nothing else than to have parted with his Right of resisting. Each Citizen, as also every subordinate civil Person, is called the SUBJECT of him who hath the chief command.

Chapter 6: Of the right of him, whether Council, or one Man only, who hath the supreme power in the City

II. Now if anyone will not consent, the rest notwithstanding shall among themselves constitute the City without him. Whence it will come to pass, that the City retains its primitive Right against the Dissenter, that is, the Right of war, as against an Enemy.

VI. Because therefore for the security of particular men, and, by consequence for the common peace, it is necessary that the right of using the Sword for punishment be transferred to some Man or Council, that Man or Council is necessarily understood by Right to have the supreme Power in the City. For he that by Right punishes at his own discretion, by Right compels all men to all things which he himself wills; than which a greater command cannot be imagined.

IX. Furthermore, since it no less, nay it much more conduces to Peace to prevent brawls from arising, than to appease them being risen; and that all controversies are bred from hence, that the opinions of men differ concerning *Meum & Tuum*, *just* and *unjust*, *profitable* and *unprofitable*, *good* and *evil*, *honest* and *dishonest*, and the like, which every man esteems according to his own judgement; it belongs to the same Chief Power to make some common Rules for all men, and to declare them publicly, by which every man may know what may be called his, what another's, what just, what unjust, what honest, what dishonest, what good, what evil, that is summarily, what is to be done, what to be avoided in our common course of life. But those Rules and measures are usually called the Civil Laws, or the Laws of the City, as being the Commands of him who hath the supreme power in the City. And the Civil Laws (that we may define them) are nothing else but *the commands of him who hath the chief authority in the City, for direction of the future actions of his Citizens*.

XI. By evident and necessary inference, we may understand that it very much concerns the interest of Peace, that no opinions or doctrines be delivered to Citizens, by which they may imagine, that

either by Right they may not obey the Laws of the City, that is, the commands of that Man, or Council, to whom the supreme power is committed, or that it is lawful to resist him, or that a less punishment remains for him that denies, than him that yields obedience. For if one command somewhat to be done under penalty of natural death, another forbids it under pain of eternal death, and both by their own Right, it will follow that the Citizens, although innocent, are not only by Right punishable, but that the City itself is altogether dissolved. For no man can serve two Masters: nor is he less, but rather more, a Master, whom we believe we are to obey for fear of damnation, than he whom we obey for fear of temporal death. It follows therefore, that this one, whether Man, or Court, to whom the City hath committed the supreme Power, have also this Right. That he both judges what opinions and doctrines are enemies unto peace, and also that he forbids them to be taught.

XIII. Now those seditious persons who dispute against absolute Authority, do not so much care to destroy it, as to convey it on others; for removing this power, they together take away Civil Society, and a confusion of all things returns.

XVI. What is to be called *Theft*, what *Murder*, what *Adultery*, what *Injury* in a Citizen, this is not to be determined by the natural, but by the civil Law. What is ours, and what another's, is a question belonging to the civil Law. In like manner, not every killing of a man is murder, but only that which the civil Law forbids; neither is all encounter with women Adultery, but only that which the civil Law prohibits.

XVIII. The notes of supreme command are these: to make and abrogate laws, to determine war and peace, to know and judge of all controversies, either by himself or by judges appointed by him; to elect all magistrates, ministers, and counsellors. Lastly, if there be any man who by right can do some one action which is not lawful for any citizen or citizens to do beside himself, that man hath obtained

the supreme power. For those things which by right may not be done by any one or many citizens, the City itself can only do. He therefore that does those things uses the City's Right, which is the supreme power.

Chapter 7: Of the three kinds of Government, Democracy, Aristocracy, Monarchy

XI. As an *Aristocracy*, so also a *Monarchy* is derived from the Power of the *People*, transferring its Right, that is, its Authority on one man. Here also we must understand, that some *one* man, either by name or some other token, is propounded to be taken notice of above all the rest, and that by a plurality of voices the whole Right of the People is conveyed on him, insomuch as whatsoever the People could do before he were elected, the same in every Respect may he by Right now do, being elected. Which being done, the People is no longer one *Person*, but a rude multitude, as being only one before by virtue of the supreme command, whereof they now have made a conveyance from themselves on this one Man.

Chapter 9: Of the right of Parents over their children and of hereditary Government

IX. For my part therefore I cannot find what reason a mere *servant* hath to make complaints, if they relate only to want of *liberty*, unless he count it a misery to be restrained from hurting himself, and to receive that life, (which by war, or misfortune, or through his own idleness was forfeited) together with all manner of sustenance, and all things necessary to the conservation of health, on this condition only, that he will be ruled.

Chapter 10. A comparison between three kinds of government, according to their several inconveniences

I. Every man indeed out of the state of civil government hath a most entire, but unfruitful liberty; because that he who by reason of his own liberty acts all at his own will, must also by reason of the same liberty in others, suffer all at another's will. But in a constituted City, every subject retains to himself as much freedom as suffices him to live well, and quietly, and there is so much taken away from others, as may make them not to be feared. Out of this state, every man hath such a Right to all, as yet he can enjoy nothing; in it, each one securely enjoys his limited Right. Out of it, any man may rightly spoil, or kill one another; in it, none but one. Out of it we are protected by our own forces; in it, by the power of all. Out of it no man is sure of the fruit of his labours; in it, all men are. Lastly, out of it, there is a Dominion of Passions, war, fear, poverty, slovenliness, solitude, barbarism, ignorance, cruelty. In it, the Dominion of reason, peace, security, riches, decency, society, elegancy, sciences, and benevolence.

XVII. But it is a manifest sign, that the most absolute Monarchy is the best state of government, that not only Kings, but even those Cities which are subject to the *people*, or to *Nobles*, give the whole command of war to one only, and that so absolute, as nothing can be more (wherein by the way this must be noted also, that no King can give a General greater authority over his army, than he himself by Right may exercise over all his subjects). *Monarchy* therefore is the best of all governments in the Camps. But what else are many Commonwealths than so many Camps strengthened with arms, and men against each other, whose state (because not restrained by any common power, howsoever an uncertain peace, like a short truce, may passe between them) is to be accounted for the state of nature, which is the state of War.

Chapter 12. Of the internal causes, tending to the dissolution of any Government

I. Since therefore it belongs to Kings to discern between *good* and *evil*, wicked are those, though usual sayings, that he only is a King who does righteously, and that Kings must not be obeyed, unless they command us just things, and many other such like.

Before there was any government, just and unjust had no being, their nature only being relative to some command, and every action in its own nature is indifferent; that it becomes *just*, or *unjust*, proceeds from the right of the Magistrate. Legitimate Kings therefore make the things they command, just, by commanding them, and those which they forbid, unjust, by forbidding them.

II. For if I be commanded to do that which is a sin in him who commands me, if I do it, and he that commands me be, by Right, Lord over me, I sin not; for if I wage war at the Commandment of my Prince, conceiving the war to be unjustly undertaken, I do not therefore do unjustly, but rather if I refuse to do it, arrogating to myself the knowledge of what is just and unjust, which pertains only to my Prince.

IV. Laws therefore are set for *Titus* and *Caius*, not for the Ruler

V. There are also some who divide the Supreme Authority so as to allow the power of War and Peace, unto one, (whom they call a *Monarch*) but the right of raising Monies they give to some others, and not to him. But because monies are the sinews of War, and Peace, they who thus divide the Authority, do either really not divide it at all, but place it wholly in them, in whose power the money is, but give the name of it to another, or if they do really divide it, they dissolve the Government. For neither upon necessity can War be waged, nor can the public Peace be preserved without Money.

VII. Before the yoke of Civil Society was undertaken, no man had any *Proper Right*; all things were *common* to all men. Tell me there-

fore, how got thou this *propriety* but from the Magistrate? How got the Magistrates it, but that every man transferred his Right on him? And thou therefore hast also given up thy Right to him. Thy *Dominion* therefore, and *Propriety*, is just so much as he will, and shall last so long as he pleases.

Chapter 13. Concerning the duties of them who bear Rule

I. Where he, to whom the Right of ruling doth belong, is himself present in all judicatures, consultations, and public actions, there the administration is such, as if God beyond the ordinary course of nature, should immediately apply himself unto all matters.

IX. I therefore conceive it to be the duty of Supreme Officers to cause the true elements of civil Doctrine to be written, and to command them to be taught in all the Colleges of their several Dominions.

Chapter 14. Of Laws and Trespasses

X. For though the Law of nature forbid theft, adultery, &c., yet if the civil Law command us to invade anything, that invasion is not theft, adultery, &c.

Source: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, or The Matter, Forme, and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil*, 1651.

Leviathan is a Biblical figure that denotes power. With Hobbes the Leviathan becomes a metaphor for the omnipotence of the State ruled by an Absolute Sovereign.

The natural desire for power

I put for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death. And the cause of this, is not always that a man hopes for a more intensive delight, than he has already attained to, or that he cannot be content with a moderate power, but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more. And from hence it is that Kings, whose power is greatest, turn their endeavours to the assuring it at home by laws, or abroad by wars: and when that is done, there succeedeth a new desire; in some, of fame from new conquest; in others, of ease and sensual pleasure ; in others, of admiration, or being flattered for excellence in some art, or other ability of the mind.

(Part One - Chapter XI)

The state of nature as a war of all against all

So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel.

First, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory.

The first, maketh men invade for gain; the second, for safety; and the third, for reputation. The first use violence, to make themselves masters of other men's persons, wives, children, and cattle; the second, to defend them; the third, for trifles, as a word, a smile, a

different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue, either direct in their persons, or by reflection in their kindred, their friends, their nation, their profession, or their name.

Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man. For war consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known; and therefore the notion of *time*, is to be considered in the nature of war; as it is in the nature of weather. For as the nature of foul weather, lieth not in a shower or two of rain, but in an inclination thereto of many days together: so the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE.

Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man; the same is consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition, there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

(Part One - Chapter XIII)

The need for a monopolistic power

But though there had never been any time wherein particular men were in a condition of war one against another; yet in all times, Kings, and Persons of Sovereign Authority, because of their independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators; having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their forts, garrisons, and guns upon the frontiers of their kingdoms; and continual spies upon their neighbours; which is a posture of war. But because they uphold thereby, the industry of their subjects, there does not follow from it that misery which accompanies the liberty of particular men.

To this war of every man against every man, this also is consequent; that nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, have there no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law; where no law, no injustice. Force and fraud are in war the two cardinal virtues. Justice and injustice are none of the faculties neither of the body nor mind. If they were, they might be in a man that were alone in the world, as well as his senses, and passions. They are qualities that relate to men in society, not in solitude. It is consequent also to the same condition that there be no propriety, no dominion, no *mine* and *thine* distinct; but only that to be every man's, that he can get; and for so long as he can keep it. And thus much for the ill condition, which man by mere nature is actually placed in; though with a possibility to come out of it, consisting partly in the passions, partly in his reason.

The passions that incline men to peace, are: fear of death; desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain them. And reason suggesteth convenient articles of peace, upon which men may be drawn to agreement. These articles, are they, which otherwise are called the Laws of Nature.

(Part One - Chapter XIII)

Might makes right

Covenants entered into by fear, in the condition of mere nature, are obligatory. For example, if I covenant to pay a ransom, or service for my life, to an enemy, I am bound by it: for it is a contract, wherein one receiveth the benefit of life; the other is to receive money, or service for it; and consequently, where no other law, as in the condition of mere nature, forbiddeth the performance, the covenant is valid. Therefore prisoners of war, if trusted with the payment of their ransom, are obliged to pay it: and if a weaker prince make a disadvantageous peace with a stronger, for fear, he is bound to keep it.

(Part One - Chapter XIV)

Necessity of a covenant

Therefore before the names of just and unjust can have place, there must be some coercive power, to compel men equally to the performance of their covenants, by the terror of some punishment, greater than the benefit they expect by the breach of their covenant; and to make good that propriety, which by mutual contract men acquire, in recompense of the universal right they abandon: and such power there is none before the erection of a Commonwealth. And this is also to be gathered out of the ordinary definition of justice in the Schools: for they say, that justice is the constant will of giving to every man his own. And therefore where there is no own, that is, no propriety, there is no injustice; and where there is no coercive power erected, that is, where there is no Commonwealth, there is no propriety; all men having right to all things: therefore where there is no Commonwealth, there nothing is unjust.

So that the nature of justice, consisteth in keeping of valid covenants, but the validity of covenants begins not but with the constitution of a

civil power sufficient to compel men to keep them: and then it is also that propriety begins.

(Part One - Chapter XV)

Covenant as submission to a monopolistic power

The only way to erect such a common power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of foreigners, and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort, as that by their own industry, and by the fruits of the earth they may nourish themselves and live contentedly; is, to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one will: which is as much as to say, to appoint one man, or assembly of men, to bear their person; and every one to own, and acknowledge himself to be author of whatsoever he that so beareth their person shall act, or cause to be acted, in those things which concern the common peace and safety; and therein to submit their wills, every one to his will, and their judgments, to his judgment.

This is more than consent, or concord; it is a real unity of them all, in one and the same person, made by covenant of every man with every man, in such manner, as if every man should say to every man, *I authorise and give up my right of governing myself, to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy right to him, and authorize all his actions in like manner.*

This done, the multitude so united in one person, is called a COMMONWEALTH, in Latin CIVITAS. This is the generation of that great LEVIATHAN, or rather, to speak more reverently, of that *Mortal God*, to which we owe under the *Immortal God*, our peace and defence.

For by this authority, given him by every particular man in the Commonwealth, he hath the use of so much power and strength conferred on him that, by terror thereof, he is enabled to form the wills of them all, to peace at home, and mutual aid against their enemies abroad. And in him consisteth the essence of the Commonwealth; which, to define it, *is one person, of whose acts a great multitude, by mutual covenants one with another, have made themselves every one the author, to the end he may use the strength and means of them all, as he shall think expedient, for their peace and common defence.*

And he that carrieth this person, is called SOVEREIGN, and said to have Sovereign Power; and every one besides, his SUBJECT.

(Part two – Chapter XVII)

The Powers of the Sovereign

A *Commonwealth* is said to be *instituted*, when a *multitude* of men do agree, and covenant, *every one with every one*, that to whatsoever *man*, or *assembly of men*, shall be given by the major part, the *right* to *present* the person of them all, that is to say, to be their *representative*; every one, as well he that *voted for it*, as he that *voted against it*, shall *authorize* all the actions and judgments, of that man, or assembly of men, in the same manner, as if they were his own, to the end, to live peaceably amongst themselves, and be protected against other men.

From this institution of a Commonwealth are derived all the *rights*, and *faculties* of him, or them, on whom the sovereign power is conferred by the consent of the people assembled.

First, because they covenant, it is to be understood, they are not obliged by former covenant to anything repugnant hereunto. And consequently they that have already instituted a Commonwealth, being thereby bound by covenant to own the actions and judgments

of one, cannot lawfully make a new covenant, amongst themselves, to be obedient to any other, in any thing whatsoever, without his permission.

Secondly, because the right of bearing the person of them all is given to him they make sovereign, by covenant only of one to another, and not of him to any of them; there can happen no breach of covenant on the part of the sovereign; and consequently none of his subjects, by any pretence of forfeiture, can be freed from his subjection.

Thirdly, because the major part by consenting voices declared a sovereign; he that dissented must now consent with the rest; that is, be contented to avow all the actions he shall do, or else justly be destroyed by the rest.

Fourthly, because every subject is by this institution author of all the actions and judgments of the sovereign instituted; it follows, that whatsoever he doth, it can be no injury to any of his subjects; nor ought he to be by any of them accused of injustice.

Fifthly, and consequently to that which was said last, no man that hath sovereign power can justly be put to death, or otherwise in any manner by his subjects punished.

Sixthly, it is annexed to the sovereignty, to be judge of what opinions and doctrines are averse, and what conducing to peace; and consequently, on what occasions, how far, and what men are to be trusted withal, in speaking to multitudes of people; and who shall examine the doctrines of all books before they be published.

Seventhly, is annexed to the sovereignty, the whole power of prescribing the rules, whereby man may know what goods he may enjoy, and what actions he may do, without being molested by any of his fellow-subjects; and this is it men call propriety.

Eighthly, is annexed to the sovereignty, the right of judicature; that is

to say, of hearing and deciding all controversies which may arise concerning law, either civil, or natural; or concerning fact.

Ninthly, is annexed to the sovereignty, the right of making war and peace with other nations, and Commonwealths; that is to say, of judging when it is for the public good, and how great forces are to be assembled, armed, and paid for that end; and to levy money upon the subjects, to defray the expenses thereof.

Tenthly, is annexed to the sovereignty, the choosing of all counsellors, ministers, magistrates, and officers, both in peace and war.

Eleventhly, to the sovereign is committed the power of rewarding with riches or honour, and punishing with corporal or pecuniary punishment, or with ignominy, every subject according to the law he hath formerly made; or if there be no law made, according as he shall judge most to conduce to the encouraging of men to serve the Commonwealth, or deterring of them from doing disservice to the same.

... not only the whole *militia*, or forces of the Commonwealth; but also the judicature of all controversies, is annexed to the sovereignty. To the sovereign therefore it belongeth also to give titles of honour; and to appoint what order of place, and dignity, each man shall hold; and what signs of respect, in public or private meetings, they shall give to one another.

These are the rights, which make the essence of sovereignty; and which are the marks, whereby man may discern in what man, or assembly of men, the sovereign power is placed, and resideth. For these are incommunicable, and inseparable. The power to coin money; to dispose of the estate and persons of infant heirs; to have preemption in markets; and all other statute prerogatives, may be transferred by the sovereign; and yet the power to protect his subjects be retained. But if he transfers the *militia*, he retains the judicature in vain, for want of execution of the laws: or if he grant

away the power of raising money; the *militia* is in vain; or if he give away the government of doctrines, men will be frightened into rebellion with the fear of spirits. And so if we consider any one of the said rights, we shall presently see, that the holding of all the rest will produce no effect in the conservation of peace and justice, the end for which all Commonwealths are instituted. And this division is it, whereof it is said, *a kingdom divided in itself cannot stand*: for unless this division precede, division into opposite armies can never happen.

And as the power, so also the honour of the sovereign, ought to be greater than that of any, or all the subjects. For in the sovereignty is the fountain of honour. The dignities of lord, earl, duke, and prince are his creatures. As in the presence of the master, the servants are equal, and without any honour at all; so are the subjects, in the presence of the sovereign. And though they shine some more, some less, when they are out of his sight; yet in his presence, they shine no more than the stars in the presence of the sun.

But a man may here object, that the condition of subjects is very miserable; as being obnoxious to the lusts, and other irregular passions of him, or them that have so unlimited a power in their hands.

And commonly they that live under a monarch think it the fault of monarchy; and they that live under the government of democracy, or other sovereign assembly, attribute all the inconvenience to that form of Commonwealth; whereas the power in all forms, if they be perfect enough to protect them, is the same: not considering that the state of man can never be without some incommodity or other; and that the greatest that in any form of government can possibly happen to the people in general, is scarce sensible, in respect of the miseries, and horrible calamities that accompany a civil war, or that dissolute condition of masterless men, without subjection to laws, and a coercive power to tie their hands from rapine and revenge: nor consid-

ering that the greatest pressure of sovereign governors proceedeth not from any delight, or profit they can expect in the damage or weakening of their subjects, in whose vigour consisteth their own strength and glory, but in the restiveness of themselves, that unwillingly contributing to their own defence, make it necessary for their governors to draw from them what they can in time of peace, that they may have means on any emergent occasion, or sudden need, to resist, or take advantage on their enemies. For all men are by nature provided of notable multiplying glasses, that is their passions and self-love, through which, every little payment appeareth a great grievance; but are destitute of those prospective glasses, namely moral and civil science, to see afar off the miseries that hang over them, and cannot without such payments be avoided.

(Part two - Chapter XVIII)

Sovereign by will of God

The monarch, or the sovereign assembly only hath immediate authority from God, to teach and instruct the people; and no man but the sovereign, receiveth his power *Dei gratia* simply; that is to say, from the favour of none but God: all other, receive theirs from the favour and providence of God, and their sovereigns; as in a monarchy *Dei gratia et regis*; or *Dei providentia et voluntate regis*.

(Part two - Chapter XXIII)

The sovereign as an economic ruler

As the distribution of land at home; so also to assign in what places, and for what commodities, the subject shall traffic abroad, belongeth to the sovereign. And therefore it belongeth to the Commonwealth, that is, to the Sovereign only, to approve, or disapprove both of the places, and matter of foreign traffic.

And therefore it belongeth to the Commonwealth, that is to say, to the sovereign, to appoint in what manner all kinds of contract between subjects, as buying, selling, exchanging, borrowing, lending, letting, and taking to hire, are to be made; and by what words and signs they shall be understood for valid.

(Part two - Chapter XXIV)

The sovereign as a legislator

The legislator in all Commonwealths, is only the sovereign, be he one man, as in a monarchy, or one assembly of men, as in a democracy, or aristocracy. For the legislator is he that maketh the law.

The sovereign of a Commonwealth, be it an assembly, or one man, is not subject to the civil laws. For having power to make, and repeal laws, he may when he pleaseth, free himself from that subjection, by repealing those laws that trouble him, and making of new; and consequently he was free before. For he is free, that can be free when he will: nor is it possible for any person to be bound to himself; because he that can bind, can release; and therefore he that is bound to himself only, is not bound.

(Part two - Chapter XXVI)

Alexander Hamilton

For a Strong Central State (1788)

A governmental solution advocated by most classic conservatives is that of a strong central State. And this is also the position of Alexander Hamilton in this essay that was part of *The Federalist* collection of writings by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay to promote the ratification of the Constitution of the United States.

For Hamilton, the necessary features of a good government are “decision, activity, secrecy, and despatch” and these aspects “will generally characterize the proceedings of one man.”

What secrecy in decisions might lead the ruler of a country (a Monarch President) is not something that seems to worry to the least the author of this essay.

Source: Alexander Hamilton, *The Executive Department Further Considered*, New York Independent Journal, 15 March 1788. In *The Federalist*, n° 70.

To the People of the State of New York:

There is an idea, which is not without its advocates, that a vigorous Executive is inconsistent with the genius of republican government. The enlightened well-wishers to this species of government must at least hope that the supposition is destitute of foundation; since they can never admit its truth, without at the same time admitting the condemnation of their own principles. Energy in the Executive is a leading character in the definition of good government. It is essential to the protection of the community against foreign attacks; it is not less essential to the steady administration of the laws; to the protection of property against those irregular and high-handed combinations which sometimes interrupt the ordinary course of justice; to the security of liberty against the enterprises and assaults of ambition, of faction, and of anarchy. Every man the least conversant in Roman story, knows how often that republic was obliged to take refuge in the absolute power of a single man, under the formidable title of Dictator, as well against the intrigues of ambitious individuals who aspired to the tyranny, and the seditions of whole classes of the community whose conduct threatened the existence of all government, as against the invasions of external enemies who menaced the conquest and destruction of Rome.

There can be no need, however, to multiply arguments or examples on this head. A feeble Executive implies a feeble execution of the government. A feeble execution is but another phrase for a bad execution; and a government ill executed, whatever it may be in theory, must be, in practice, a bad government.

Taking it for granted, therefore, that all men of sense will agree in the necessity of an energetic Executive, it will only remain to inquire, what are the ingredients which constitute this energy? How far can they be combined with those other ingredients which constitute safety in the republican sense? And how far does this combination characterize the plan which has been reported by the convention?

The ingredients which constitute energy in the Executive are, first, unity; secondly, duration; thirdly, an adequate provision for its support; fourthly, competent powers.

The ingredients which constitute safety in the republican sense are, first, a due dependence on the people, secondly, a due responsibility.

Those politicians and statesmen who have been the most celebrated for the soundness of their principles and for the justice of their views, have declared in favor of a single Executive and a numerous legislature. They have with great propriety, considered energy as the most necessary qualification of the former, and have regarded this as most applicable to power in a single hand, while they have, with equal propriety, considered the latter as best adapted to deliberation and wisdom, and best calculated to conciliate the confidence of the people and to secure their privileges and interests.

That unity is conducive to energy will not be disputed. Decision, activity, secrecy, and despatch will generally characterize the proceedings of one man in a much more eminent degree than the proceedings of any greater number; and in proportion as the number is increased, these qualities will be diminished.

This unity may be destroyed in two ways: either by vesting the power in two or more magistrates of equal dignity and authority; or by vesting it ostensibly in one man, subject, in whole or in part, to the control and co-operation of others, in the capacity of counsellors to him. Of the first, the two Consuls of Rome may serve as an example; of the last, we shall find examples in the constitutions of several of the States. New York and New Jersey, if I recollect right, are the only States which have intrusted the executive authority wholly to single men. Both these methods of destroying the unity of the Executive have their partisans; but the votaries of an executive council are the most numerous. They are both liable, if not to equal, to similar objections, and may in most lights be examined in conjunction.

The experience of other nations will afford little instruction on this head. As far, however, as it teaches any thing, it teaches us not to be enamoured of plurality in the Executive. We have seen that the Achaeans, on an experiment of two Praetors, were induced to abolish one. The Roman history records many instances of mischiefs to the republic from the dissensions between the Consuls, and between the military Tribunes, who were at times substituted for the Consuls. But it gives us no specimens of any peculiar advantages derived to the state from the circumstance of the plurality of those magistrates. That the dissensions between them were not more frequent or more fatal, is a matter of astonishment, until we advert to the singular position in which the republic was almost continually placed, and to the prudent policy pointed out by the circumstances of the state, and pursued by the Consuls, of making a division of the government between them. The patricians engaged in a perpetual struggle with the plebeians for the preservation of their ancient authorities and dignities; the Consuls, who were generally chosen out of the former body, were commonly united by the personal interest they had in the defense of the privileges of their order. In addition to this motive of union, after the arms of the republic had considerably expanded the bounds of its empire, it became an established custom with the Consuls to divide the administration between themselves by lot; one of them remaining at Rome to govern the city and its environs, the other taking the command in the more distant provinces. This expedient must, no doubt, have had great influence in preventing those collisions and rivalships which might otherwise have embroiled the peace of the republic.

But quitting the dim light of historical research, attaching ourselves purely to the dictates of reason and good sense, we shall discover much greater cause to reject than to approve the idea of plurality in the Executive, under any modification whatever.

Wherever two or more persons are engaged in any common enterprise or pursuit, there is always danger of difference of opinion. If it

be a public trust or office, in which they are clothed with equal dignity and authority, there is peculiar danger of personal emulation and even animosity. From either, and especially from all these causes, the most bitter dissensions are apt to spring. Whenever these happen, they lessen the respectability, weaken the authority, and distract the plans and operation of those whom they divide. If they should unfortunately assail the supreme executive magistracy of a country, consisting of a plurality of persons, they might impede or frustrate the most important measures of the government, in the most critical emergencies of the state. And what is still worse, they might split the community into the most violent and irreconcilable factions, adhering differently to the different individuals who composed the magistracy.

Men often oppose a thing, merely because they have had no agency in planning it, or because it may have been planned by those whom they dislike. But if they have been consulted, and have happened to disapprove, opposition then becomes, in their estimation, an indispensable duty of self-love. They seem to think themselves bound in honor, and by all the motives of personal infallibility, to defeat the success of what has been resolved upon, contrary to their sentiments. Men of upright, benevolent tempers have too many opportunities of remarking, with horror, to what desperate lengths this disposition is sometimes carried, and how often the great interests of society are sacrificed to the vanity, to the conceit, and to the obstinacy of individuals, who have credit enough to make their passions and their caprices interesting to mankind. Perhaps the question now before the public may, in its consequences, afford melancholy proofs of the effects of this despicable frailty, or rather detestable vice, in the human character.

Upon the principles of a free government, inconveniences from the source just mentioned must necessarily be submitted to in the formation of the legislature; but it is unnecessary, and therefore unwise, to introduce them into the constitution of the Executive. It is here too

that they may be most pernicious. In the legislature, promptitude of decision is oftener an evil than a benefit. The differences of opinion, and the jarrings of parties in that department of the government, though they may sometimes obstruct salutary plans, yet often promote deliberation and circumspection, and serve to check excesses in the majority. When a resolution too is once taken, the opposition must be at an end. That resolution is a law, and resistance to it punishable. But no favorable circumstances palliate or atone for the disadvantages of dissension in the executive department. Here, they are pure and unmixed. There is no point at which they cease to operate. They serve to embarrass and weaken the execution of the plan or measure to which they relate, from the first step to the final conclusion of it. They constantly counteract those qualities in the Executive which are the most necessary ingredients in its composition, vigor and expedition, and this without any counterbalancing good. In the conduct of war, in which the energy of the Executive is the bulwark of the national security, every thing would be to be apprehended from its plurality.

It must be confessed that these observations apply with principal weight to the first case supposed, that is to a plurality of magistrates of equal dignity and authority; a scheme, the advocates for which are not likely to form a numerous sect. But they apply, though not with equal, yet with considerable weight, to the project of a council, whose concurrence is made constitutionally necessary to the operations of the ostensible Executive. An artful cabal in that council would be able to distract and to enervate the whole system of administration. If no such cabal should exist, the mere diversity of views and opinions would alone be sufficient to tincture the exercise of the executive authority with a spirit of habitual feebleness and dilatoriness.

But one of the weightiest objections to a plurality in the Executive, and which lies as much against the last as the first plan, is that it tends to conceal faults and destroy responsibility.

Responsibility is of two kinds: to censure and to punishment. The first is the more important of the two, especially in an elective office. Man, in public trust, will much oftener act in such a manner as to render him unworthy of being any longer trusted, than in such a manner as to make him obnoxious to legal punishment. But the multiplication of the Executive adds to the difficulty of detection in either case. It often becomes impossible, amidst mutual accusations, to determine on whom the blame or the punishment of a pernicious measure, or series of pernicious measures, ought really to fall. It is shifted from one to another with so much dexterity, and under such plausible appearances, that the public opinion is left in suspense about the real author. The circumstances which may have led to any national miscarriage or misfortune are sometimes so complicated that, where there are a number of actors who may have had different degrees and kinds of agency, though we may clearly see upon the whole that there has been mismanagement, yet it may be impracticable to pronounce to whose account the evil which may have been incurred is truly chargeable.

“I was overruled by my council. The council were so divided in their opinions that it was impossible to obtain any better resolution on the point.” These and similar pretexts are constantly at hand, whether true or false. And who is there that will either take the trouble or incur the odium of a strict scrutiny into the secret springs of the transaction? Should there be found a citizen zealous enough to undertake the unpromising task, if there happen to be collusion between the parties concerned, how easy it is to clothe the circumstances with so much ambiguity, as to render it uncertain what was the precise conduct of any of those parties?

In the single instance in which the governor of this state is coupled with a council that is, in the appointment to offices, we have seen the mischiefs of it in the view now under consideration. Scandalous appointments to important offices have been made. Some cases, indeed, have been so flagrant that ALL PARTIES have agreed in the

impropriety of the thing. When inquiry has been made, the blame has been laid by the governor on the members of the council, who, on their part, have charged it upon his nomination; while the people remain altogether at a loss to determine, by whose influence their interests have been committed to hands so unqualified and so manifestly improper. In tenderness to individuals, I forbear to descend to particulars.

It is evident from these considerations, that the plurality of the Executive tends to deprive the people of the two greatest securities they can have for the faithful exercise of any delegated power; first, the restraints of public opinion, which lose their efficacy, as well on account of the division of the censure attendant on bad measures among a number, as on account of the uncertainty on whom it ought to fall; and, secondly, the opportunity of discovering with facility and clearness the misconduct of the persons they trust, in order either to their removal from office or to their actual punishment in cases which admit of it.

In England, the king is a perpetual magistrate; and it is a maxim which has obtained for the sake of the public peace, that he is unaccountable for his administration, and his person sacred. Nothing, therefore, can be wiser in that kingdom, than to annex to the king a constitutional council, who may be responsible to the nation for the advice they give. Without this, there would be no responsibility whatever in the executive department, an idea inadmissible in a free government. But even there the king is not bound by the resolutions of his council, though they are answerable for the advice they give. He is the absolute master of his own conduct in the exercise of his office, and may observe or disregard the counsel given to him at his sole discretion.

But in a republic, where every magistrate ought to be personally responsible for his behavior in office, the reason which in the British Constitution dictates the propriety of a council, not only ceases to

apply, but turns against the institution. In the monarchy of Great Britain, it furnishes a substitute for the prohibited responsibility of the chief magistrate, which serves in some degree as a hostage to the national justice for his good behavior. In the American republic, it would serve to destroy, or would greatly diminish, the intended and necessary responsibility of the Chief Magistrate himself.

The idea of a council to the Executive, which has so generally obtained in the State constitutions, has been derived from that maxim of republican jealousy which considers power as safer in the hands of a number of men than of a single man. If the maxim should be admitted to be applicable to the case, I should contend that the advantage on that side would not counterbalance the numerous disadvantages on the opposite side. But I do not think the rule at all applicable to the executive power. I clearly concur in opinion, in this particular, with a writer whom the celebrated Junius pronounces to be “deep, solid, and ingenious,” that “the executive power is more easily confined when it is ONE” [Jean-Louis de Lolme]; that it is far more safe there should be a single object for the jealousy and watchfulness of the people; and, in a word, that all multiplication of the Executive is rather dangerous than friendly to liberty.

A little consideration will satisfy us, that the species of security sought for in the multiplication of the Executive, is attainable. Numbers must be so great as to render combination difficult, or they are rather a source of danger than of security. The united credit and influence of several individuals must be more formidable to liberty, than the credit and influence of either of them separately. When power, therefore, is placed in the hands of so small a number of men, as to admit of their interests and views being easily combined in a common enterprise, by an artful leader, it becomes more liable to abuse, and more dangerous when abused, than if it be lodged in the hands of one man; who, from the very circumstance of his being alone, will be more narrowly watched and more readily suspected, and who cannot unite so great a mass of influence as when he is asso-

ciated with others. The Decemvirs of Rome, whose name denotes their number [Ten], were more to be dreaded in their usurpation than any ONE of them would have been. No person would think of proposing an Executive much more numerous than that body; from six to a dozen have been suggested for the number of the council. The extreme of these numbers, is not too great for an easy combination; and from such a combination America would have more to fear, than from the ambition of any single individual. A council to a magistrate, who is himself responsible for what he does, are generally nothing better than a clog upon his good intentions, are often the instruments and accomplices of his bad and are almost always a cloak to his faults.

I forbear to dwell upon the subject of expense; though it be evident that if the council should be numerous enough to answer the principal end aimed at by the institution, the salaries of the members, who must be drawn from their homes to reside at the seat of government, would form an item in the catalogue of public expenditures too serious to be incurred for an object of equivocal utility. I will only add that, prior to the appearance of the Constitution, I rarely met with an intelligent man from any of the states, who did not admit, as the result of experience, that the UNITY of the Executive of this state was one of the best of the distinguishing features of our Constitution.

Joseph de Maistre

The Sovereign as the producer of society (1796-1819)

Joseph de Maistre (1753 – 1821) was a philosopher, writer, lawyer, diplomat, and magistrate. He was one of the more lucid advocates of a social order under the rulership of a Monarch. For this reason, written Constitutions, as those produced after the American and French Revolutions, were totally dismissed by him as not only useless but also absurd attempts at shaping a natural reality necessarily based on the single and absolute power of the Monarch.

Source: Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, 1796 (Chapter VI).

The Divine influence in political constitutions

The human being can change everything in his sphere of activity, but he creates nothing; this is his law, both physically and morally.

Man can undoubtedly plant a seedling, raise a tree, improve it by grafting, and prune it in a hundred ways; but he has never imagined that he had the power to make a tree.

How did he imagine that he had that of making a constitution? Could it be through experience? Let's see what experience tells us.

All the free constitutions known in the world have been formed in two ways. Sometimes they have sprung up, so to speak, in an insensible manner, by the coming together of a host of those circumstances that we call fortuitous; and sometimes they have a single author who appears as an exceptional being and is obeyed.

In both suppositions, here are the characters by which God warns us of our weakness and of the right he has reserved for himself in the formation of governments.

1° No constitution is the result of deliberation; the rights of peoples are never written down, or at least the constitutive acts or written fundamental laws are never more than declaratory titles of prior rights, of which nothing can be said other than that they exist because they exist.

2° Since God has not considered appropriate to use supernatural means in this area, he at least circumscribes human action, to the extent that in the formation of constitutions, circumstances are everything, and human beings are only circumstances. Quite commonly, even, it is by running towards a certain goal that they obtain another result, as we have seen in the English constitution.

3° The rights of the people, properly so called, quite often derive from concessions made by the sovereigns, and in this case, it is possible to record them historically; but the rights of the sovereign and of the aristocracy, at least the essential ones, constitutive and radical, if we may put it this way, have neither age nor authors.

4° Even the Sovereign's concessions have always been preceded by a state of affairs that necessitated them, and which did not depend on him.

5° Although written laws are never more than declarations of prior rights, it is far from the case that everything that can be written is written; there is even always something in every constitution that cannot be written, and which must be left in a dark and venerable cloud, on pain of overthrowing the State.

6° The more that is written, the weaker the institution, and the reason for this is clear. Laws are only declarations of rights, and rights are only declared when they are attacked; so that the multiplicity of written constitutional laws only proves the multiplicity of shocks and the danger of destruction. This is why the most vigorous institution of secular antiquity was that of Lacedemonia [Sparta], where nothing was written.

7° No nation can give itself liberty unless it did have it. When it begins to reflect on itself, its laws are made. Human influence does not extend beyond the development of existing rights that were ignored or contested. If imprudent people cross these boundaries with reckless reforms, the nation loses what it had without attaining what it wants. Hence the need to innovate only very rarely, and always with restraint and trembling.

8° When Providence has decreed the more rapid formation of a political constitution, there appears a man clothed with indefinable power: he speaks and is obeyed. But these marvellous human beings perhaps belong only to the ancient world and to the youth of nations. Be that as it may, here is the distinctive character of these legislators *par excellence*. They are kings, or eminently noble persons: in this respect, there is, and can be, no exception. It was on this point that the institution of Solon, the most fragile of antiquity, failed. The golden days of Athens, which were just passing, were interrupted by

conquests and tyrannies, and Solon himself saw the rising to power of the Pisistratids.

9° Even these legislators, with their extraordinary power, never do more than assemble elements pre-existing in the customs and character of peoples. But this assembly, this rapid formation, which is akin to creation, is carried out only in the name of the Divinity. Politics and religion are fused together: the legislator is barely distinguishable from the priest; and public institutions consist mainly of religious ceremonies and festivities.

10° Freedom, in a sense, was always a gift of Kings; for all free nations were constituted by Kings. This is the general rule, and the exceptions we could point out would fall within the rule if they were discussed.

11° No free nation has ever existed that did not have in its natural constitution the seeds of liberty as old as itself; and no nation has ever effectively attempted to develop, through its fundamental written laws, rights other than those that existed in its natural constitution.

12° Any assembly of men cannot constitute a nation; and even this enterprise exceeds in folly what all the Bedlams of the universe can produce of more absurd and extravagant. To prove this proposition in detail, after what I have said, would be, it seems to me, to show a lack of respect for those who know, and to do too much honour to those who do not.

13° I have spoken of one principal characteristic of true legislators; here is another which is very remarkable, and on which it would be easy to write a book. It is that they are never what we call learned, that they do not write, that they act by instinct and impulse rather than by reasoning, and that they have no other instrument with which to act than a certain moral force that bends wills like the wind bends a crop.

Source: Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape dans son Rapport avec les Souverainetés Temporelles*, 1819 (Second Book, Chapter One)

A few words on sovereignty

Man, as a being both moral and corrupt, just in his intelligence and perverse in his will, must necessarily be governed; otherwise, he would be both sociable and unsociable, and society would be both necessary and impossible.

We see in the courts the absolute necessity of sovereignty; for man must be governed precisely as he must be judged, and for the same reason, that is to say, because wherever there is no verdict there is combat.

On this point, as on so many others, man cannot imagine anything better than what exists, i.e. a power that leads men by general rules, made not for this situation or that man, but for all cases, for all times and for all men.

Man is just, at least in his intention, whenever it is not a matter of himself, and this is what makes sovereignty and consequently society possible. For the cases in which sovereignty is exposed to wilful wrongdoing are always, by the nature of things, much rarer than the others. To follow precisely the same analogy, in the administration of justice, the cases in which judges are tempted to prevaricate are necessarily rare compared with other cases. If it were otherwise, the administration of justice would be as impossible as sovereignty.

The most dissolute prince does not prevent public scandals from being prosecuted in his courts, provided they do not affect him personally. But as he alone is above justice, even if he were unfortu-

nately to set the most dangerous examples at home, the general laws could still be enforced.

Man, then, being necessarily associated and necessarily governed, his will has nothing to do with the establishment of government. For, as soon as peoples have no choice and sovereignty results directly from human nature, sovereigns no longer exist by the grace of the peoples; sovereignty being no more the result of their will than society itself.

It has often been asked whether the king was made for the people, or the people for the king. This question presupposes, it seems to me, very little reflection. The two propositions are false taken separately, and true taken together. The people are made for the sovereign, and the sovereign is made for the people; and both are made so that there can be sovereignty.

The mainspring in a watch is not made for the pendulum, nor the pendulum for the mainspring, but each for the other, and both to show the time.

There can be no sovereign without a nation, just as there can be no nation without a sovereign. The nation owes more to the sovereign than the sovereign owes to the nation. For the nation owes the sovereign its social existence and all the benefits that flow from it, while the prince owes sovereignty nothing more than a vain splendour that has nothing in common with happiness and almost always excludes it.

Louis de Bonald

The King as the embodiment of love in society (1796)

The author makes clear in his conclusive sentence of this extract that: “*Where all human beings necessarily wish to dominate with equal wills and unequal forces, it is necessary for one man to dominate or for all men to destroy each other.*”

We find here the same Hobbesian view of human beings inevitably fighting each other for power and the inevitable conclusion that one individual, the Monarch, must rule all in order to assure peace and justice. A classic conservative narrative of how things are and always should be.

Source: Louis de Bonald, *Théorie du pouvoir politique et religieux dans la société civile, démontrée par le raisonnement et par l'histoire*, 1796.

Extract from Book 1, Chapter II: Sociétés politiques ou générales.

General *will*, general *love*, general *strength*, form the constitution of political society or the society of *conservation*.

Will, *love* and *strength* are therefore external; for only that which is *external* or *public* is *general*.

How was the general will of society or the social will made external?

This question, the most important of all political questions, requires extensive and unfortunately somewhat abstract developments. Philosophy, which places the *general will* in the *popular will*, avoids difficulties in theory only to give birth to monsters in reality.

The general will of the conserving society cannot be the particular will of one man; for the particular will of every man is essentially disorderly. It cannot be the will of all men; for wills that are essentially unruly or destructive cannot be united into a will that is essentially upright or conservative, nor can wills that are necessarily particular and opposed be united into a will that is essentially general and always the same.

The will of an entire people, even if it is unanimous, is only the sum of particular wills and it cannot be the general will.

[...]

What, then, is the general will of society?

Society is a *being*, for if it were not a being it would not exist.

Every being has a purpose; and natural or political society has a purpose, which is the *production* or *conservation* of the human beings.

Every being has the *will*, if it is intelligent, and the *tendency*, if it is corporeal, to reach its purpose. Thus, in the human being, the soul has the will to exist, the body a tendency to dissolve; and as every

being necessarily reaches its end, the dissolution of the body presages and proves the immortality of the soul.

[...]

Society, a collective or general human being, or a group of particular human beings, has a general *purpose*, which is the object of the *general will*, and which it achieves by a general means, that is to say, by a general *love*, acting by a general *force*.

I am therefore led back by another route to this proposition, already demonstrated, that there is in political society *a general will, a general love, a general force to achieve its faith, which is the conservation of social beings*.

But a being necessarily achieves its purpose, unless a superior being prevents it from doing so; and there is no being superior to society, since there is no being outside society.

So, the general will of society will necessarily be conservative, its general love necessarily conservative, its general strength necessarily conservative.

Let us listen to the confession of philosophy: "As long as *several human beings* consider themselves as forming *a single body*, they can only have *a will* that relates to the *common conservation* The general will cannot decide on a particular object." (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social*, 1762).

The reader is now in a position to understand how the general will was made external.

The human beings in society are linked among themselves in certain ways that we call *relationships*.

These relationships are laws when they are necessary, that is, when

they are such that they could not be other than they are, without offending human nature.

The human beings in society, between whom there are *necessary relationships*, are therefore in the social state most appropriate to their nature, i.e. the most perfect, the most likely to ensure their conservation.

But the general will of political society *desires* the conservation of the human beings; therefore, it desires the *laws* or *necessary relationships* between human beings. If it *desires* them, it *produces* them, or *produces itself* through them, since the general will is necessarily effective.

Necessary laws or *relationships* are fixed, immutable, fundamental relationships or *laws*; therefore fixed, immutable, fundamental *laws* are the *manifestation*, the *revelation*, the *expression* of the general will.

[...]

If the relationships between social beings are *necessary*, or *such that they cannot be other than they are without offending the nature of the human beings*, then the nature of those beings wants to produce the *necessary* relationships. For every being inevitably wants to place itself in the state most in accordance with its nature; therefore, the nature of the social beings *wants* what the general will of society *wants*.

But God loves the beings he has created, since they are good, i.e. *made in his own image*. He therefore also desires their preservation; he then wishes the presence of the *laws* or *necessary relationships* which ensure their preservation, or their *existence in the condition most in accord with their nature*.

Therefore, the general will of society, the nature of the human beings in society, the will of God, they all *want* the same thing or are in conformity amongst them. So, they are but one and the same will, because the wills that occupy no space can come together in one and the same will.

Thus, the general will of society, of the social body, of social man, the nature of social beings or of society, the social will, even the will of God, are synonymous expressions in this work.

[...]

The general will of society was therefore made external or manifested in fixed and fundamental laws. We shall see, in the rest of this work, how the general will produces *laws* or, which is the same thing, is produced by *laws*.

How was general love made external?

We must return to the human being. Love, as we have said, is interior or intelligent in its principle, exterior or physical in its effects. It belongs to both mind and body; it is *mind* and *body*, since it is thought and action. It can therefore only be made exterior or manifested by a mind united to a body, by a human being. It arose in a being, and this being was the general *love* of society, since he belonged both to its general *will*, whose orders he manifested, and to the general *force* whose action he directed.

Thus love, in society as in the human being, was the knot, the intermediary between the intelligent part and the material part; and this man was called *monarch*, because he alone *ordered*, and *king*, because he *directed* the public force. He was the general love or love of conservation, that is to say, the love of others, because he personified society, or the neighbour in general, with regard to each individual human being.

This general love bound people together, uniting each individual to all the individuals represented in a single man, like the centre which unites all the points of the circumference. This produced in society, as Rousseau says, “*that common interest which formed the social bond* because, if there were not *a point on which all interests agreed*, no society could subsist.”

The love of beings, I said, is in those human beings the principle of their conservation. It is a conservative power when it acts by force or cogency. This man-king was therefore the conservative power when he directed the general or public force.

This Man-King was therefore a *necessary relationship* derived from the nature of beings in society. And as God the creator of beings is the author of all the *necessary relationships* that exist between them, it is rigorously true to say: *Omnis potestas a Deo*, because, where there is no King, there is no general or social power, i.e. *potestas*.

Thus society, which must be distinguished from the gathering of men, the people, *could not exist before the monarch*, because it *could not exist before the power to exist*. Therefore, it is absurd to suppose that society could prescribe conditions to the monarch.

How was the general force of society made external?

The external force of man is in his body; the external force of society was therefore in physical bodies or men; and it was only the force of all that could effectively repress the force of each, just as it was only general love or love of neighbour that could prevent the disordered effects of exclusive self-love or love of oneself.

The particular will of the Man-King did not represent the general will, because the will of every man is essentially unbalanced. His particular strength could not represent the general strength, because the strength of a man is physically insufficient. But he could represent the *love* that the human beings in society must have for one another; to be the goal, the centre of this mutual *love*, because love is

good by nature, and it is necessarily *conservative* when it is regulated by a *conservative* will.

In society, the King was neither the legislative power, nor the executive power, nor the judicial power, but the general or social conservative power, which, in order to enforce the laws, the expression of the conservative general will, acts by general force. The essentially conservative general will, manifested in the laws, therefore directed the general power, which was necessarily conservative, when it acted by a force that was necessarily conservative.

So, the general will of society, or nature, or the will of God himself was the *sovereign*; general love, or the King, was the *minister* or the agent; general force, or physical men, were the *subject* or the instrument. The dogma of the sovereignty of the people, by overturning this order and dethroning God, must naturally lead to atheism.

In a regulated human being, the will, corrected by the laws, must also be the *sovereign*, and must direct love towards permitted objects; and *love* must be the *minister* or the *agent*, and make the subject or the instrument, I would say the force or the body, serve useful actions.

Also notice that the Latins, to express the condition of a man whose actions are not directed by legitimate affections, or a regulated love, recall *sui impotentia*, i.e. without *power* over oneself, in the same sense that we say of a man carried away by his passions, which are only a disordered love of oneself, that he is not master of himself.

Love acting by *force* is therefore *power* in society as in the human being, and from now on I will only use the expression *power* to designate *love* acting by *force*.

Thus, the general will manifested by fundamental laws; general power exercised by a King, agent of the general will; general or public *force*, action of the general *power*, formed the constitution of the conservation society, or the political or general society.

And since I see these characteristics in certain societies, and I do not see them in all societies, I conclude that there are societies that have a constitution, and societies that have no constitution; constituted societies, and societies that are not constituted, that is to say societies that *conserve* beings, and societies that *do not conserve* them, or that *do not conserve* themselves, since they have no *conserving* power.

It follows, from the propositions demonstrated in this chapter, this fundamental axiom of politics or the science of societies:

Where all human beings necessarily wish to dominate with equal wills and unequal forces, it is necessary for one man to dominate or for all men to destroy each other.

Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

The State as God on earth (1821)

In this very heavy piece of writing, Hegel presents the STATE as a super-entity, the manifestation of God on earth. Like God, the State represents the perfect expression and the active caretaker of universal and individual needs and exigencies.

As the history of the States has shown repeatedly this was and is total wishful thinking even when applied to IDEAL STATES, that never existed and never will exist. It is also an absurdity from the point of view of the social sciences insofar as dispersed entities (the individuals) are considered to be on an equal foot with concentrated power (the State). To complete this quite implausible scenario, many particularistic (national) State powers are seen as the harbingers of universal values.

Unfortunately, similar views are still sold to the masses with a certain (albeit decreasing) degree of success.

Source: Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* [Elements of the Philosophy of Right], 1821.

§ 257

The State is the reality of the ethical idea — the ethical spirit, as the manifest, self-evident, substantial will that thinks and knows itself and carries out what it knows and insofar as it knows it. The State has its direct existence in *custom* and its mediated existence in the *self-consciousness* of the individual, his knowledge and activity, just as the *self-consciousness* has its *substantial freedom* through the ethos in it, as its essence, purpose and products of its activity.

§ 258

The State is absolutely rational inasmuch as it is the reality of the substantial *will* which it possesses in the particular *self-consciousness* once that consciousness has been raised to consciousness of its universality. This substantial unity is an absolute unmoved end in itself, in which freedom comes to its highest right, just as this final end has the supreme right against the individuals, whose *highest duty* it is to be members of the State.

If the State is confused with civil society, and its destiny is placed in the security and protection of property and personal freedom, then the interest of individuals as such is the ultimate end for which they are united, and it follows equally from this that to be a member of the State is something arbitrary. But the State's relation to the individual is quite different from this. Since the State is objective spirit, it is only as one of its members that the individual himself has objectivity, genuine individuality, and an ethical life. The association as such is itself the true content and purpose, and the destiny of the individuals is living a universal life. Their further particular satisfaction, activity, mode of conduct has this substantiality and universality as its starting point and result.

Rationality, considered abstractly, consists generally in the interpenetrating unity of the universal and the individual, and here concretely in the unity of objective freedom, i.e. the general substantial will and subjective freedom as the individual knowledge and his will seeking particular ends — and therefore, in form, it consists in an action that is determined according to thought, i.e. general laws and principles. This idea is the eternal and necessary being of the spirit in and of itself.

[...]

Note by Eduard Gans taken from Hegel's lessons

The State in and by itself is the ethical whole, the actualisation of freedom; and it is an absolute end of reason that freedom should be actual. The State is the spirit on the world and consciously realising itself there. In nature, on the other hand, the spirit actualises itself only as its own other, as spirit asleep. Only when it is present in consciousness, when it knows itself as a really existent object, is it the State. In considering freedom, the starting point must be not individuality, the single self-consciousness, but only the essence of self-consciousness; for whether man knows it or not, this essence is externally realised as a self-subsistent power in which single individuals are only moments. The march of God in the world, that is what the State is. The basis of the State is the power of reason actualising itself as will. In considering the Idea of the State, we must not have our eyes on particular States or on particular institutions. Instead, we must consider the Idea, this actual God, by itself. On some principle or other, any State may be shown to be bad, this or that defect may be found in it; and yet, at any rate, if one of the mature States of our epoch is in question, it has in it the moments essential to the existence of the State. But since it is easier to find defects than to understand the affirmative, we may readily fall into the mistake of looking at isolated aspects of the State and so forgetting its inward organic life. The State is no ideal work of

art; it stands on earth and so in the sphere of caprice, chance, and error, and bad behaviour may disfigure it in many respects. But the ugliest of men, or a criminal, or an invalid, or a cripple, is still always a living man. The affirmative, life, subsists despite his defects, and it is this affirmative factor which is our theme here.

§ 259

The idea of the State:

- a) Has *immediate* reality and is the individual State as a self-referring organism, the *Constitution* or the *Internal Constitutional Law*.
- b) Passes over into the *relation* of the single State to other States, — *External Constitutional Law*.
- c) Is the general idea as a *species* and an absolute power towards the individual States, the spirit that gives itself its reality in the process of *World History*.

§ 260

The State is the reality of concrete freedom; but *concrete freedom* consists in the fact that the personal individual and his particular interests have both their complete *development* and the *recognition of their own right* (as they do in the sphere of the family and civil society). But, for one thing, they also pass over of their own accord into the interest of the universal, and, for another thing, they know and will the universal. They even recognise it as their own substantive mind; they take it as their end and aim and are active in its pursuit.

The result is that the universal does not prevail or achieve completion except along with particular interests and through the co-operation of particular knowing and willing; and individuals likewise do

not live as private persons for their own ends alone, but in the very act of willing these ends they will the universal in the light of the universal, and their activity is consciously aimed at none but the universal end.

The principle of modern States has this immense strength and depth because it allows the principle of subjectivity to progress to its culmination in the extreme of self-subsistent personal particularity, and yet at the same time to drive it *back into substantial unity* and thus to preserve it in itself.

Note by Eduard Gans taken from Hegel's lessons

The Idea of the State in modern times has a special character in that the State is the actualisation of freedom not in accordance with subjective whim but in accordance with the concept of the will, i.e. in accordance with its universality and divinity. Immature States are those in which the Idea of the State is still veiled and where its particular determinations have not yet attained free self-subsistence. In the States of classical antiquity, universality was present, but particularity had not then been released, given free scope, and brought back to universality, i.e. to the Universal end of the whole. The essence of the modern State is that the universal be bound up with the complete freedom of its particular members and with private well-being, that thus the interests of family and civil society must concentrate themselves on the State, although the universal end cannot be advanced without the personal knowledge and will of its particular members, whose own rights must be maintained. Thus the universal must be furthered, but subjectivity on the other hand must attain its full and living development. It is only when both these moments subsist in their strength that the State can be regarded as articulated and genuinely organised.

§ 261

In contrast with the spheres of private law and private welfare, the family and civil society, the State is on the one hand an *external* necessity and their higher authority. Its nature is such that their laws as well as their interests are subordinate to it and dependent on it. However, on the other hand it is their *immanent* end, and its strength lies in the unity of its universal end with the particular interest of individuals, insofar as the individuals have, at the same time, duties towards it and also rights.

Thomas Carlyle

The King as Hero (1841)

This text is part of six lectures delivered by Carlyle in the month of May 1840. We find the usual conservative appeal to be obedient to exceptional Men (the Heroes) and to follow their guidance, because, in the words of the author “there is no act more moral between men than that of rule and obedience.” We need only to find “the true *Könning*, King, or Able-man, and he *has* a divine right over me.” A very simple justification for holding monocratic power that could not withstand the arriving onto the social scene of many new protagonists as politicians and party-men.

Source: Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, 1841.

Society is founded on Hero-worship (Lecture I).

All dignities of rank, on which human association rests, are what we may call a *Heroarchy* (Government of Heroes), — or a Hierarchy, for

it is “sacred” enough withal! The Duke means *Dux*, Leader; King is *Kon-ning*, *Kan-ning*, Man that *knows* or *cans*.

Society everywhere is some representation, not *insupportably* inaccurate, of a graduated Worship of Heroes — reverence and obedience done to men really great and wise. Not *insupportably* inaccurate, I say! They are all as bank-notes, these social dignitaries, all representing gold; — and several of them, alas, always are *forged* notes.

We can do with some forged false notes; with a good many even; but not with all, or the most of them forged! No: there have to come revolutions then; cries of Democracy, Liberty and Equality, and I know not what: — the notes being all false, and no gold to be had for *them*, people take to crying in their despair that there is no gold, that there never was any! — ‘Gold,’ Hero-worship, is nevertheless, as it was always and everywhere, and cannot cease till man himself ceases.

[...]

The Hero as King (Lecture VI)

We come now to the last form of Heroism; that which we call Kingship. The Commander over Men; he to whose will our wills are to be subordinated, and loyally surrender themselves, and find their welfare in doing so, may be reckoned the most important of Great Men.

He is practically the *summary* for us of *all* the various figures of Heroism; Priest, Teacher, whatsoever of earthly or of spiritual dignity we can fancy to reside in a man, embodies itself here, to *command* over us, to furnish us with constant practical teaching, to tell us for the day and hour what we are to *do*. He is called *Rex*, Regulator, *Roi*: our own name is still better; King, *Könning*, which means *Can-ning*, Able-man.

[...]

... may I say here, that the finding of your *Able-man* and getting him invested with the *symbols of ability*, with dignity, worship (*worth-ship*), royalty, kingdom, or whatever we call it, so that *he* may actually have room to guide according to his faculty of doing it, — is the business, well or ill accomplished, of all social procedure whatsoever in this world! Hustings-speeches, Parliamentary motions, Reform Bills, French Revolutions, all mean at heart this; or else nothing.

Find in any country the Ablest Man that exists there; raise *him* to the supreme place, and loyally reverence him: you have a perfect government for that country; no ballot-box, parliamentary eloquence, voting, constitution-building, or other machinery whatsoever can improve it a whit. It is in the perfect State; an ideal country. The Ablest Man; he means also the truest-hearted, justest, the Noblest Man: what he *tells us to do* must be precisely the wisest, fittest, that we could anywhere or anyhow learn; — the thing which it will in all ways behoove us, with right loyal thankfulness and nothing doubting, to do! Our *doing* and life were then, so far as government could regulate it, well regulated; that were the ideal of constitutions.

[...]

Much sorry stuff, written some hundred years ago or more, about the 'Divine right of Kings,' moulders unread now in the Public Libraries of this country. Far be it from us to disturb the calm process by which it is disappearing harmlessly from the earth, in those repositories! At the same time, not to let the immense rubbish go without leaving us, as it ought, some soul of it behind — I will say that it did mean something; something true, which it is important for us and all men to keep in mind. To assert that in whatever man you chose to lay hold of (by this or the other plan of clutching at him); and clapt a round piece of metal on the head of, and called King, — there straightway came to reside a divine virtue, so that *he* became a kind of god, and a

Divinity inspired him with faculty and right to rule over you to all lengths ...

But I will say withal, and that is what these Divine-right men meant, That in Kings, and in all human Authorities, and relations that men god-created can form among each other, there is verily either a Divine Right or else a Diabolic Wrong; one or the other of these two! For it is false altogether, what the last Sceptical Century taught us, that this world is a steamengine. There is a God in this world; and a God's-sanction, or else the violation of such, does look out from all ruling and obedience, from all moral acts of men.

There is no act more moral between men than that of rule and obedience. Woe to him that claims obedience when it is not due; woe to him that refuses it when it is! God's law is in that, I say, however the Parchment-laws may run: there is a Divine Right or else a Diabolic Wrong at the heart of every claim that one man makes upon another.

It can do none of us harm to reflect on this: in all the relations of life it will concern us; in Loyalty and Royalty, the highest of these. I esteem the modern error, That all goes by self-interest and the checking and balancing of greedy knaveries, and that in short, there is nothing divine whatever in the association of men, a still more despicable error, natural as it is to an unbelieving century, than that of a 'divine right' in people *called* Kings.

I say, Find me the true *Könning*, King, or Able-man, and he *has* a divine right over me. That we knew in some tolerable measure how to find him, and that all men were ready to acknowledge his divine right when found: this is precisely the healing which a sick world is everywhere, in these ages, seeking after! The true King, as guide of the practical, has ever something of the Pontiff in him, — guide of the spiritual, from which all practice has its rise.

Otto von Bismarck

The State as a provident father (1891)

Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898) was the first chancellor (1871-1890) of a unified German Empire. In this text there are many passages from his speeches where it emerges clearly that, even from a very conservative position, he considered necessary for the State to intervene in the provision of social assistance for the needy and for the working people. In this respect he can be viewed as the founder of the modern Welfare State.

Source: William Harbutt Dawson, *Bismarck and State Socialism. An exposition of the social and economic legislation of Germany since 1870* (1891)

Insurance of the Working Classes

Replying once to the accusation made by an opponent in the Reichstag that his social-political measures were tainted with Socialism, Prince Bismarck said,

“You will be compelled yet to add a few drops of social oil in the recipe you prescribe for the State; how many I cannot say.”

In no measures has more of the Chancellor's “social oil” been introduced than in the industrial insurance laws. These may be said to indicate the high-water mark of German State Socialism. That they are the result of organic development has already been shown. The *Sickness Insurance Law* of 1883, the *Accident Insurance Laws* of 1884 and 1885, and the *Old Age Insurance Law* of 1889 are based upon the principle of compulsion which was introduced into the sick insurance legislation of Prussia in 1854.

The laws relating to insurance against sickness and accident were rendered necessary by the inadequacy of the existing statutes. The law intended to protect the workman against the ill-effects of a helpless and indigent old age had no prototype in either German or Prussian legislation, yet it followed as a logical consequence, if not of the laws already mentioned, at least of the principles upon which they were avowedly based.

After all, the idea of insuring the industrial classes against the time of old age and incapacity for work was heard of in Germany long before the re-establishment of the Empire. As early as 1850 a Chemnitz manufacturer proposed in the Frankfort Parliament that the State should levy a tax upon all employers of labour for the benefit of workpeople who had through advancing age or other causes become less efficient, and for the establishment and maintenance of homes for aged and worn-out labourers. The proposal, however, found no support.

How the Insurance Law originated

Before the Government of Prince Bismarck had promised the trio of insurance laws which are now in operation, a small body of Conservatives in the Reichstag urged the introduction of obligatory insurance against old age and indigence. This was in 1878 and 1879, and the Ministerial reply was not altogether negative.

The Socialist Deputy, Herr Bebel, strange to say, advocated in the latter year insurance by the State direct — a principle which two years afterwards the Government unsuccessfully endeavoured to carry into effect. The attitude of the Government in 1879 was thus explained by Minister Hofmann:

“The Government accepts the theory that the workingman who has become incapacitated through age, or in consequence of his work, should not be a burden upon the public, but should be provided for by other institutions. It is, however, difficult to say *how*.”

The debate which took place on this occasion showed the growth of a strong feeling in favour of an extended system of industrial insurance, and all eyes turned to the State for direction in the settlement of what had become a great social problem. In 1881 came the first decided word from the Emperor and his Government upon the subject. The speech from the throne which opened the Reichstag on February 15th, 1881, said:

“At the opening of the Reichstag in February 1879, the Emperor, in reference to the [Anti-Socialist] law of October 21st, 1878, gave expression to the hope that this House would not refuse its co-operation in the remedying of social ills by means of legislation. A remedy cannot alone be sought in the repression of Socialistic excesses; there must be simultaneously the positive advancement of the welfare of the working classes. And here the care of those

workpeople who are incapable of earning their livelihood is of the first importance. In the interest of these the Emperor has caused a bill for the insurance of workpeople against the consequences of accident to be sent to the *Bundesrat* — a bill which, it is hoped, will meet a need felt both by workpeople and employers. His Majesty hopes that the measure will in principle receive the assent of the Federal Governments, and that it will be welcomed by the Reichstag as a complement of the legislation affording protection against Social-Democratic movements.

Past institutions intended to insure working people against the danger of falling into a condition of helplessness owing to the incapacity resulting from accident or age have proved inadequate, and their insufficiency has to no small extent contributed to cause the working classes to seek help by participating in Social-Democratic movements.”

The duties and functions of the State, as interpreted by the Crown and the Government, were more fully set forth in the *Begründung* [Justification] which accompanied the first *Accident Insurance Bill*, bearing the date March 8th, 1881.

“That the State, — it said — should interest itself to a greater degree than hitherto in those of its members who need assistance, is not only a duty of humanity and Christianity — by which State institutions should be permeated — but a duty of State-preserving policy, whose aim should be to cultivate the conception — and that, too, amongst the non-propertyed classes, which form at once the most numerous and the least instructed part of the population — that the State is not merely a necessary but a beneficent institution.

These classes must, by the evident and direct advantages which are secured to them by legislative measures, be led to regard the State not as an institution contrived for the protection of the better classes of society, but as one serving their own needs and interests. The

apprehension that a Socialistic element might be introduced into legislation if this end were followed should not check us.

So far as that may be the case it will not be an innovation but the further development of the modern State idea, the result of Christian ethics, according to which the State should discharge, besides the defensive duty of protecting existing rights, the positive duty of promoting the welfare of all its members, and especially those who are weak and in need of help, by means of judicious institutions and the employment of those resources of the community which are at its disposal. In this sense the legal regulation of poor relief which the modern State, in opposition to that of antiquity and of the Middle Ages, recognises as a duty incumbent upon it, contains a Socialistic element, and in truth the measures which may be adopted for improving the condition of the non-propertied classes are only a development of the idea which lies at the basis of poor relief.

Nor should the fear that legislation of this kind will not attain important results unless the resources of the Empire and of the individual States be largely employed be a reason for holding back, for the value of measures affecting the future existence of society and the State should not be estimated according to the sacrifice of money which may be entailed. With a single measure, such as is at present proposed, it is of course impossible to remove entirely, or even to a considerable extent, the difficulties which are contained in the social question. This is, in fact, but the first step in a direction in which a difficult work, that will last for years, will have to be overcome gradually and cautiously, and the discharge of one task will only produce new ones."

The first reading of the bill was taken on April 1st. Three days before this the Chancellor had given the Reichstag an advance-proof of his views on the question. Speaking of his general scheme of social and fiscal reform, he said:

“The end I have in view is to relieve the parishes of a large part of their poor-law charges by the establishment of an institution, having State support and extending to the entire Empire, for the maintenance of old and incapacitated people, just like the institution of accident insurance.”

And further:

“A generation may perhaps be necessary in order to decide whether the ends I have in view can be attained or should be abandoned, but the way must be trodden, and I believe that the parishes — especially those overburdened with poor — and under certain circumstances the circles (*Kreise*) as well, would experience considerable relief if the poor-law charges were distributed more justly amongst larger unions than now, and that they would receive considerable relief, without direct grants in cash, if all persons requiring relief owing to natural causes, as incapacity or old age, were to be received into an insurance institution established by the State.”

Supporting the proposed law on April 2nd, Prince Bismarck amplified these views. He said:

“The domain of legislation which we enter with this law ... deals with a question which will not very soon be removed from the order of the day. For fifty years we have been speaking of a social question.

Since the passing of the Socialist Law I have continually been reminded by persons in high and official circles, as well as by others in the popular classes, that a promise was then given that something positive should also be done to remove the legitimate causes of Socialism. I have had the reminder in mind *toto die* up to this very moment, and I do not believe that either our sons or grandsons will quite dispose of the social question which has been hovering before

us for fifty years. No political question can be brought to a perfect mathematical conclusion, so that book balances can be drawn up; these questions rise up, have their day, and then disappear among other questions of history: that is the way of organic development.”

He held that the State had positive and active functions to discharge, and that in Christian, monarchical, and paternally governed countries like the German States the principle of *Laissez-faire* was inadmissible. “I have a feeling, — he said — that the State can be responsible for its omissions,” by which he meant its neglect to afford adequate help and protection to the weaker of its citizens. He not only demanded for the working classes insurance against sickness, accident, and old age, but he asked that the State would bear a fair share of the cost. Industry could not bear the whole burden, and it would be absurd to try to make the workingman exclusively liable. So far as the present measure was concerned it was intended that the insurance premiums should be paid equally by employers, employed, and the Empire.

In proposing a national system of insurance, he held that the State could not fairly entrust the insurance of workpeople to private venture.

“The corollary of compulsion is, in my opinion, insurance through the State — either through the Empire or the individual State: without that, no compulsion. I should not have courage to exercise compulsion if I had nothing to offer in return. ...

If compulsion is enforced it is necessary that the law provide at the same time an institution for insurance, which shall be cheaper and securer than any other. We cannot expose the savings of the poor to the danger of bankruptcy, nor can we allow a deduction from the contributions to be paid as dividends or interest on shares. ... According to my idea of justice, we could not compel insurance in private companies which might go into bankruptcy, even with good

management, because of conjunctures or great calamities, and which are compelled to so fix their contributions that dividends can be paid to those who invest their money in the concerns — or at least a good interest with the hope of dividend.”

The Accident Insurance Law

Reserving an examination of the scheme of sickness insurance thus established, it will be convenient to trace further the career of the *Accident Bill*. An imperial message to the Reichstag of March 6th, 1884, stated that social-political legislation would monopolise attention during the forthcoming session.

“The Emperor’s wish, solemnly and emphatically declared on repeated occasions, to improve by organic laws the economic and social condition of the working classes, and thus to promote amity amongst all classes of the population, has found complete endorsement by the German nation. The deliberations on the *Sickness Insurance Law* passed last year furnished welcome evidence that the Reichstag is at one with the Federal Council in the consciousness of the importance and urgency of the social reforms contemplated. The next step in this direction consists of legal provision for working people injured by accident during employment, and in case of death for those dependent on them.

Seeing that the *Accident Insurance Bill* introduced in the spring of 1882 did not receive legislative sanction, it has been subjected to careful reconsideration in the light of the experience derived from past developments of the question. This has led to the modification of the contemplated co-operative organisation of industrial undertakers on the basis of extended self-government, as well as the further participation of the workpeople in the same for the protection of their interests....

When the *Accident Insurance Bill* has become law, it will be our duty to seek to establish, upon a similar basis of organisation, satisfactory provision for workpeople who through age or incapacity have become unable to earn their livelihood."

Prince Bismarck spoke on March 15th, 1884, in support of the new *Accident Insurance Bill*. He admitted at the outset that the Reichstag was asked to join the Government in exploring a *terra incognita*, and that the difficulties to be encountered would increase the more the progress made. In order to make success more certain it was proposed to begin with an incomplete measure, which should only embrace a section of the great industrial army.

"Yet we do not, — he added — intend to disregard the other branches of industry; we only desire to guard against the danger indicated by the proverb that better is the enemy of good, the danger that when one tries to attain too much, he may attain nothing at all. I should like us and the German Reichstag to have the merit of having made at least a beginning in this domain of legislation, and thus of having preceded the other European States. The limitation of the measure is dictated by the consideration that the wider and more comprehensive it is the more numerous are the interests touched, and therefore the greater the opposition on the part of the representatives of these interests, which will be aroused and will find expression here, so that the passing of the measure would be all the more difficult. The extent of the limitation should in my opinion be determined by the extent of the *Employers' Liability Act* of 1871, for I regarded it as our first duty to remove the deficiencies of the first attempt made in this domain by that law."

He laid before the Reichstag the question: Should the State compel the insurance of working people? and answering it in the affirmative he drew the conclusion that the State should take insurance into its

own hands, and not leave it to private enterprise, which really meant private speculation on the misfortunes of the labouring population.

“The whole matter centres in the question: Is it the duty of the State, or is it not, to provide for its helpless citizens? I maintain that it is its duty, that it is the duty not only of the ‘*Christian State*,’ as I ventured once to call it when speaking of ‘practical Christianity,’ but of every State. It would be foolish for a corporation to undertake matters which the individual can attend to alone; and similarly, the purposes which the parish can fulfil with justice and with advantage are left to the parish. But there are purposes which only the State as a whole can fulfil. To these belong national defence, the general system of communications, and, indeed, everything spoken of in article 4 of the Constitution.

To these, too, belong the help of the necessitous and the removal of those just complaints which provide Social Democracy with really effective material for agitation. This is a duty of the State, a duty which the State cannot permanently disregard...

As soon as the State takes this matter [of insurance] in hand — and I believe it is its duty to take it in hand — it must seek the cheapest form of insurance, and, not aiming at profit for itself, must keep primarily in view the benefit of the poor and needy. Otherwise, we might leave the fulfilment of certain State duties — such as poor relief, in the widest sense of the words, is amongst others — like education and national defence with more right to share companies, only asking ourselves: Who will do it most cheaply? Who will do it most effectively? If provision for the necessitous in a greater degree than is possible with the present poor relief legislation is a State duty, the State must take the matter in hand; it cannot rest content with the thought that a share company will undertake it.”

The Bill was referred to committee on March 21st, and it emerged into daylight again at the beginning of May. The Chancellor spoke

on the second reading, proclaiming the workingman's "right to labour" (*Recht auf Arbeit*), as laid down in the common law of Prussia. He held that the State was ultimately responsible for the employment of those of its citizens who, through no fault of their own, lacked the opportunity to work, and thus the means of sustenance. It could not stand by and see them hunger. He cared not that this doctrine-savoured of Socialism.

"If an establishment employing twenty thousand or more workpeople were to be ruined, we could not allow these men to hunger.

We should have to resort to real State Socialism and find work for them, and this is what we do in every case of distress. If the objection were right that we should shun State Socialism as we would an infectious disease, how do we come to organise works in one province and another in case of distress — works which we should not undertake if the labourers had employment and wages? In such cases we build railways whose profitableness is questionable; we carry out improvements which otherwise would be left to private initiative. If that is Communism, I have no objection at all to it; though with such catchwords we really get no further."

The measure was eventually passed by a substantial majority, and it became law of the land on July 6th, 1884. The Act was to come into operation on October 1st, 1885.

The Old Age Insurance Law

The trio of insurance laws was completed in 1889 by the passing of a measure providing for the insurance of workpeople against the time of incapacity and old age (*Invaliditäts- und Altersversicherungsgesetz*). This was no after-thought suggested by the laws which preceded. It formed, from the first, part of the complete plan of insur-

ance foreshadowed by Prince Bismarck over a decade ago, and in some of the Chancellor's early speeches on the social question he regarded the pensioning of old and incapacitated workpeople as at once desirable and inevitable. The speculation has been ventured that the Emperor Frederick, had he lived, might not, owing to his well-known political leanings, have been disposed to carry out this part of Bismarck's social programme. It is, however, unlikely that any such departure from established policy would have been taken, unlikely even that it was meditated, for a draft law on the subject of old age insurance had been laid before the Reichstag before the death of the Emperor William. Whatever may have been the ideas of the Spring-time Emperor, his son, the present sovereign, early let it be understood, on his ascending the throne in the summer of 1888, that his social policy was that of the old Emperor and of Prince Bismarck.

"It will be my endeavour, — he said in his speech from the throne on June 25th, — to carry on the work of imperial legislation in the sense in which my late grandfather began it. I especially endorse to its full extent the message issued by him on November 17th, 1881, and in its sense I will continue to aim at legislation that will give to the industrial population the protection which, in accordance with the principles of Christian ethics, it can afford to the weak and the distressed in the struggle for existence."

An imperial utterance of November 22nd, 1888 was more pointed.

"As a valued legacy from my grandfather, I have undertaken the task of carrying on the social-political legislation inaugurated by him. I do not indulge the hope that the distress and misery of mankind can be banished from the world by legislation, but I regard it as the duty of the State to endeavour to ameliorate existing economic evils to the extent of its power, and by means of organic institutions to recognise, as a duty of the commonwealth, the active

charity which springs from the soil of Christianity. The difficulties which attend the comprehensive insurance, by State command, of workpeople against the dangers of age and incapacity are great, but with God's help not insuperable."

Soon afterwards the Reichstag was called upon to consider this final measure of insurance, and in June 1889, it became law, though it was left to the Emperor and the Federal Council to determine the time of its coming into operation.

The *Old Age Insurance Law* is expected to apply to about twelve million workpeople, including labourers, factory operatives, journeymen, domestic servants, clerks, assistants, and apprentices in handicrafts and in trade (apothecaries excluded), and smaller officials (as on railways, etc.), so long as their wages do not reach 2,000 marks (about £100) a year; also persons employed in shipping, whether maritime, river, or lake; and, if the Federal Council so determine, certain classes of small independent undertakers. The obligation to insure begins with the completion of the sixteenth year, but there are exemptions, including persons who, owing to physical or mental weakness, are unable to earn fixed minimum wages, and persons already entitled to public pensions, equal in amount to the benefits secured by the law, or who are assured accident annuities. The contributions are paid by the employers and workpeople in equal shares, but the State also guarantees a yearly subsidy of 50 marks (£2 10s.) for every annuity paid. Contributions are only to be paid when the insured is in work.

The law contains many provisions intended to secure to workpeople equitable treatment during the first years of its operation, but it is impossible here to do more than indicate main outlines. A few important stipulations must close this examination. An annuitant cannot claim both for old age and incapacity. Should an insured male who has contributed five years die before receiving an annuity, his widow (or in the event of her death the orphan children under fifteen

years of age) are entitled to receive half the amount of his contributions. In case an insured female dies under the same circumstances the claim may only be made on behalf of her children under fifteen years, if such exist. No such repayment of premiums can be made if the bereaved persons benefit under the *Accident Insurance Law*. Insurance is to take place in institutions established under the supervision of the Federal Council. Contributions are made in postage stamps affixed to yearly receipt cards supplied to the insured. Annuities are to be paid through the post-office monthly in advance, as in the case of accident assurance.

While these three measures of industrial insurance cannot but prove of enormous social value, it must not be forgotten that the great army of casual labourers and unemployed will receive no benefit. How can the position of this vast class be improved? To the problem here presented, German statesmanship will no doubt seriously direct its attention before long.

Prince Bismarck has avowed his recognition of the labourer's "right to work," a principle laid down in the common law of Prussia. His insurance laws seem, indeed, to demand the recognition of this "right" as a logical necessity. If the Chancellor will show the world how to solve the perplexing problem involved in the existence of a numerous class of labourers who are shut out from the employment which private enterprise is able to offer, he will further augment his already brilliant reputation as the first social reformer of the century.

Liberalism

The term Liberalism has undergone such a transformation to become now probably the most ambiguous of all ideological qualifications.

It refers here to all those who present themselves as “progressive” individuals who want to use the power of the State to promote the common good.

The main difference with respect to the supporters of all the other ideologies is that a liberal imposes his ideas and practices by way of the State while talking extensively about freedom, as if the State might be the harbinger and the promoter of liberty for all.

In reality, the message of *laissez-faire* and *laissez-passer* that might have condensed the original classical principles of liberalism (autonomous individuals and voluntary communities) has been transformed by modern liberals into a *laissez-nous faire, laissez-nous passer*. And the results, among others, have been the exporting-imposing of a so-called liberal democracy and the formulation of the TINA doctrine (there is no alternative to the “Liberal State”).

Max Stirner

Political Liberalism

(1845)

This is one of the most damning critiques of political liberalism ever written. Clearly not everything attributed to liberal thinkers and activists should be discarded, following Stirner's devastating analysis. However, many would agree that the replacement of personal power (the king, the aristocrat) by impersonal ones (the State, the Nation, the Law) as advocated and historically implemented by liberal parties, has brought about a power more absolute and pervasive than most of those existing in the past. For this reason, the passionate plea put forward by Stirner for the individual, the unique human being, the "egoist" looking after his/her own well-being, is not to be belittled even when it is expressed in a crude language that might repeal instead of attract those who are for the dignity and freedom of all human beings.

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

In the eighteenth century, after the chalice of so-called absolute monarchy had been drained down to the dregs, people became aware that their drink did not taste human — too clearly aware not to begin to crave for another cup. Since our fathers were “human beings” after all, they at last demanded to be regarded as such.

Whoever sees in us something else than human beings, we likewise will not see in him a human being, but an inhuman being, and treat him as an inhuman being; on the other hand, whoever recognizes us as human beings and protects us against the danger of being treated inhumanly, him we will honour as our true protector and patron.

Let us then hold together and protect the human in each other; then we find in our *cohesion* the necessary protection, and in ourselves, *those who hold together*, a community of those who know their human dignity and hold together as “human beings.” Our holding together is the *State*; we who hold together are the *Nation*.

In our co-operation as Nation or State we are only human beings. How we behave in other respects as individuals, and what self-seeking impulses we may there succumb to, belongs solely to our *private* life; our public or State life is a *purely human* one. Everything un-human or “egoistic” that clings to us is degraded to a “private matter” and we separate precisely the State from ‘bourgeois society’, in which ‘egoism’ is at work.

The true man is the Nation, but the individual is always an egoist. Therefore cast off your individuality or isolation wherein dwells discord and egoistic inequality, and consecrate yourselves wholly to the true man — the Nation or the State. Then you will be considered human beings and have everything that is human. The State, the true Man, will entitle you to what belongs to it, and give you the “Rights of Man”. Man gives you his rights!

So runs the speech of the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie is nothing else than the idea that the State is all in all, the true Man, and that the individual's human worth consists in being a citizen of the State. In being a good citizen he seeks his highest honour; beyond that he knows nothing higher than at most the antiquated "being a good Christian."

The bourgeoisie developed itself in the struggle against the privileged classes, by whom it was cavalierly treated as "Third Estate" and confounded with the *canaille*. In other words, up to that time the State had regarded people as belonging to different castes. The son of an aristocrat was selected for posts to which the most distinguished commoners aspired in vain. Bourgeois sentiment revolted against this. No more honours, no more preferential treatment of individuals, no more distinction of class! All were equal! No *special interest* should be pursued, but the *general interest of all*.

The State should be a community of free and equal human beings, and every one should dedicate himself to the "good of the whole," to be dissolved in the *State*, to make the State his end and ideal.

State! State! so ran the general cry, and thenceforth people sought for the "right State Constitution," the best Constitution, i.e. the State in its best form. The idea of the State entered all hearts and aroused enthusiasm; to serve it, this worldly god, became the new worship and cult. The properly *political* epoch had dawned. To serve the State or the Nation became the highest ideal, the State's interest the highest interest, State service (for which one does not by any means need to be an official) the highest honour.

So then the separate interests and personalities were driven away, and sacrifice for the State had become the *shibboleth* [1]. One must give up *oneself*, and live only for the State. One must act "disinterestedly," must not want to benefit *himself*, but the State. Hereby, the State has become the real person, before which the individual personality vanishes. I do not live, but HE lives in me. Therefore, in comparison with the former self-seeking, this was unselfishness and

impersonality itself. Before this God — the State — all egoism disappeared, and before Him all were equal; they were without any other distinction — men, nothing but men.

The Revolution was fuelled by the inflammable material of *property*. The government needed money. Now it had to prove the proposition that it was *absolute*, and so the master of all property, the sole proprietor; it had to *take* control of *its* money, which was only in the possession of the subjects, but not their property. Instead, it convenes Estates-General, to have this money *granted* to it. The fear of the ultimate consequence destroyed the illusion of an *absolute* government. He who must have something “granted” to him cannot be regarded as absolute. The subjects recognized that they were *real proprietors*, and that it was *their* money that was demanded. Those who had hitherto been subjects attained the consciousness that they were *proprietors*. Bailly [2] describes this in a few words:

“If you cannot dispose of my property without my assent, how much less can you of my person, of all that concerns my mental and social position? All this is my property, like the piece of land that I cultivate; and I have a right, an interest, to make the laws myself.”

Bailly's words sound, certainly, as if every one was a proprietor now. However, instead of the government, instead of the prince, *The Nation* now became proprietor and master. From that time on the ideal is spoken of as — “freedom of the people — a free people,” etc.

As early as July 8, 1789, the declaration of the bishop of Autun and Barrière [3] destroyed the pretence that each and every individual was of importance in the legislative process; it showed the complete powerlessness of the constituents; *the majority of the representatives* had become *master*. When on July 9 the plan for the division of the work on the constitution is proposed, Mirabeau [4] remarked that “the government has only power, no rights; only in the *people* is the source of all *right* to be found.” On July 16 this same Mirabeau

exclaimed: "Is not the people the source of all power?" The source, therefore, of all right, and the source of all power! By the way, here the substance of "right" becomes visible; it is — *power*. "He who has power has right."

The bourgeoisie is the heir of the privileged classes. In fact, the rights of the barons, which were taken from them as "usurpations," only passed over to the bourgeoisie. For the bourgeoisie was now called the "Nation." All *prerogatives* were now put "into the hands of the Nation." As a result they ceased to be "privileges" [*Vorrechte*]: they became "rights" [*Rechte*]. From this time on, the Nation demands tithes, compulsory services; it has inherited the manorial court, the hunting rights, the serfs. The night of August 4 was the death-night of privileges or "prerogatives" (cities, communes, boards of magistrates, were also privileged, provided with prerogatives and seigniorial rights), and ended with the new morning of "right," the "rights of the State," the "rights of the Nation."

The monarch in the person of the "royal master" had been a paltry monarch compared with this new monarch, the "Sovereign Nation." This new monarchy was a thousand times severer, stricter, and more consistent. Against the new monarch there was no longer any right, any privilege at all; how limited the "absolute king" of the *ancien regime* looks in comparison! The Revolution brought about the transformation of the *limited monarchy* into an *absolute monarchy*. From this time on, every right that is not conferred by this monarch is a "pretension"; but every prerogative that he bestows is a "right." The times demanded *absolute royalty*, absolute monarchy; therefore down fell that so-called absolute royalty which had so little understood how to become absolute that it remained limited by a thousand little lords.

The *bourgeoisie* has brought forth what has been longed for and striven for for millennia, namely to find that absolute master next to whom no other masters and mistresses would exist sharing that

power. It has revealed the Master who alone confers “legal titles” and without whose granting *nothing is authorised*. “Thus we now know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God saved the one.” [*First Letter to the Corinthians*, 8:4]

You can no longer argue against *the* Right, as you can against *a* right, by claiming that it is “an injustice.” One can only say that it is nonsense, an illusion. If one were to call it an injustice, one would have to oppose it with another right and measure it against it. If, on the other hand, one rejects the Right as such, the Right in and of itself, completely and utterly, then one also rejects the concept of injustice and dissolves the entire concept of Right (which includes the concept of injustice).

What does that mean, that we all enjoy “equality of political rights?” Only this, that the State takes no account of my person, that I, like everyone else, am only a man to it, without having any other significance that impresses it. I do not impress it as a nobleman, the son of a nobleman, or even as the heir of an official whose office belongs to me by inheritance (as in the Middle Ages with the earldoms etc. and later under absolute kingship, where hereditary offices occur).

Now the State has an innumerable number of rights to grant, e.g. the right to lead a battalion, a company, etc., the right to lecture at a university, and so forth; it has to assign them because they are its own, i.e. State rights or “political” rights. It makes no difference to him to whom he attributes them, if the recipient only fulfils the duties that arise from the rights granted. We are all right and *equal* to him, one worth no more and no less than another. Whoever receives the command of the army is indifferent to me, says the Sovereign State, provided that the recipient understands the matter properly.

“Equality of political rights” has, consequently, the meaning that every one may acquire every right that the State has to confer, if only he fulfils the conditions attached to it — conditions which are to be sought only in the nature of the particular right, not in a preference

for the person (*persona grata*). The nature of the right to become an officer, for example, entails that one possess healthy limbs and an appropriate degree of knowledge, but it does not have noble birth as a condition. If, on the other hand, even the most deserving commoner could not attain that rank, then an inequality of political rights would exist. Today's States have, more or less, implemented this principle of equality.

The monarchy of estates (so I will call absolute royalty, the time of the kings *before* the revolution) kept the individual in dependence on a lot of little monarchies. These were cooperatives societies [*Genossenschaften*] like the guilds, the nobility, the priesthood, the bourgeoisie, cities, municipalities. Everywhere the individual must regard himself first as a member of this small society, and yield unconditional obedience to its spirit, the *esprit de corps*, as his monarch. More than the individual nobleman, for example, must his family, the honour of his tribe, count for him.

It was only through his corporation, his class, that the individual related to the larger corporation, the State; just as in Catholicism the individual deals with God only through the priest. The third estate now put an end to this by demonstrating the courage to negate *itself as an estate*. It resolved no longer to be and to be called one estate among other estates, but to be transfigured and universalised into a 'Nation'. In this way it created a much more perfect and absolute monarchy, and the whole *principle of the estates* that had prevailed before, the principle of small monarchies within the great, was destroyed.

Therefore it cannot be said that the Revolution was a revolution against the first two privileged estates. It was against the small monarchies of the estates in general. But when the estates and their tyranny had been broken (even the king was only a king of the estates, not a king of the people), then there remained the individuals freed from the inequality of the estates.

Were they now really to be without an estate and out of 'limits and links', no longer bound by any estate (*status*) without a general bond of union? No, the Third Estate had only declared itself the Nation in order not to remain an estate among other estates, but to become the *only Estate*. This sole Estate is the Nation, the "State." What had become of the individual? A political Protestant, for he had entered into a direct relationship with his God, the State. He was no longer an aristocrat, in the monarchy of the nobility, a craftsman in the monarchy of the guild, but he, like all others, recognised and acknowledged only *one Lord*, the State, as whose servant they all received the same honorary title, 'citizen'.

The *bourgeoisie* is the aristocracy of Merit; its motto, "Let merit wear its crowns." It fought against the "lazy" aristocracy, for according to it, the industrious, the person characterized by industry and merit, not the "born" is free; but also not I am free, but the 'meritorious', the honest servant (of his King; of the State; of the people in the Constitutional States).

By *serving*, one acquires freedom, that is, acquires "merit," even if one served Mammon. One must make merit for oneself for the State, i.e., for the principle of the State, for the moral spirit of the State. Whoever *serves* this spirit of the State is a good citizen, regardless of which profession he may favour. In the eyes of the good citizens, the 'innovators' are practising a 'unproductive art'. Only the 'huckster' is 'practical', and the huckster spirit is as good as the one that hunts for civil servant positions, as the one that seeks to make a fortune in trade or otherwise to become useful to itself and others.

But if the deserving are considered the free (for what freedom does the contented citizen, the faithful office-holder, lack of that freedom that his heart desires?), then the 'servants' are the free. The obedient servant is the free man! What glaring nonsense! Yet this is the sense of the bourgeoisie, and its poet Goethe, like its philosopher Hegel, have glorified the dependence of the subject on the object, obedience

to the objective world, etc. He who serves the cause alone, 'devoting himself entirely to it,' has true freedom.

And among the thinkers the cause was — *reason*, that which, like State and church, gives *general laws*, and puts the individual man in irons by the *idea of humanity*. It determines what is "true," and what one must then conform to. No more "rational" people than the honest servants, who primarily are called good citizens as servants of the State.

Whether you are filthy rich or as poor as a church-mouse, the State of the bourgeoisie leaves that to your own devices; but only have a "good disposition." This it demands of you and considers it its most urgent task to establish this in all of you. Therefore, it will protect you from "evil suggestions" by keeping the 'evil-minded' in check and silencing their inflammatory speeches with the sword of censorship or the stick of the press and behind the walls of dungeons, and on the other hand will appoint people of 'good disposition' as censors and in every way exert a *moral influence* on you through 'well-meaning and well-intentioned' people. Once he has made you deaf to the evil suggestions, he will open your ears again all the more diligently to good promptings.

With the age of the *bourgeoisie* begins that of *liberalism*.

People want to see what is "rational," "suited to the times," etc., established everywhere. The following definition of liberalism, which is supposed to be pronounced in its honour, characterizes it completely: "Liberalism is nothing else than the knowledge of reason, applied to our existing relations." [5] Its aim is a "rational order," a "moral behaviour," a "limited freedom," not anarchy, lawlessness, selfhood.

But, if reason rules, then the *person* succumbs. Art has for a long time not only acknowledged the ugly, but considered it as necessary to its existence, and has taken it into itself: it needs the villain. In the reli-

gious domain, too, the most extreme liberals go so far that they want to see the most religious man regarded as a citizen — that is, the religious villain; they want to see no more of trials for heresy. But against the “rational law” no one is to rebel, otherwise he is threatened with the severest penalty. What is wanted is not free movement and recognition of the person or of Me, but of reason — a dominion of reason, a domination. The liberals are *zealots*, not exactly for the faith, for God, but certainly for *reason*, their master. They cannot tolerate any impropriety and therefore no self-development and self-determination; they *play the guardian* as effectively as the most absolute rulers.

“Political liberty,” what are we to understand by that? Is it the liberty of the individual from the State and its laws? No; on the contrary, it is the individual's *subjection* within the State and to the laws of the State. But why “liberty”? Because one is no longer separated from the State by intermediaries, but stands in direct and immediate relation to it; because one is a citizen, not the subject of another, not even of the king as a person, but only in his capacity as “supreme head of the State.” Political liberty, this fundamental doctrine of liberalism, is nothing but a second phase of Protestantism, and runs quite parallel with “religious liberty.”

Or would it perhaps be right to understand “political liberty” as freedom from religion? Anything but that. Independence of intermediaries is all that it is intended to express, independence of mediating priests, the abolition of the “laity,” and so, direct and immediate relation to religion or to God. Only on condition that one has religion can one enjoy religious freedom; religious freedom does not mean lack of religion, but intimate faith, unmediated communion with God. For the religiously free, religion is a matter of the heart, it is to him his own affair, it is to him a “sacredly serious matter.” So, too, to the “politically free” individual the State is a sacredly serious matter; it is his heart's affair, his chief affair, his own affair.

Political liberty means that the *polis*, the State, is free; religious liberty means that religion is free, as freedom of conscience signifies that conscience is free; thus not that I am free from the State, from religion, from conscience, or that I am rid of them. It does not mean My freedom, but the freedom of a power that rules and dominates Me; it means that one of My despots, such as the State, religion, conscience, is free. State, religion, conscience, these despots, make Me a slave, and their liberty is My slavery. It goes without saying that they necessarily follow the principle "the end justifies the means." If the end is the welfare of the State, then war is a sacred means; if justice is the end of the State, then murder is a sacred means and is called by its sacred name, 'execution.' etc. The sacred State sanctions everything that serves its interests.

The 'individual freedom' over which civil liberalism keeps jealous watch, does not at all signify a completely free self-determination, whereby actions become entirely mine, but only independence from persons. Individually free is he who is not responsible to any human being. Understood in this sense — and it must not be understood otherwise — not only is the ruler individually free, that is, *unaccountable to men* (before God he acknowledges himself responsible), but all are free who are 'accountable only to the law.' This kind of freedom was won by the revolutionary movement of the century, namely, independence of the will, of the type *tel est notre plaisir*.

Therefore the constitutional prince himself had to be divested of all personality, of all individual decision, so as not to violate the 'individual freedom' of others as a person, as an *individual human being*. The *personal will of the ruler* has disappeared in the constitutional prince; it is with a right feeling, therefore, that absolute princes resist this. Nevertheless it is these princes who want to be 'Christian princes' in the best sense of the word. But to do this they would have to become a *purely spiritual* power, since the Christian is subject only to the *spirit* ('God is spirit').

Only the constitutional prince represents consistently the purely spiritual power; he represents the one who stands spiritualised, without any personal significance, to such a degree that he can pass for a perfect, uncanny 'spirit,' for an *idea*. The constitutional king is the truly *Christian* king, the genuine, consistent carrying-out of the Christian principle. In the constitutional monarchy, individual rule, that is, a ruler who really *wills*, has found its end; therefore, *individual freedom* reigns here, independence from every individual ruler, from everyone who could command me with a *tel est notre plaisir*. It is the completed Christian life in the State, a spiritualised life.

The bourgeoisie behaves in a thoroughly liberal manner. Any personal encroachment into the sphere of another outrages the bourgeois sense: if the bourgeois sees that one is dependent on the whim, the pleasure, the will of a person as an individual (i.e. as not authorised by a 'higher power'), he immediately brings out his liberalism and cries out about 'arbitrariness'. Enough, the citizen claims his freedom from what is called a command [*Befehl*]: 'Nobody has any authority to command me!' *Orders* carries the idea that what I am to do is another man's will, while *law* [*Gesetz*] does not express a personal authority of another.

The freedom of the citizenry is freedom or independence from the will of another person, the so-called personal or individual freedom; for to be personally free means only to be free in such a way that no other person can dispose of mine, or that what I may or may not do does not depend on the personal determination of another. Freedom of the press, among other freedoms, is one of these liberties of liberalism, which fights only the coercion of censorship as that of personal arbitrariness, but otherwise shows itself extremely inclined and willing to tyrannise over others through 'press laws,' i.e., the civil liberals want freedom of writing *for themselves*; for since they are *law-abiding*, they will not fall under the law through their writings.

Only liberal matter, that is, only lawful matter, is to be allowed to be printed; otherwise the “press laws” threaten “press-penalties.” If one’s personal freedom is secured, one does not even notice how, when it comes to something further, the most glaring lack of freedom becomes dominant. For, although one is rid of the *command*, and ‘No one has any business to give orders to us,’ one has become all the more subservient to the *law*. One is now formally enslaved by legal means.

In the civil-State [*Bürger-Staat*] there are only ‘free people’ who are forced into thousands of things (e.g. into paying homage, into a creed, and the like). But what does that matter? Why, it is only the State, the law, not any person, that compels them!

What does the bourgeoisie want with its zeal against every personal command, i.e. one not grounded in the ‘thing’ [*Sache*], in ‘reason,’ etc.? It is simply fighting in the interest of the “cause” against the dominion of “persons”! But the cause of the spirit is what is reasonable, good, lawful, etc.; that is the ‘good cause.’ The bourgeoisie wants an *impersonal* ruler.

Furthermore, if the principle is this, that only the thing should rule the man, namely the thing of morality, the thing of legality, etc., then no personal curtailment of the one by the other may be authorised (as, for example, the commoner was formerly curtailed by the offices of the nobility, the noble curtailed by the commoner’s handicrafts, etc.), i.e. *free competition* must take place. Only through the thing can one curtail the other (e. g. the rich man the destitute through money, a thing), not as a person. Henceforth there is only one sovereignty, the sovereignty of the State; personally, no one is any longer master of another. From their birth, children belong to the State, and to the parents only in the name of the State, which, for example, does not allow infanticide, and demands the baptism of children.

But the State also regards all its children as equal (‘civil or political

equality'), and they may see for themselves how they get along with each other: they may *compete*.

Free competition means nothing more than that each one may be present, assert himself, and fight against all the rest. Naturally, the feudal faction opposed this, since their existence depended on absence of competition. The struggles during the period of the restoration of the French monarchy had no other content than that the bourgeoisie fought for free competition, while the feudal faction sought to bring back the guild system. Now, free competition has won, and against the guild system it had to win.

If the Revolution ended in a reaction, then this only brought to light what the Revolution *actually was*. For every striving then arrives at reaction when it *comes to its senses*, and only storms forward into the original action as long as it is a *intoxication*, a 'rashness'. 'Prudence' will always be the keyword of reaction, because prudence sets limits and frees the actual will, i.e. the principle, from the initial "licentiousness" and "unrestrainedness".

Wild youths, students who renounce all considerations, are *really* philistines, since with them, as with the latter, considerations form the substance of their conduct; only that they, as braggarts, rebel against considerations and behave negatively, while as philistines, later, they surrender to them and behave positively towards them. In both cases, all their doing and thinking revolve around these considerations, but the philistine is *reactionary* compared to the young student, who is the wild fellow who has come to his senses, just as the latter is the rash philistine. Everyday experience confirms the truth of this transformation and shows how the boastful turn to philistines by growing older.

So, too, the so-called reaction in Germany gives proof that it was only the *discreet* continuation of the warlike jubilation of liberty.

The Revolution was not directed against the *existing*, but against *this existing*, against a *particular* existence. It abolished *this* ruler, not *the* ruler; on the contrary, the French were ruled most inexorably; it killed the old vicious rulers, but wanted to confer on the virtuous ones a securely established position, i.e., it replaced vice only with virtue. (Vice and virtue, again, are on their part distinguished from each other only as a wild young fellow from a philistine).

To this day, the principle of the revolution has remained to fight only against *one or another* particular establishment, to be *reformatory*. As much as *improved*, as much as the 'prudent progress' may be adhered to, always there is only a *new master* set in the old one's place, and the overthrow is a new construction. We are still at the distinction of the young philistine from the old one. The Revolution began in a *bourgeois* way with the rising of the third estate, the middle class; it ends in a *bourgeois* way. It was not the *individual* – and he alone is the *human being* – who became free, but the *burgher*, the *citoyen*, the *political* man, who for that very reason is not the Man, but an exemplar of the human species, and more particularly an exemplar of the *burgher* species, a *free burgher*.

In the Revolution it was not the individual who acted in a world-historical sense, but a *people*: the *Nation*, the Sovereign Nation, wanted to effect everything. An imagined *ego*, an idea, such as the Nation is, appears acting, i.e., the individuals give themselves up as tools of this idea and act as 'citizens.'

The power and at the same time the limits of the bourgeoisie are in the *fundamental law of the State*, in a charter, in a legal [*rechtlich*] or 'just' [*gerecht*] prince who himself rules and governs according to 'reasonable laws'; in short, in *legality*. The period of the *bourgeoisie* is dominated by the British spirit of legality.

An assembly of provincial estates, for example, always reminds itself that its powers only go so and so far, and that it is only appointed by favour and can be dismissed again by disfavour. It always reminds

itself of its *calling*. It cannot be denied that my father begot me; but now that I am begotten, his intentions of begetting me do not concern me a bit, and whatever *calling* he may have given me, I do what I myself want. Therefore even a called assembly of estates, the French assembly in the beginning of the Revolution, recognized quite rightly that it was independent of the one who had summoned it. It *existed* and would have been foolish if it had not asserted its right to exist, but imagined that it was dependent, as on a father.

The called one no longer has to ask “what did the caller want when he created me?” but “what do I want after I have once followed the call?” Not the one who called him, not the constituents, not the charter under which their coming together was brought about, nothing will be for him a sacred, inviolable power. He is *authorised* to do everything that is in his power; he will know no restrictive ‘authorisation,’ will not want to be *loyal*. If one could expect anything of this sort from the chambers at all, it would be a completely egotistical chamber, severed from all ties and ruthless. But chambers are always submissive, and so it is not surprising that so much half-hearted or undecided, i.e. hypocritical, ‘egoism’ is spreading in them.

The members of the estates are to remain within the *limits* prescribed for them by the charter, by the king’s will, and the like. If they cannot or will not do so, they are to ‘resign.’ What loyal subject could act differently, could put himself, his convictions, and his will as the *first* thing, who could be so immoral as to want to assert *himself* even if the body and everything were to perish? People keep carefully within the limits of their *authorization*; of course one must remain within the limits of his *power* anyhow, because no one can do more than he can. ‘My power, or, if it be so, powerlessness, be my sole limit, but would powers be nothing except restrictive precepts? Should I profess this all-subversive view? No, I am a law-abiding citizen!’

The bourgeoisie professes a morality that is closely related to its essence. The first demand of this morality is that people should pursue a solid business, an honest trade, and lead a moral life. The industrial baron, the concubine, the thief, robber and murderer, the gambler, the destitute man without employment, the reckless are immoral in its eyes. The brave citizen describes the mood against these ‘immoral’ people as his ‘deepest indignation’.

All of them lack a permanent settlement, the *solidity* of business, a solid, honourable life, a fixed income, etc. In short, because their existence is not based on a secure foundation, they belong to the dangerous ‘individuals or isolated individuals’, to the dangerous *proletariat*: they are ‘lone bawlers’ who offer no ‘guarantees’ and ‘have nothing to lose,’ and so, nothing to risk. For example, the forming of family ties *binds* a man; he who is bound furnishes security, can be taken hold of; not so the vagabond. The gambler risks everything, ruins himself and others, offers no guarantee.

All those who appear suspicious, hostile, and dangerous to the citizen could be summarised under the name ‘vagabonds’; he dislikes any vagabond way of life. For there are also intellectual vagabonds for whom the ancestral home of their fathers seems too narrow and oppressive to be content with the limited space any more: instead of keeping within the bounds of a moderate way of thinking and accepting as inviolable truth what furnishes comfort and tranquillity to thousands, they transgress all the limits of tradition and run wild with their impertinent criticism and untamed mania for doubt, these extravagant vagabonds.

They form the class of the unsettled, restless, changeable, i.e., the *proletarians*, and when they give voice to their unsettled nature, they are called “unruly fellows.”

The so-called *proletariat* or pauperism has such a broad sense. How much one would err if one credited the bourgeoisie with the desire to do away with poverty (pauperism) to the best of their ability. On the

contrary, the good bourgeois finds comfort in the conviction that the 'good things of fortune are unevenly distributed and will always remain so – according to God's wise counsel'. The poverty that surrounds him on all sides does not bother the true citizen any more than that he at most comes to terms with it by throwing an alms, or providing work and food for an 'honest and useful' fellow.

But all the more does he feel his quiet enjoyment marred by the *innovation-hungry* and *discontented* poverty, by those poor people who no longer remain silent and suffer, but begin to be extravagant and restless. Lock up the vagabond, throw the troublemaker into the darkest dungeon! He wants to 'incite displeasure and rebellion against existing ordinances' in the State – stone him, stone him!

But it is precisely these malcontents who proceed from the following line of reasoning: it does not matter to the 'good citizens' who protects them and their principles, whether an absolute or a constitutional king, a republic, etc., if only they are protected. And what is their principle, whose protector they always 'love'? Not that of labour; nor that of birth. But that of *mediocrity*, the golden mean: a little birth and a little labour, i.e., a *property yielding interest*. Here, property is the fixed, the given, the inherited (birth), and the interest on it is the toil (labour), thus *working capital*. Just don't go overboard, don't go to extremes, don't be radical! Birthright, certainly, but only an inherited possession; labour, certainly, but little or none of one's own, but the labour of capital and that of the – subservient labourers.

If an age is imbued with an error, some always derive advantage from the error, while others suffer from it. In the Middle Ages there was a general error among Christians that the Church must have all power or supremacy on earth; the hierarchs believed in this 'truth' no less than the laity, and both were spellbound in the same error. But the hierarchs had the *advantage* of power through it, the laity the *disadvantage* of subjection. But as the saying goes, 'adversity teaches

wisdom,' and so the laity eventually became wise and no longer believed in the medieval 'truth.' The same relationship exists between the bourgeoisie and the working class. The bourgeois and the workers believe in the 'truth' of *money*; they who do not possess it believe in it no less than those who do, that is, the laymen as well as the priests.

'Money makes the world go round' is the keynote of the bourgeois era. A propertyless nobleman and a propertyless labourer are of no political significance as "starvelings": neither birth nor work are, but *money* brings *prestige* [*Geld gibt Geltung*]. The propertied rule, but the State trains up from the destitute its "servants," giving them money (a salary) in proportion to the extent that they are supposed to govern in its name.

I receive everything from the State. Do I have anything without the *State's permission*? What I have without it, it *takes* from me as soon as it discovers the lack of a "legal title." So don't I have everything through its mercy, its permission?

The bourgeoisie relies on this alone, on the *legal title*. The citizen is what he is through the *protection of the State*, through the favour of the State. He would necessarily be afraid of losing everything if the State's power were broken.

But what about the proletarian who has nothing to lose? Since he has nothing to lose, he does not need protection of the State for his 'nothing.' On the contrary, he can gain if that State protection is withdrawn from the *protégés*.

That is why the non-possessor will regard the State as a power protecting the possessor, which privileges the latter, but does nothing for him, the non-possessor, except to suck his blood. The State is a citizens' State [*Bürgerstaat*], it is the Estate of the bourgeoisie. It protects people not according to their work, but according to their obedience ("loyalty"), namely according to whether they enjoy and

administer the rights entrusted to them by the State in accordance with the will, that is the laws of the State.

Under the regime of the bourgeoisie, the working people always fall into the hands of the propertied, that is, of those who have some bit of the State property at their disposal (and everything that can be owned is State property, belongs to the State and is only a fief of the individuals), especially money and goods, and thus of the capitalists. The worker cannot exploit his labour according to the value that it has for the consumer. 'The work is poorly paid!' The capitalist makes the greatest profit from it.

Only the work of those who enhance the splendour and sovereignty of the State is well paid, and more than well paid; the work of high State officials. The State pays well so that its 'good citizens', the propertied, can pay badly without danger; it secures its servants, from whom it forms a protective power, a 'police force' (the police force includes soldiers, officials of all kinds, e.g. those of the judiciary, education, etc., in short, the whole 'State Machine') through good pay, and the 'good citizens' are happy to pay high taxes to him in order to pay so much lower rates to their workers.

But the class of workers remains unprotected in what they essentially are (for it is not as workers that they enjoy the protection of the State, but as its subjects they have a so-called legal protection), namely a power hostile to this State, this State of the propertied, this 'citizen kingship'. Its principle, labour, is not recognised in terms of its *value*: it is exploited, a war booty of the propertied, the enemies.

The workers have the most enormous power in their hands, and once they become fully aware of it and use it, nothing can stand in their way: they would only have to stop working and consider what they have created as theirs and enjoy it. This is the meaning of the labour unrest that arises here and there.

The State is based on the *slavery of labour*. If labour is *freed*, the State is lost.

Notes

[1] A *shibboleth* is a word whose variations in pronunciation can be used to differentiate members of different cultural and linguistic groups. In this case means a way to differentiate those who are in favour from those who are against the State.

[2] Jean-Sylvain Bailly (1736-1793), famous astronomer and mayor of Paris during the first years (1789-1791) of the French Revolution. He was guillotined the 12 November 1793 during the Reign of Terror.

[3] Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord (1754-1838), bishop of Autun and Barrère (1789-1791). He was thereafter a crafty diplomat at the service of several different rulers (Louis XVI, Napoleon, Louis XVIII, Charles X, Louis-Philippe)

[4] Count de Mirabeau (1749-1791) was the principal spokesman for the Third Estate at the National Assembly of 1789-1791 during the first phase of the French Revolution.

[5] Stirner's quotation is from page 12 of George Harwegh (ed.) *Ein und zwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz*, Zürich and Winterthur, 1843. This text, containing essays by German radicals, was published in Switzerland to escape German press censorship.

Thomas Hill Green

The State as a Moral Agent (1882)

Thomas H. Green, exponent of Social Liberalism, see the State as a moral agent, the one that through political subjection of the individuals can grant them a common well-being. This idealised view of the State has succeeded in promoting a continuous enlargement of its sphere of activities by all who have occupied positions of State power, liberal politicians included.

Source: T. H. Green, *The Principles of Political Obligation*, 1882.

114. To ask why I am to submit to the power of the State, is to ask why I am to allow my life to be regulated by that complex of institutions without which I literally should not have a life to call my own, nor should be able to ask for a justification of what I am called on to do. For that I may have a life which I can call my own, I must not only be conscious of myself and of ends which I present to myself as mine; I must be able to reckon on a certain freedom of action and acquisition for the attainment of those ends, and this can only be

secured through common recognition of this freedom on the part of each other by members of a society, as being for a common good.

Without this, the very consciousness of having ends of his own and a life which he can direct in a certain way, of which he can make something, would remain dormant in a man. It is true that slaves have been found to have this consciousness in high development; but a slave even at his lowest has been partly made what he is by an ancestral life which was not one of slavery pure and simple, a life in which certain elementary rights were secured to the members of a society through their recognition of a common interest. He retains certain spiritual aptitudes from that state of family or tribal freedom.

This, perhaps, is all that could be said of most of the slaves on plantations in modern times; but the slavery of the ancient world, being mainly founded on captivity in war, was compatible with a considerable amount of civilisation on the part of the slaves at the time when their slavery began. A Jewish slave, e.g., would carry with him into slavery a thoroughly developed conception of right and law. Slavery, moreover, implies the establishment of some regular system of rights in the slave-owning society. The slave, especially the domestic slave, has the signs and effects of this system all about him.

Hence such elementary consciousness of rights — of powers that are his own to make the best of — as the born slave may inherit from an ancestral life of freedom, finds a stimulus to its inward development, though no opportunity for outward exercise, in the habits and ideas of civilised life with which a common language enables the slave to become conversant, and which, through the sympathy implied in a common language, he to some extent makes his own. Thus, the appearance in slaves of the conception that they should be masters of themselves, does not conflict with the proposition that only so far as a certain freedom of action and acquisition is secured to a body of men through their recognition of the exercise of that freedom by each other as being for the common good, is there an

actualisation of the individual's consciousness of having life and ends of his own.

The exercise, manifestation, expression of this consciousness through a freedom secured in the way described is necessary to its real existence, just as language of some sort is necessary to the real existence of thought, and bodily movement to that of the soul.

115. The demand, again, for a justification of what one is called on by authority to do presupposes some standard of right, recognised as equally valid for and by the person making the demand and others who form a society with him, and such a recognised standard in turn implies institutions for the regulation of men's dealings with each other, institutions of which the relation to the consciousness of right may be compared, as above, to that of language to thought. It cannot be said that the most elementary consciousness of right is prior to them, or they to it. They are the expression in which it becomes real. As conflicting with the momentary inclinations of the individual, these institutions are a power which he obeys unwillingly; which he has to, or is made to, obey. But it is only through them that the consciousness takes shape and form which expresses itself in the question, 'Why should I thus be constrained? By what right is my natural right to do as I like overborne?'

116. The doctrine that the rights of government are founded on the consent of the governed is a confused way of stating the truth that the institutions by which man is moralised, by which he comes to do what he sees that he must as distinct from what he would like, express a conception of a common good; that through them that conception takes form and reality; and that it is in turn through its presence in the individual that they have a constraining power over him, a power which is not that of mere fear, still less a physical

compulsion, but which leads him to do what he is not inclined to because there is a law that he should.

Rousseau, it will be remembered, speaks of the 'social pact' not merely as the foundation of sovereignty or civil government, but as the foundation of morality. Through it man becomes a moral agent; for slavery to appetite he substitutes freedom of subjection to self-imposed law. If he had seen at the same time that rights do not begin till duties begin, and that if there was no morality prior to the pact there could not be rights, he might have been saved from the error which the notion of there being natural rights introduces into his theory. But though he does not seem himself to have been aware of the full bearing of his own conception, the conception itself is essentially true. Setting aside the fictitious representation of an original covenant as having given birth to that common 'ego' or general will, without which no such covenant would have been possible, and of obligations arising out of it, as out of a bargain made between one man and another, it remains true that only through a recognition by certain men of a common interest, and through the expression of that recognition in certain regulations of their dealings with each other, could morality originate, or any meaning be gained for such terms as 'ought' and 'right' and their equivalents.

117. Morality, in the first instance, is the observance of such regulations, and though a higher morality, the morality of the character governed by 'disinterested motives' i.e., by interest in some form of human perfection, comes to differentiate itself from this primitive morality consisting in the observance of rules established for a common good, yet this 'outward' morality is the presupposition of the 'higher' morality.

Morality and political subjection thus have a common source — '*political* subjection' being distinguished from that of a slave, as a subjection which secures rights to the subject. That common source

is the rational recognition by certain human beings — it may be merely by children of the same parent — of a common well-being which is their well-being, and which they conceive as their well-being whether at any moment any one of them is inclined to it or no, and the embodiment of that recognition in rules by which the inclinations of the individuals are restrained, and a corresponding freedom of action for the attainment of well-being on the whole is secured.

209. The capacity for rights, then, being a capacity for spontaneous action regulated by a conception of a common good, either so regulated through an interest which flows directly from that conception or through hopes and fears which are affected by it through more complex channels of habit and association, is a capacity which cannot be generated — which on the contrary is neutralised — by any influences that interfere with the spontaneous action of social interests.

Now any direct enforcement of the outward conduct, which ought to flow from social interests, by means of threatened penalties — and a law requiring such conduct necessarily implies penalties for disobedience to it — does interfere with the spontaneous action of those interests, and consequently checks the growth of the capacity which is the condition of the beneficial exercise of rights. For this reason, the effectual action of the State, i.e., the community as acting through law, for the promotion of habits of true citizenship, seems necessarily to be confined to the removal of obstacles.

Under this head, however, there may and should be included much that most States have hitherto neglected, and much that at first sight may have the appearance of an enforcement of moral duties, e.g., the requirement that parents have their children taught the elementary arts. To educate one's children is no doubt a moral duty, and it is not one of those duties, like that of paying debts, of which the neglect

directly interferes with the rights of someone else. It might seem, therefore, to be a duty with which positive law should have nothing to do, any more than with the duty of striving after a noble life. On the other hand, the neglect of it does tend to prevent the growth of the capacity for beneficially exercising rights on the part of those whose education is neglected, and it is on this account, not as a purely moral duty on the part of a parent, but as the prevention of a hindrance to the capacity for rights on the part of children, that education should be enforced by the State.

It may be objected, indeed, that in enforcing it we are departing in regard to the parents from the principle above laid down; that we are interfering with the spontaneous action of social interests, though we are doing so with a view to promoting this spontaneous action in another generation. But the answer to this objection is, that a law of compulsory education, if the preferences, ecclesiastical or other, of those parents who show any practical sense of their responsibility are duly respected, is from the beginning only felt as compulsion by those in whom, so far as this social function is concerned, there is no spontaneity to be interfered with; and that in the second generation, though the law with its penal sanctions still continues, it is not felt as a law, as an enforcement of action by penalties, at all.

210. On the same principle the freedom of contract ought probably to be more restricted in certain directions than is at present the case. The freedom to do as they like on the part of one set of men may involve the ultimate disqualification of many others, or of a succeeding generation, for the exercise of rights. This applies most obviously to such kinds of contract or traffic as affect the health and housing of the people, the growth of population relatively to the means of subsistence, and the accumulation or distribution of landed property. In the hurry of removing those restraints on free dealing between man and man, which have arisen partly perhaps from some

confused idea of maintaining morality but much more from the power of class-interests, we have been apt to take too narrow a view of the range of persons — not one generation merely but succeeding generations — whose freedom ought to be taken into account, and of the conditions necessary to their freedom ('freedom' here meaning their qualification for the exercise of rights).

Hence the massing of population without regard to conditions of health; unrestrained traffic in deleterious commodities; unlimited upgrowth of the class of hired labourers in particular industries which circumstances have suddenly stimulated, without any provision against the dangers of an impoverished proletariat in following generations. Meanwhile, under pretence of allowing freedom of bequest and settlement, a system has grown up which prevents the landlords of each generation from being free either in the government of their families or in the disposal of their land, and aggravates the tendency to crowd into towns, as well as the difficulties of providing healthy house-room, by keeping land in a few hands.

It would be out of place here to consider in detail the remedies for these evils, or to discuss the question how far it is well to trust to the initiative of the State or individuals in dealing with them. It is enough to point out the directions in which the State may remove obstacles to the realisation of the capacity for beneficial exercise of rights without defeating its own object by vitiating the spontaneous character of that capacity.

Bernard Bosanquet

The Philosophical Theory of the State (1899)

The political thought of Bernard Bosanquet “lies clearly within the tradition of liberalism.” (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

Towards the end of the 19th century, his idealised vision of the State contributed, amongst the English liberals, to modify their position in favour of an enlargement of the attributions of the State. In this extract from one of his major works, four aspects of his thinking are pointed out and presented.

Source: Bernard Bosanquet, *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, 1899.

State = Freedom

[Now] our nature as rational beings implies the imperative claim upon us of a will which is thus real or rational. Recognised or unrecognised, it is rooted in our own wills, as the claim to be true is rooted in our assertions. Any system of institutions which represents

to us, on the whole, the conditions essential to affirming such a will, in objects of action such as to constitute a tolerably complete life, has an imperative claim upon our loyalty and obedience as the embodiment of our liberty. The only question that can arise is whether the system is that which it pretends to be. But even if rebellion is a duty, it can only be so because the imperative obligation, as we recognise it, is irreconcilable with the particular system which claims our obedience in its name. The imperative claim of the will that wills itself is our own inmost nature, and we cannot throw it off. This is the ultimate root of political obligation.

It is such a "real" or rational will that thinkers after Rousseau have identified with the State. In this theory they are following the principles of Plato and Aristotle, no less than the indications which Rousseau furnished by his theory of the general will in connection with the work of the legislator. The State, when thus regarded, is to the general life of the individual much as we saw the family to be with regard to certain of his impulses. The idea is that in it, or by its help, we find at once discipline and expansion, the transfiguration of partial impulses, and something to do and to care for, such as the nature of a human self demands. If, that is to say, you start with a human being as he is in fact, and try to devise what will furnish him with an outlet and a stable purpose capable of doing justice to his capacities — a satisfying object of life — you will be driven on by the necessity of the facts at least as far as the State, and perhaps further. Two points may be insisted on to make this conception less paradoxical to the English mind.

(a) The State, as thus conceived, is not merely the political fabric. The term State accents indeed the political aspect of the whole, and is opposed to the notion of an anarchical society. But it includes the entire hierarchy of institutions by which life is determined, from the family to the trade, and from the trade to the Church and the University. It includes all of them, not as the mere collection of the growths of the country, but as the structure which

gives life and meaning to the political whole, while receiving from it mutual adjustment, and therefore expansion and a more liberal air.

The State, it might be said, is thus conceived as the operative criticism of all institutions — the modification and adjustment by which they are capable of playing a rational part in the object of human will. And criticism, in this sense, is the life of institutions. As exclusive objects, they are a prey to stagnation and disease — think of the temper which lives solely for the family or solely for the Church; it is only as taken up into the movement and circulation of the State that they are living spiritual beings.

It follows that the State, in this sense, is, above all things, not a number of persons, but a working conception of life. It is, as Plato has taught us, the conception by the guidance of which every living member of the commonwealth is enabled to perform his function.

If we ask whether this means that a complete conception of the aims and possibilities of the common life exists even in the minds of statesmen, not to speak of ordinary citizens, the question answers itself in the negative. And yet the State can only live and work in as far as such a conception, in however fragmentary, one-sided shapes, pervades the general mind. It is not there mostly in reflective shape; and in so far as it is in reflective shape it is according to ultimate standards contradictory and incomplete.

But everyone who has a fair judgment of what his own place demands from him, has, at his own angle, so to speak, a working insight into the end of the State; and, of course, practical contradictions would be fewer if such conceptions were completer and more covered by each other. But a complete reflective conception of the end of the State, comprehensive and free from contradiction, would mean a complete idea of the realisation of all human capacity, without waste or failure. Such a conception is impossible owing to the gradual character of the process by which the end of life, the

nature of the good, is determined for man. The Real Will, as represented by the State, is only a partial embodiment of it.

(b) The State, as the operative criticism of all institutions, is necessarily force; and in the last resort, it is the only recognised and justified force. It seems important to observe that force is inherent in the State, and no true ideal points in the direction of destroying it. For the force of the State proceeds essentially from its character of being our own mind extended, so to speak, beyond our immediate consciousness.

Not only is the conduct of life as a whole beyond the powers of the average individual at his average level, but it is beyond the powers of all the average individuals in a society taken together at their average level. We make a great mistake in thinking of the force exercised by the State as limited to the restraint of disorderly persons by the police and the punishment of intentional lawbreakers. The State is the fly-wheel of our life. Its system is constantly reminding us of duties, from sanitation to the incidents of trusteeship, which we have not the least desire to neglect, but which we are either too ignorant or too indolent to carry out apart from instruction and authoritative suggestion.

We profit at every turn by institutions, rules, traditions, researches, made by minds at their best, which, through State action, are now in a form to operate as extensions of our own minds. It is not merely the contrast between the limited activity of one individual and the greater achievement of millions put together. It is the contrast between individuals working in the order and armed with the laws, customs, writings, and institutions devised by ages, and the same individuals considered as their daily average selves, with a varying but always limited range of immediate consciousness. For at any given moment, no judge knows all the law; no author knows all his own books, not to mention those of others; no official of an institution has the whole logic and meaning of the institution before his mind.

All individuals are continually reinforced and carried on, beyond their average immediate consciousness, by the knowledge, resources, and energy which surround them in the social order, with its inheritance, of which the order itself is the greatest part. And the return of this greater self, forming a system adjusted to unity, upon their isolated minds, as an expansion and stimulus to them, necessarily takes the shape of force, in as far as their minds are inert. And this must always be the case, not merely so long as wills are straightforwardly rebellious against the common good, but so long as the knowledge and energy of the average mind are unequal to dealing, on its own initiative and out of its own resources, with all possible conjunctions in which necessary conditions of the common good are to be maintained.

In other words, there must be inertia to overcome, as long as the limitations of our animal nature exist at all. The State is, as Plato told us, the individual mind writ large, or, as we have said, our mind reinforced by capacities which are of its own nature, but which supplement its defects. And this being so, the less complete must clearly submit to find itself in the more complete, and be carried along with it so far as the latter is able to advance.

It is very important to note, however, that our mind at its best is very different from our mind at its average; and it has understood and approved, when at its best, a great deal which in its average moments comes upon it as force or custom from the outside. Thus, there is no abrupt division between our conscious mind and the social system of suggestion, custom, and force, which supports and extends and amends it. The two are related much as the focus of consciousness is related to the sub-conscious and automatic habits by which daily life is rendered possible.

It is no more conceivable that social life should go on without force and authoritative custom, because the end of social life is reflected in the varying intelligence of individuals, than that individual life

should go on without sub-consciousness and automatism, because it is ultimately relative to the ends which appear as ideas in the shifting focus of the mind.

State = Society

We have hitherto spoken of the State and Society as almost convertible terms. And in fact it is part of our argument that the influences of Society differ only in degree from the powers of the State, and that the explanation of both is ultimately the same. But on the other hand, it is also part of our argument that the State as such is a necessary factor in civilised life; and that no true ideal lies in the direction of minimising its individuality or restricting its absolute power.

By the State, then, we mean Society as a unit, recognised as rightly exercising control over its members through absolute physical power. The limits of the unit are, of course, determined by what looks like historical accident; but there is logic underneath the apparent accident, and the most tremendous political questions turn upon the delimitation of political units. A principle, so to speak, of political parsimony — *entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*, “two organisations will not survive when one can do the work” — is always tending to expand the political unit. The limits of the common experience necessary for effective self-government are always operating to control this expansion. We might therefore suggest, as a principle determining the area of States, “the widest territorial area compatible with the unity of experience which is demanded by effective self-government.”

But the State *de facto* (which is also *de jure*) is the Society which is recognised as exercising compulsory power over its members, and as presenting itself *qua* a single independent corporation among other independent corporations. Without such power, or where, if anywhere, it does not exist, there can be no ultimate and effective

adjustment of the claims of individuals, and of the various social groups in which individuals are involved.

It is the need for this ultimate effective adjustment which constitutes the need that every individual in civilised life should belong to one State, and to one only. Otherwise conflicting adjustments might be imposed upon him by diverse authorities having equal power and right to enforce his obedience. That Society, then, is a State, which is habitually recognised as a unit lawfully exercising force. We saw that the characteristics of Society pass gradually into those of the State. It would not be true that Society is a State only as actually exercising force; but it would perhaps be true to say that State action as such, though far from being limited to the downright exercise of force, yet consists of all that side of social action which depends on the character of ultimate arbiter and regulator, maintainer of mechanical routine, and source of authoritative suggestion, a character which is one with the right to exercise force in the last resort.

The end of the State, then, is the end of Society and of the Individual — the best life, as determined by the fundamental logic of the will. The means at its disposal, *qua* State, always partake of the nature of force, though this does not exclude their having other aspects as well. Taxation may have the most reasonable and even the most popular purpose, yet the generality and justice of its incidence, and the certainty of its productiveness, can only be secured by compulsion. No State could undertake its work on the basis of voluntary contributions. A universal end, we might say, is indeed not a mere general rule; but you cannot carry out a universal end in a plurality of units — and a set of human individuals is always in one aspect a plurality of units — without enforcing general rules.

Here, then, we have our problem more closely determined than in the previous chapters. There we saw, in general, that self-government can have no meaning unless we can “really” will something which we do not always “actually” will. And we were led to look for

a clue to our real or implied will in the social spirit as incorporated in laws and institutions, that is to say in Society as a working whole reflected in the full system of the consciousnesses which composed it.

We supposed ourselves prepared, then, it would seem, to do and suffer anything which would promote the best life of the whole — that maximisation of our being which, from the nature of our real will, we saw to be imperative upon us — a demand implied in every volition and from which we could never escape.

But now we are face to face with the question what we *are* called upon to do or to suffer, as members of a State, in promotion of the best life. The governing fact of the situation is that the means of action at our disposal as members of a State are not, on their distinctive side, *in pari materia* with the end. It is true that the State, as an intelligent system, can appeal by reasoning and persuasion to the logical will as such. It constantly does so in various forms, and a State which did nothing of the kind either directly or indirectly would not possess the recognition which is necessary to its very existence.

So far its work is *in pari materia* with the end, being a direct element in the expansion of mind and character in their own spiritual medium of thought and will. But this side of its work is not distinctive of the State, and, therefore, is not that for which more particularly it exists. Its distinctive attribute is to be ultimate arbiter and regulator of claims, the guarantor of life as at least a workable system in the bodily world. It is in its ultimateness *de facto* that the differentia lies which separates it from the innumerable other groupings and associations which go to make up our complex life.

This is shown in the fact that each of us, as we have said, must belong to a State, and can belong to one only. It is because the authority is ultimate that it must be single. Now, authority which is to be ultimate in a sphere including the world of bodily action, must be an

authority which can use force. And it is for this reason that, as we said, force is involved in the distinctive attributes of the State.

State = Nation

The Nation-State, we have already suggested, is the widest organisation which has the common experience necessary to found a common life. This is why it is recognised as absolute in power over the individual, and as his representative and champion in the affairs of the world outside. It is obvious that there can be but one such absolute power in relation to any one person; and that, so far as the world is organised, there must be one; and, in fact, his discharge from one allegiance can only be effected by his acceptance of another.

The analysis of the previous chapter releases us from the task of setting out the elements which combine in the Nation State, as the conception of sovereign and ultimate adjustment between the spheres which realise the elements of our ethical life. It should be noted, however, that the principles of the family, the district, and the class, not only enter into the nation in these definite shapes, but affect the general fabric of the national State through the sense of race, of country, and of a pervading standard of life and culture. The reaction of ideal unity on the natural conditions of a State is exemplified by the tendency to substitute ideal frontiers — a meridian or a parallel — for frontiers determined by natural boundaries.

The Nation-State as an ethical idea is, then, a faith or a purpose — we might say a mission, were not the word too narrow and too aggressive. It seems to be less to its inhabitant than the City-state to its citizens; but that is greatly because, as happens with the higher achievements of mind, it includes too much to be readily apprehended. The modern nation is a history and a religion rather than a clear cut idea. Its power as an idea-force is not known till it is tried. How little the outsider, and even members of the community

concerned, were able to gauge beforehand the strength of the sentiment and conception that pervaded the United States through the war of secession.

The place of the idea of the Nation-State in the whole of ethical ideas may be illustrated by the Greek conception of Happiness, as that organisation of aims, whatever it may be, which permits the fullest harmony to life. The State, as such, we saw, is limited to the office of maintaining the external conditions of a good life; but the conditions cannot be conceived without reference to the life for which they exist, and it is true, therefore, to say that the conception of the Nation-State involves at least an outline of the life to which, as a power, it is instrumental. The State, in short, cannot be understood apart from the nation, nor the conditions from the life, although in exerting political force it is important to distinguish them. As an ethical idea, the idea of a purpose, it is essential to hold the two sides together, if we are not to walk blindly.

State = Morality

Our analysis of the Nation-State suggests a point of view which may be applied to the vexed question of whether State action is to be judged by the same moral tests as private action.

The first step is to get a clear idea of the nature of State action. It must be confined, one would think, to what is done in the name of the State, and by something approaching to an act of will on its part as a State. We only pass moral judgment on individuals in respect of their acts of will, and we ought to extend the same justice to a State. The question is complicated by the fact that a State has, as its accredited agents, individuals whose acts it must normally avow. But it can hardly be saddled with moral responsibility for their personal misdoings, except under circumstances which are barely conceivable. The State, as such, can have no ends but public ends; and in practice it

has none but what its organs conceive to be public ends. If an agent, even under the order of his executive superior, commits a breach of morality, *bona fide* in order to what he conceives to be a public end desired by the State, he and his superior are certainly blamable, but the immorality can hardly be laid at the door of the public will.

Indeed, a strict definition of State action might raise a difficulty like that of defining the General Will — if the act was immoral, can the State, *as such*, really have willed it? And waiving this as a mere refinement, it still seems clear that the selfishness or sensuality, which has at least a good deal to do with the immorality of private actions, can hardly be present in an act of the public will, in the same sense as in a private volition. The State, as such, certainly cannot be guilty of personal immorality, and it is hard to see how it can commit theft or murder in the sense in which these are moral offences. To speak of the question as if it concerned the conduct of statesmen and their agents, instead of the volition of a State as such, seems to introduce confusion. We are discussing the parallel between public and private acts, and we are asked to begin by treating the public acts as private.

It may be said that this distinction between public and private acts leads to the casuistry of pure intention. We are saying, it will be urged, that the State remains pure, because its will is on the whole towards a public interest, whatever crimes its agents may commit. And, no doubt, this line is often taken in practice. A successful agent finds his evil deeds are winked at; an unsuccessful one is disavowed. In either case the State pleads innocence. But this danger cannot alter the conditions of a moral action, and we cannot impute that as an action to the State, of which it knew no particulars, which it never willed, and which can hardly indeed be the object of a public will. It has a duty to see to the character of its agents and punish their excesses; but the conditions under which it is true that *qui facit per alium facit per se*, can seldom apply to a public body with regard to actions of its agent which are not of a nature to embody public ends.

Promises and treaties, however, are acts which embody public ends. And here the State, on its side, is bound to maintain good faith; but still its agent is likely to go wrong if he mixes up the obligations of the State with his private honour. The question for him, if he has to keep or break a public undertaking, is, to what is the State substantially bound, not to what extent would he be bound if he had made the promise or engagement in question in his private capacity? He, or the power which is to act, must consider the obligations and aims of the State, as a whole, and work for the best fulfilment of them as a whole. The question may be *parallel* to that of a private case of honour, but it is not *his* honour nor *his* promise that is in question. Just so, if he introduces his private conscience about religion or morality into his public acts on behalf of the State, he may cause frightful persecutions or disasters. The religious persecutions, and our position in India, supply examples.

The State, then, exists to promote good life, and what it does cannot be morally indifferent; but its actions cannot be identified with the deeds of its agents, or morally judged as private volitions are judged. Its acts proper are always public acts, and it cannot, as a State, act within the relations of private life in which organised morality exists. It has no determinate function in a larger community, but is itself the supreme community; the guardian of a whole moral world, but not a factor within an organised moral world. Moral relations presuppose an organised life; but such a life is only within the State, not in relations between the State and other communities.

Winston Churchill

Collectivism and Individualism

(1906)

Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill (1874 – 1965) was a member of the Liberal Party from 1904 to 1924 and was elected several times as Liberal MP.

In this extract from a speech, he clarifies that collectivism and individualism are not exclusive alternative positions but that the choice which stance to adopt depends on the matter in object. The human being, “for some purposes must be collectivist, for others he is, and he will for all time remain, an individualist.”

Source: Speech at St. Andrew’s Hall, Glasgow, 1 October 1906.

Something more is needed if we are to get forward. There lies the function of the Liberal Party. Liberalism supplies at once the higher impulse and the practicable path; it appeals to persons by sentiments of generosity and humanity; it proceeds by course of moderation.

By gradual steps, by steady effort from day to day, from year to year, Liberalism enlists hundreds of thousands upon the side of progress and popular democratic reform whom militant Socialism would drive into violent Tory reaction.

That is why the Tory Party hate us. That is why they, too, direct their attacks upon the great organisation of the Liberal Party, because they know it is through the agency of Liberalism that society will be able in the course of time to slide forward, almost painlessly — for the world is changing very fast — on to a more even and a more equal foundation.

That is the mission which lies before Liberalism.

The cause of the Liberal Party is the cause of the left-out millions; and because we believe that there is in all the world no other instrument of equal potency and efficacy available at the present time for the purposes of social amelioration, we are bound in duty and in honour to guard it from all attacks, whether they arise from violence or from reaction.

There is no necessity tonight to plunge into a discussion of the philosophical divergencies between Socialism and Liberalism. It is not possible to draw a hard-and-fast line between individualism and collectivism. You cannot draw it either in theory or in practice.

That is where the Socialist makes a mistake. Let us not imitate that mistake. No man can be a collectivist alone or an individualist alone. He must be both an individualist and a collectivist. The nature of man is a dual nature. The character of the organisation of human society is dual. Man is at once a unique being and a gregarious animal. For some purposes he must be collectivist, for others he is, and he will for all time remain, an individualist...

No view of society can possibly be complete which does not comprise within its scope both collective organisation and individual

incentive. The whole tendency of civilisation is, however, towards the multiplication of the collective functions of society. The ever-growing complications of civilisation create for us new services which have to be undertaken by the State, and create for us an expansion of the existing services.

There is a growing feeling, which I entirely share, against allowing those services, which are in the nature of monopolies, to pass into private hands.

There is a pretty steady determination, which I am convinced will become effective in the present Parliament, to intercept all future unearned increment which may arise from the increase in the speculative value of land.

There will be an ever-widening area of municipal enterprise.

I go farther. I should like to see the State embark on various novel and adventurous experiments.

I am delighted to see that Mr. Burns is now interesting himself in afforestation.

I am of the opinion that the State should increasingly assume the position of the reserve employer of labour. I am very sorry we have not got the railways of this country in our hands. We may do something better with the canals, and we are all agreed, everyone in this hall who belongs to the Progressive Party, that the State must increasingly and earnestly concern itself with the care of the sick and the aged, and, above all, of the children.

I look forward to the universal establishment of minimum standards of life and labour, and their progressive elevation as the increasing energies of production may permit.

I do not think that Liberalism in any circumstances can cut itself off from this fertile field of social effort, and I would recommend you not

to be scared in discussing any of these proposals just because some old woman comes along and tells you they are Socialistic.

If you take my advice, you will judge each case on its merits. Where you find that State enterprise is likely to be ineffective, then utilise private enterprises, and do not grudge them their profits.

John Hobson

Socialism in Liberalism

(1909)

John Atkinson Hobson (1858 – 1940) was a brilliant journalist and essayist.

In this text he upholds the thesis that, unless liberals embrace social reform, that means an enlargement of the role of the State in social matters, the future existence of the Liberal Party might be compromised. The founding, a few years early, of the Labour Party (February 1900) with a political agenda based even more on the spirit of the time, namely State interventionism (called “socialism”), will then accelerate the demise of the liberals as a political force in the UK.

Source: John Hobson, *The Crisis of Liberalism*, Chapter IV, 1909.

The charge of Socialism brought against the Liberal and Progressive Party by their Conservative opponents is commonly resented as a merely tactical device to shift the strain of political controversy from the Tariff issue and to blacken an enemy with a vituperative epithet.

An effective technical answer is afforded by an appeal to the party of avowed Socialism which still continues to designate Liberals here, as upon the Continent, a party of capitalists. But motives and technicalities apart, there is enough substance in the charge, as applied to the section of Liberals committed to advanced social reforms, to demand a fair examination.

For the first time in the history of English Liberalism, leaders with a powerful support of the rank and file have committed themselves with zeal and even passionate conviction to promote a series of practical measures which, though not closely welded in their immediate purport, have the common result of increasing the powers and resources of the State for the improvement of the material and moral condition of the people.

These measures, aiming to secure the use and the value of the land for the people, to obtain for municipalities and other public bodies increased ownership or control of local services, to strengthen governmental supervision of private industries, to enlarge the public machinery of education, to afford increased public assistance to the young, the sick, the aged — such measures and the policy of public finance which they involve are correctly designated as “socialistic” in their character.

It is true that each measure is urged upon its separate merits, that the pace of its advancement and the spirit of compromise which dogs its footsteps hide the logic of the revolutionary process even from many of its active agents.

For revolutionary in one sense it is.

Not that it involves any violent breach of continuity with Liberal traditions, still less any such sudden dangerous disturbance of public order or of property as is commonly associated with the term. But the general underlying meaning and motive of the social policy, struggling now for the first time into clear consciousness, is the intention

to use the popular power of self-government to extirpate the roots of poverty and of the diseases, physical and moral, associated with it.

This process of practical reform, if it is to be effective, assuredly demands an interference by Government with existing rights of private property and private business enterprise, and an assertion through taxation of public rights of property, so novel in character and so considerable in size as rightly to be considered revolutionary.

The real revolution is in the minds of men.

The recent Parliament contained some scores of men passionately moved by a sense of social wrong, of undeserved poverty and riches, of baneful waste in the resources of the commonwealth, and eager to apply large organic remedies. It is the strength of these men's faith and the size of the remedies they are willing to apply that distinguish their social policy from the tinkering devices of the earlier programmes of the Liberal Party.

Experience has taught them the profound truth of John Mill's saying: "Small remedies for great diseases do not produce small results: they produce no results."

Will this policy of social reconstruction go forward? The last century has shown several epochs of ebullience of the reform spirit in our nation. The 'thirties and 'forties were seething with constructive Socialism of a swift, idealist order. The Christian Socialism of a generation later was the sentimental utterance of popular protest against the new miseries of city poverty. The Radical Party of the late 'seventies and early 'eighties gave in their programmes a dim fragmentary reflection of demands in which the new teaching of Henry George and of Continental Socialism found vigorous expression.

But these movements achieved almost nothing; their fervour was soon spent, their forces dissipated.

Will it be the same with our Parliamentary party of social reform and the popular enthusiasm which swept them to the fore? Have they the principles, the strength of conviction, and the grit of character demanded for the task of constructive Liberalism assigned to them?

The answer to this question we think depends upon how clearly the larger body of the party can be led to realise the grave historic nature of their task.

Let them plainly recognise the truth that this is the last chance for English Liberalism. Unless it is prepared for the efforts, risks, and even sacrifices of expressing the older Liberal principles in the new positive forms of economic liberty and equality along the lines indicated in the programme of its advanced guard, it is doomed to the same sort of impotence as has already befallen Liberalism in most of the Continental countries.

We believe that what we term the advanced guard is well aware of the historical crisis which confronts them, that they are willing to make the necessary effort and to undergo the necessary risks. But can they succeed in rallying round them the genuine support of the Liberal "centre" in Parliament and in the nation?

This "centre" is, alike in sympathy and in formal policy, more advanced than it has ever been before. But upon the critical issues of social reform it lacks passion and principle, and is continually disposed to enervating compromise.

In Parliament it consists largely of well-to-do men whose social policy is weakened by fears of high taxation and of encroachments upon private profitable enterprise; in the country this same large class, well but not vigorously disposed towards social reforms, stands halting in opinion, fearful of the Socialistic movement, not because of any definite individualism or abstract theory of the limits of the State, but because certain spectres and phrases have got upon their nerves. Holding, as most do, a difficult and slippery footing in

some business or profession, they are nervous about attacks on property, disturbance of business, bureaucracy, corruption, mob domination.

Though not opposed to social experiments, they are not prepared for efforts or for risks, and their genuine desire to see improved conditions for the people is invalidated by an excessive belief in the possibilities of narrow forms of self-help, a survival of the *laissez faire* Radicalism of the Victorian age.

Unless a sufficient proportion of these men can be won over, their objections met, their fears dissolved, their sense of justice stimulated, the Liberal Party as the historic instrument of social reform is doomed to failure.

For a small band of "righteous men" will not save a party; they must carry with them the majority of solid Liberals in the centre if the reform policy is to be substantial.

Let it be clearly understood that this policy cannot consist in mere economy, in good administration at home, peace abroad, in minor legislation for education, temperance, or even land reform.

The volume, the direction, the pace, and the substance of the positive measures for improving the economic condition of the people must be adequate, and these conditions involve a larger provision of public income than is yet recognised by most politicians, a larger development of interference with existing landed and other economic interests than is yet admitted.

Whether a sufficient Liberal Party can be brought to face this task, with its risks and difficulties, depends upon the education of this "middle" section in the principles of social reconstruction. For their real difficulties are mainly of principle.

Any Radical social policy must, of course, involve a shedding of Whigs, even of a few honest Radical individualists, and of some

Liberals whose business interests too closely based on privilege will dominate their policy.

It is with the large remainder, probably a majority of the Liberal Party, that we are concerned. The situation, as we understand it, is this: Their mind is at present impeded for effective co-operation in the great work of social reconstruction by certain doubts and fears and difficulties, which are real in the sense that they are honestly held, and are important in that they rest not on points of practical detail but on deep-seated notions respecting the meaning and effects of social reconstruction.

These doubts and fears relate, some to Socialism, some to democracy, and are due in large degree to the spirit and the forms which social democracy have taken in the programmes of the Socialist parties, on the Continent and here.

Though Marx and the philosophers of Socialism have been little read in this country, certain characteristics of their criticism, its materialistic interpretation of history, its crude assertion of the rights and functions of "labour," its wholesale repudiation of the legitimacy of rent, interest and profit, and its doctrine of the absorption of all industry by the State, have become accepted formulae and have naturally been adopted as the authoritative exposition of the movement.

While this hard-cast revolutionary Socialism has softened even on the Continent and never had much vogue in this country, the milder and more opportunist brands suffer from excessive vagueness. If the Radical policy of social reconstruction is to be effective in this country this lack of intelligible formulation of principles must be remedied.

The real difficulties must be met; the right limits of State and municipal collectivism must be laid down; the questions, how far brains, how far "labour," are makers of wealth, how far freedom of private

profitable enterprise is essential to secure the work of “brains”; whether efficiency of labour can be got out of public enterprise; whether the tyranny of bureaucracy would become unendurable; whether the tendency of such Socialism will be to dwarf individuality and to make for a dead level of humanity; whether the general result of impaired productive motives will lead to so great a diminution of wealth as no improvement in distribution can compensate — these and other not less radical questions which beset the wavering mind of our “centre” Liberals demand thorough and impartial consideration.

Then there is the group of not less serious questions relating to taxation, condensed in the charge that “Socialism” consists in taking away the property of the rich and giving it to the poor, a policy alleged to be unjust in itself and disastrous both to the receivers and the tax-payers.

The timidity of the Liberal centre is based primarily upon fears engendered by these questions which imperatively demand intelligible answers, if the Liberal Party hopes to press forward with energy and confidence along the path of social reconstruction to which it is formally committed, and upon which its future existence as a party depends.

Leonard Hobhouse

Liberal Socialism

(1911)

The connection between liberalism and socialism was not at all new when Leonard Hobhouse (1864-1929) wrote this essay. Already in 1887, in a speech in the House of Commons, William Harcourt, the liberal MP, had declared: “We are all Socialists now.” It meant we are all for State intervention in every sphere of social life. This is, more or less, the same position reiterated here by Leonard Hobhouse in advocating Liberal Socialism. The problem is that, while there should be no theoretical opposition between Liberalism and Socialism if their supporters are in favour of both freedom and absence of privileges, there is a strong practical contradiction if these aims are seen as the end-result of State action. And this because the State is the main controller and restrictor of freedom and the principal appropriator and distributor of privileges.

Source: Leonard Hobhouse, *Liberalism*, 1911.

New Liberalism and enlarged State action

But the collective activity of the community does not necessarily proceed by coercion or restraint. The more securely it is founded on freedom and general willing assent, the more it is free to work out all the achievements in which the individual is feeble or powerless while combined action is strong. Human progress, on whatever side we consider it, is found to be in the main social progress, the work of conscious or unconscious co-operation. In this work voluntary association plays a large and increasing part.

But the State is one form of association among others, distinguished by its use of coercive power, by its supremacy, and by its claim to control all who dwell within its geographical limits. What the functions of such a form of association are to be we shall have to consider a little further in connection with the other questions which we have already raised. But that, in general, we are justified in regarding the State as one among many forms of human association for the maintenance and improvement of life is the general principle that we have to point out here, and this is the point at which we stand furthest from the older Liberalism.

We have, however, already seen some reason for thinking that the older doctrines led, when carefully examined, to a more enlarged conception of State action than appeared on the surface; and we shall see more fully before we have done that the "positive" conception of the State which we have now reached not only involves no conflict with the true principle of personal liberty, but is necessary to its effective realization. (From Chapter VI)

New Liberalism and common national will

There is, in addition, one principle of historic Liberalism with which our present conception of the State is in full sympathy. The concep-

tion of the common good as it has been explained can be realized in its fullness only through the common will. There are, of course, elements of value in the good government of a benevolent despot or of a fatherly aristocracy. Within any peaceful order there is room for many good things to flourish. But the full fruit of social progress is only to be reaped by a society in which the generality of men and women are not only passive recipients but practical contributors. To make the rights and responsibilities of citizens real and living, and to extend them as widely as the conditions of society allow, is thus an integral part of the organic conception of society, and the justification of the democratic principle. It is, at the same time, the justification of nationalism so far as nationalism is founded on a true interpretation of history. For, inasmuch as the true social harmony rests on feeling and makes use of all the natural ties of kinship, of neighbourliness, of congruity of character and belief, and of language and mode of life, the best, healthiest, and most vigorous political unit is that to which men are by their own feelings strongly drawn. Any breach of such unity, whether by forcible disruption or by compulsory inclusion in a larger society of alien sentiments and laws, tends to mutilate — or, at lowest, to cramp — the spontaneous development of social life. National and personal freedom are growths of the same root, and their historic connection rests on no accident, but on ultimate identity of idea. (From Chapter VI)

State coercion for the good of the individuals

... the individual owes more to the community than is always recognized. Under modern conditions he is too much inclined to take for granted what the State does for him and to use the personal security and liberty of speech which it affords him as a vantage ground from which he can in safety denounce its works and repudiate its authority. He assumes the right to be in or out of the social system as he

chooses. He relies on the general law which protects him, and emancipates himself from some particular law which he finds oppressive to his conscience. He forgets or does not take the trouble to reflect that, if every one were to act as he does, the social machine would come to a stop. He certainly fails to make it clear how a society would subsist in which every man should claim the right of unrestricted disobedience to a law which he happens to think wrong. In fact, it is possible for an over-tender conscience to consort with an insufficient sense of social responsibility. The combination is unfortunate; and we may fairly say that, if the State owes the utmost consideration to the conscience, its owner owes a corresponding debt to the State. With such mutual consideration, and with the development of the civic sense, conflicts between law and conscience are capable of being brought within very narrow limits, though their complete reconciliation will always remain a problem until men are generally agreed as to the fundamental conditions of the social harmony.

It may be asked, on the other hand, whether in insisting on the free development of personality we have not understated the duty of society to its members. We all admit a collective responsibility for children. Are there not grown-up people who stand just as much in need of care? What of the idiot, the imbecile, the feeble-minded or the drunkard? What does rational self-determination mean for these classes? They may injure no one but themselves except by the contagion of bad example. But have we no duty towards them, having in view their own good alone and leaving every other consideration aside? Have we not the right to take the feeble-minded under our care and to keep the drunkard from drink, purely for their own good and apart from every ulterior consideration? And, if so, must we not extend the whole sphere of permissible coercion, and admit that a man may for his own sake and with no ulterior object, be compelled to do what we think right and avoid what we think wrong? (From Chapter VII)

Liberal Socialism

... it is clear that the system of industrial competition fails to meet the ethical demand embodied in the conception of the "living wage." That system holds out no hope of an improvement which shall bring the means of such a healthy and independent existence as should be the birthright of every citizen of a free state within the grasp of the mass of the people of the United Kingdom. It is this belief slowly penetrating the public mind which has turned it to new thoughts of social regeneration. The sum and substance of the changes that I have mentioned may be expressed in the principle that the individual cannot stand alone, but that between him and the State there is a reciprocal obligation. He owes the State the duty of industriously working for himself and his family. He is not to exploit the labour of his young children, but to submit to the public requirements for their education, health, cleanliness and general well-being. On the other side society owes to him the means of maintaining a civilized standard of life, and this debt is not adequately discharged by leaving him to secure such wages as he can in the higgling of the market.

This view of social obligation lays increased stress on public but by no means ignores private responsibility. It is a simple principle of applied ethics that responsibility should be commensurate with power. Now, given the opportunity of adequately remunerated work, a man has the power to earn his living. It is his right and his duty to make the best use of his opportunity, and if he fails he may fairly suffer the penalty of being treated as a pauper or even, in an extreme case, as a criminal. But the opportunity itself he cannot command with the same freedom. It is only within narrow limits that it comes within the sphere of his control. The opportunities of work and the remuneration for work are determined by a complex mass of social forces which no individual, certainly no individual workman, can shape. They can be controlled, if at all, by the organized action of the community, and therefore, by a just apportionment of responsibility, it is for the community to deal with them.

But this, it will be said, is not Liberalism but Socialism. Pursuing the economic rights of the individual we have been led to contemplate a Socialistic organization of industry. But a word like Socialism has many meanings, and it is possible that there should be a Liberal Socialism, as well as a Socialism that is illiberal. Let us, then, without sticking at a word, seek to follow out the Liberal view of the State in the sphere of economics. Let us try to determine in very general terms what is involved in realizing those primary conditions of industrial well-being which have been laid down, and how they consort with the rights of property and the claims of free industrial enterprise. (From Chapter VII)

The State and Economic Liberalism

The central point of Liberal economics, then, is the equation of social service and reward. This is the principle that every function of social value requires such remuneration as serves to stimulate and maintain its effective performance; that every one who performs such a function has the right, in the strict ethical sense of that term, to such remuneration and to no more; that the residue of existing wealth should be at the disposal of the community for social purposes. Further, it is the right, in the same sense, of every person capable of performing some useful social function that he should have the opportunity of so doing, and it is his right that the remuneration that he receives for it should be his property, *i.e.* that it should stand at his free disposal enabling him to direct his personal concerns according to his own preferences. These are rights in the sense that they are conditions of the welfare of its members which a well-ordered State will seek by every means to fulfil.

But it is not suggested that the way of such fulfilment is plain, or that it could be achieved at a stroke by a revolutionary change in the tenure of property or the system of industry. It is, indeed, implied that the State is vested with a certain overlordship over property in

general and a supervisory power over industry in general, and this principle of economic sovereignty may be set side by side with that of economic justice as a no less fundamental conception of economic Liberalism. For here, as elsewhere, liberty implies control. But the manner in which the State is to exercise its controlling power is to be learnt by experience and even in large measure by cautious experiment. We have sought to determine the principle which should guide its action, the ends at which it is to aim. The systematic study of the means lies rather within the province of economics; and the teaching of history seems to be that progress is more continuous and secure when men are content to deal with problems piecemeal than when they seek to destroy root and branch in order to erect a complete system which has captured the imagination.

It is evident that these conceptions embody many of the ideas that go to make up the framework of Socialist teaching, though they also emphasize elements of individual right and personal independence, of which Socialism at times appears oblivious. The distinction that I would claim for economic Liberalism is that it seeks to do justice to the social and individual factors in industry alike, as opposed to an abstract Socialism which emphasizes the one side and an abstract Individualism which leans its whole weight on the other. By keeping to the conception of harmony as our clue we constantly define the rights of the individual in terms of the common good, and think of the common good in terms of the welfare of all the individuals who constitute a society.

Thus in economics we avoid the confusion of liberty with competition, and see no virtue in the right of a man to get the better of others. At the same time we are not led to minimize the share of personal initiative, talent, or energy in production, but are free to contend for their claim to adequate recognition. A Socialist who is convinced of the logical coherence and practical applicability of his system may dismiss such endeavours to harmonize divergent claims as a half-hearted and illogical series of compromises. It is equally possible that

a Socialist who conceives Socialism as consisting in essence in the co-operative organization of industry by consumers, and is convinced that the full solution of industrial problems lies in that direction, should in proportion as he considers the psychological factors in production and investigates the means of realizing his ideal, find himself working back along the path to a point where he will meet the men who are grappling with the problems of the day on the principles here suggested, and will find himself able to move forward in practice in the front ranks of economic Liberalism. If this is so, the growing co-operation of political Liberalism and Labour, which in the last few years has replaced the antagonism of the 'nineties, is no mere accident of temporary political convenience, but has its roots deep in the necessities of Democracy. (From Chapter VIII)

Albert Nock

Liberalism, Properly So Called (1943)

Albert Nock writes here on the transformation of Liberalism from a movement in favour of individual freedom to a party in favour of State Power, a power allowed to intervene in the lives of everybody with the pretext of acting for their own good. That is why, in another writing Nock affirms that, of all political ideas and movements, “Liberalism always seemed to me the most vicious, because the most pretentious and specious.” (*Anarchist's Progress*).

Source: Albert Jay Nock, *The State of the Union. Essays in Social Criticism*, 1991.

I understand that what you want is not a publishable article but merely a conspectus or brief, which will aid the comprehension of two remarkable historical phenomena.

First, why is it that Liberalism is now motivated by principles exactly opposite to those which originally motivated it, and how did this change come about? Second, why has the spirit and temper of

Liberals undergone a corresponding change, and how did this change come about?

The facts are clearly apparent. We now see on all sides the extraordinary spectacle of Liberals doing their best to destroy the cardinal freedoms and immunities which Liberals formerly defended, while all the forces which are historically and traditionally known as Tory or Conservative are arrayed in defense of those freedoms. Furthermore we see Liberals vehemently vilifying those who hold to the original basic principles of Liberalism, denouncing them as enemies of society, and doing all they can to discredit and disable them. These two are probably the strangest anomalies that recent history presents.

To understand them it is necessary to consider Liberalism's origin and rise in Britain, since it is only in this perspective that American Liberalism can be clearly seen and correctly assessed. British political Liberalism was a continuator of Whiggism, which as far back as the time of Charles II proposed to subordinate the royal power to the power of Parliament. Toryism, on the contrary held to the "divine right" theory of monarchy, with all its implications. Put in terms of general principle, the Tory held that obedience to established authority is *unconditional*; the Whig held that it is *conditional*. It is of the utmost importance to keep these two primary principles constantly in mind.

Toryism therefore contemplated a type of society organised around a system of compulsory cooperation. This system is best illustrated by the example of a conscript army. The individual soldier has no option about joining or leaving the service; nor has he any say about his duties, his maintenance or his pay. In all ranks throughout the service obedience is unconditional, and is enforced under coercion. The final intention is thus to bring and keep the many under rule of the few; and the service's rules and regulations are devised with a view to strengthening a highly centralised coercive military power

over the many, and making them more easily manageable. This is the point to be kept in mind when considering the structure of civil society as Toryism would have it, and for some time did have it. As the Army, not the individual soldier, is the unit of ultimate value, so the civil structure with its system of fixed ascending subordinations, and not the individual member, was Toryism's ultimate criterion; and hence the regulatory laws, edicts, mandates, which Toryism set up were devised with a view to strengthening a highly centralised coercive civil power over the many, and making them more easily manageable.

Liberalism, on the contrary, contemplated a type of society organised around a system of voluntary cooperation; a system of original contract, free contract. This system is best illustrated by the example of an industrial concern like the Standard Oil Company. The individual need not work for Standard Oil unless he wishes to do so; he is not conscripted. His acceptance of the Company's rules is a matter of free contract; he is not coerced; he may leave if he does not like them. His wages, hours and conditions of labor are fixed by consent; if they do not suit him as proposed, he is free to refuse them. Under this system the individual is regarded as the unit of ultimate value. The logic of this position was that society as a whole would gain more from the aggregate initiative and enterprise of groups pursuing various ends in free association and by such means as of free choice should seem best to them, than it would from the efforts of groups pursuing prescribed ends under coercion.

Consequently the political design of Tory measures was uniformly to increase the coercive power of the government over the individual and enlarge its range of action. The design of Whig measures, and subsequently Liberal measures, was uniformly to decrease the government's coercive power and to reduce its range of action. This must be kept clearly in mind, for it is the fundamental distinction between Toryism in practice and Liberalism in practice. It furnishes the one and only test by which to determine whether a specific polit-

ical measure should be classified as Tory or Liberal. No matter what political label the measure bears; no matter whether its direct object may be desirable or undesirable; its mark of identification is found only by addressing these questions to it: Does this measure tend to diminish or to increase the government's coercive power over the individual? Does it tend to narrow the range of the government's coercive power, or to widen it? Does it tend to diminish compulsory cooperation or to increase it? Does it tend to enlarge the area of conduct in which the individual is free to do as he pleases, or does it enlarge the area in which he must do as governmental agents please? If these questions can be answered by the one affirmative, then the measure is a Liberal measure, properly so called; and if by the other, it is a Tory measure; and it must be repeated that neither the desirability *per se* of the immediate end which the measure is designed to serve, nor its lack of desirability, has any bearing whatever on this decision.

Liberalism held that society's work should be carried on, its responsibilities met, and its difficulties dealt with, by the application of social power, not governmental power; social power meaning the power generated and exercised by individuals and groups of individuals working in an economy which is free of governmental interference — an economy of free contract. This follows logically from the conception of government inherited from Whiggism in opposition to Toryism's conception of it. Toryism held that the ruler derived his authority from God and distributed that authority to his agents in various degrees according to their function; therefore the agents exercised power by divine right *ad hoc*, responsible only to the ruler, who in turn was responsible only to God. Whiggism, on the contrary, regarded rulership as purely a civil institution established by the nation for the benefit of all its members, with no inherent power of its own, and responsible only to the nation.

The early Liberals inherited from the Whigs this conception of government as an agency set up by the nation and responsible to it,

with no power of its own, but with certain coercive powers granted to it for exercise in sharply defined directions and in none other. They contemplated a government whose interventions on the individual should be purely negative in character. It should attend to national defense, safeguard the individual in his civil rights, maintain outward order and decency, enforce the obligations of contract, punish crimes belonging in the order of *malum in se*, and make justice cheap and easily accessible. Beyond these negative interventions it should not go; it should have no coercive power to enforce any positive interventions whatever upon the individual.

When the Whigs came into power they kept all the foregoing tenets in mind, and so did the early Liberals who succeeded them. They worked steadily towards curbing the government's coercive power over the individual; and with such effect, as historians testify, that by the middle of the eighteenth century Englishmen had simply forgotten that there was ever a time when the full "liberty of the subject" was not theirs to enjoy. In this connexion the thing to be remarked is that the Whigs proceeded by the negative method of repealing existing laws, not by the positive method of making new ones. They combed the Statute-book, and when they found a statute which bore against "the liberty of the subject" they simply repealed it and left the page blank. This purgation ran up into the thousands. In 1873 the secretary of the Law Society estimated that out of the 18,110 Acts which had been passed since the reign of Henry III, four-fifths had been wholly or partially repealed. The thing to be observed here is that this negative method of simple repeal left free scope for the sanative processes of natural law in dealing with all manner of social dislocations and disabilities. These processes are slow and usually painful, and impatience with them leads to popular demand that the government should step in and anticipate them by positive statutory intervention when anything goes wrong. The Liberals were aware that no one, least of all the "practical" politician, can foresee the ultimate effects, or even all the collateral effects, of

such interventions, or can calculate the force of their political momentum. Thus it regularly happens that they bring about ultimate evils which are not only far more serious than the specific evils which they were meant to remedy, but are also wholly unexpected. American legislative history in the last two decades shows any number of conspicuous instances where the political short-cut of positive intervention has been taken towards remedying a present evil at the most reckless expense of future good. The Prohibition Amendment is perhaps the most conspicuous of these instances.

Towards the middle of the nineteenth century British Liberals turned their backs upon their historical principles and gave support to a series of coercive measures, continuously increasing both in number and particularity, from the poor-laws, the Factory Acts, and the subvention of school-house building in the 'thirties, down to the proposals set forth in the Beveridge Report of last year (1942). It is hardly possible to conceive of a more complete *volte-face* on fundamental doctrine. Three circumstances bearing on this change may be noticed.

First, the period from the third quarter of the eighteenth century to the second of the nineteenth was one of wars; and as always in a war period, it was one of savage governmental coercions of all kinds. As always, again, the general structure of society reverted from the more advanced type contemplated by Liberalism, the type marked by voluntary cooperation, to the more primitive type contemplated by Toryism, the type marked by enforced cooperation. The normal development of a society is always from the primitive closely-organised militant type towards the loosely-organised industrial type; that is to say, from organisation in mass to organisation in group. Hence this mutation of type was a retrogression; and in consequence, as invariably happens, the mind and spirit of the people underwent a considerable readjustment. From their adjustment to the terms of pre-war "liberty of the subject," they became largely readjusted to the terms of a slave-status.

Second, as is usually the case, the period almost immediately succeeding the period of war was one of great general distress and serious civil disturbances. "The Hungry 'Forties" was on its way to become a byword. This state of things brought heavy pressure on the government; and the pressure for positive interventions of one kind and another was much increased by the readjustment just now mentioned. To understand the attitude of Liberals in these premises, one must keep clearly in mind the fact that nothing is more natural than to regard a remedied evil as an accomplished good, and to forget entirely the all-important differentiation of the means by which the good was accomplished; and therefore to conclude that the thing to be aimed at is the direct accomplishment of a present good, or what it presumed to be a good, rather than the consistent employment of a means contemplating far larger measures of ultimate good.

Thus it was natural for Liberals to say, "The government intervened, to accomplish *that* great good, and *that* and *that*; why should it not intervene to accomplish *this* and *this*?" The cardinal fact that in the one case the intervention was *negative* while in the other it must be *positive*, was lost sight of or disregarded. The questions of principle which early Liberalism would address to any proposal of intervention, were no longer put; the only questions now put were those of expediency and practicability. In this way the later Liberalism progressively abetted the lapse of British society into a mode of State-servitude quite as rigid and unconditional as the mode contemplated by Toryism, and marked by far greater particularity.

Third, the later Liberalism was confirmed in its digression by the spread of a new doctrine of society fathered by Bentham in England and on the Continent by Comte. This doctrine made a slight side-approach to Toryism in holding that society is the unit of ultimate value; rather than the individual, as early Liberalism had held; hence "the greatest good to the greatest number" is the thing to be aimed at, for the individual will find his greatest advantage and happiness in a society controlled by this principle. The consequent justification of

expediency is obvious; and the extent to which the later Liberalism has been affected by Benthamite doctrine is well known.

Passing now to consideration of Liberalism and Liberals in the United States, there is hardly anything to be said which is not clearly implicit in the foregoing. We once had a short-lived political party led by Henry Clay and known as Whigs, but it had nothing in common with British Whiggism. It was formed in opposition to Jackson's stand on the National Bank and on nullification, and took the name of Whig only as an anti-Roosevelt party today might do. It came into power in 1840 for four years, and went to pieces some ten years later.

Liberalism in this country never had a political organisation, nor has it ever had anything in common with earlier British Liberalism. It was never formulated in definite terms, even according to the broad original British formula which defined a Liberal as "one who advocates greater freedom from restraint, especially in political institutions." Thus it has had no tradition, unless one might say that it has perhaps come more or less into the degenerate British Liberal tradition of Benthamite and Comtist expediency; but this is no doubt a matter of coincidence rather than design.

Hence we see that those who call themselves Liberals proceed on no fixed principles whatever, and their action in any given premises is notoriously unpredictable. Their title is usually self-chosen, in virtue of an interest in some one special enfranchising or humanitarian cause like freeing slaves, universal suffrage, "social security," improving the conditions of labour, raising the status of Negroes. This interest is often exclusive; the absence of fixed principle is apparent in the Liberal's active opposition to other causes which stand on a logical footing with the cause he favours; as when, for example, many Liberals were rabidly against withholding the suffrage from Negroes and equally against giving it to women.

But the determining factor in the honest Liberal's attitude is his indifference towards the essential nature of the means employed to further the cause in which he is interested. There is here no implication against the honest Liberal's moral character. Nor is there an implied charge that he is acting in black ignorance of history; the charge is only one of stark incompetence with history. Having all history to guide him, he nevertheless fails to look beyond the immediate effect producible by a measure bearing on his cause, and thus fails to see that the ultimate sum-total of effect may be to produce a much worse state of things than the one which it was meant to remedy, and perhaps did remedy.

I have purposely refrained from illustration, since anyone with ordinary knowledge of history can readily supply a dozen for every point I have raised. I shall make one here, however, partly to clear the point of the last paragraph, and partly as in a general way typical.

Twelve years ago, when a government made up of professing liberals proposed a large-scale positive bureaucratic intervention to relieve distress, and by use of the taxing-power brought all citizens into enforced cooperation with it, Liberals were in favour of it. They regarded only the immediate end — the relief of distress — and not at all the nature of the means; and the means did actually serve that end, though in a most disorderly and wasteful fashion.

The true Liberal, the Liberal of the eighteenth century, would at once have looked beyond that end and asked the great primary question which finally judges, or should judge, all political action: "What type of social structure does this measure tend to produce? Does it tend to improve and reinforce the existing type, or to bring about a reversion to the primary militant type? Does it tend towards advance or retrogression, towards progress in civilisation or towards re-barbarisation?" Let us take the measure apart, and see.

The subordinate questions would then follow: "Will this measure increase the government's coercive power over the individual and

widen its scope?" Clearly so. "Will it, through taxation, confiscate social power and convert it into State power?" Yes, to an incalculable extent. "Will it diminish voluntary cooperation and increase compulsory cooperation?" Yes, greatly. "Are the directions and the driving force of this measure's political momentum at all determinable?" No, not even a conjecture is worth making.

If the true Liberal had subjected the proposed relief-measure to these tests twelve years ago, he would have said at once, "This is in no sense a Liberal measure. There is not a suggestion of Liberalism anywhere in it. On the contrary, it exactly meets every specification laid down by the most hide-bound Toryism, and for that reason I oppose it."

This illustration brings us in sight of reasons why the self-styled Liberal of the present day vehemently defames the representatives of historic Liberalism. But we should make a distinction here by leaving out of account those who are Liberals for revenue only; those of the rice-Christian kind [*], who take this title with a view to personal gain, as a convenience for getting political jobs, prestige as journalists, essayists, commentators, prestige in one-or-another order of society, or for acquiring some other modicum of advancement or distinction. Such as these meet opposition by the political method technically known as smearing; that is, by applying terms which are irrelevant to the matter in hand, and which are therefore neither descriptive nor meant to be so, but are merely terms of opprobrium. Terms such as *Fascist*, *Naziist*, *economic royalist*, *anti-Semite*, are now conspicuously the property of persons who call themselves Liberals for the sake of personal profit, as *nigger-trader* and *nigger-lover* were a century ago, and as *bolshevik* was in the days following the Russian revolution. Such persons obviously stand outside any serious discussion of Liberalism.

Another order of persons, quite in the majority, style themselves Liberals in all good faith, but being ignorant of Liberalism's princi-

ples and history, they understand neither what they say nor whereof they affirm. They conceive of themselves as on the side of progress, enlightenment, a larger measure of welfare and happiness all round, and they regard the content of Liberalism as made up of whatever matters seem compatible with this view. Whether or not they are actually compatible with Liberalism can be determined only by analysis, which they do not attempt to make. To them, whatever social or political end attracts their allegiance is a Liberal desideratum; and whatever means will attain it is, by consequence, a Liberal means.

These usually, and in quite good faith, meet opposition by attributing to the opponent opinions which he does not hold; opinions perhaps which he has often openly disavowed. In my own case, for example, an old friend, a member of the Administration and a self-styled Liberal (but of this second order) describes me as an anarchist because I hold to the theory of government maintained by the eighteenth-century British Liberals, by Mr. Jefferson and Thomas Paine. Nothing could be in more violent contrast with the spirit and temper of the early Liberals. They and the Tories each at least knew what the other's opinions and principles were, and could state them in specific terms. My friend, I regret to say, is wholly ignorant of both.

Again, this ignorance sometimes leads to conclusions prejudicial to an opponent's character; and in a time of popular excitement it quite regularly does so; and I repeat, in all good faith. Here also I may take my own case by way of example. When I questioned the policy of governmental poor-relief twelve years ago, on sound Liberal principles, I was met with the question, "But would you let Americans starve?"; and as it happened, the question was pressed hardest on me by persons who called themselves Liberals. As professing Liberals, it meant nothing to them that the exigency clearly called for the application of social power, not governmental power; that there was plenty of social power available, and plenty of social agencies available for its distribution; and that a Liberal government's duty was to

stimulate and encourage this application, but not in any way to supplant or supplement it.

I think that now, in the main, the anomalies which are the subject of this inquiry have been accounted for. Enough has been said to show how and why it is that persons calling themselves Liberals are now, many in good faith, some in despicably bad faith, advocating a coercive totalitarian type of government, a recession from the advanced type to the primitive, from the more nearly civilised to the more nearly barbarous; and are also denouncing as reactionary and anti-social those who adhere to the historical principles of Liberalism.

Note

[*] The expression “rice Christian” is employed to describe someone who has formally converted to Christianity for material benefits rather than for religious reasons.

Capitalism

The term Capitalism was practically invented and popularized by the so-called German *Kathedersozialisten* (socialists of the chair) that were opposed to the Manchester school of free trade and favourable to State intervention in social and economic life. For this reason, those German Socialists had to stress that Capitalism was an ideology strictly based on a total absence of State intervention in social and economic matters. However, this has never been the case as documented in the essays here presented.

As a matter of fact, we could very well say, with reference to historical facts and not invented fables, that the State cannot get the means of existence without Capitalism and Capitalism cannot survive without the privileges and the protection received from the State. In other words, Capitalism is powerless without the State, and the State is moneyless without Capitalism.

It is then still quite appropriate to say that “the executive of the modern State is merely a Committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.” (Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848).

Karl Marx

State debt, capital and big industry (1867)

In this extract Karl Marx puts forward the idea that the financial capital necessary for the birth of the big industry and of the capitalistic mode of production (machines) came from the debt engendered by the Nation States with the institution of a Central Banks, starting with the Bank of England in 1694.

Clearly, without the technological progress in agriculture and the introduction of machines in the industry, nothing of what has been called the Agrarian Revolution and the Industrial Revolution (18th century) would have taken place and the State debt would have been used to finance the leisure and pleasure of the aristocracy and the court. It is however interesting to investigate the link between State debt and formation of capital in order to question the fact that State and Capitalism are antithetical phenomena (as it usually believed by many) and not the economic (the Capital) and the political form (the State) of the same phenomenon.

Source: Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, Vol I. Chapter XXXI, 1867.

State debt and the birth of capital

The system of public credit, that is, State debt, the origins of which we find in Genoa and Venice as early as the Middle Ages, took possession of the whole of Europe during the manufacturing period. The colonial system, with its maritime trade and its commercial wars, served as its hothouse. Thus it first took root in Holland. National debts, i.e., the alienation of the State – whether despotic, constitutional or republican – marked with its stamp the capitalistic era. The only part of the so-called national wealth that actually enters into the collective possessions of modern peoples is their national debt. Hence, as a necessary consequence, the modern doctrine that a nation becomes the richer the more deeply it goes into debt. Public credit becomes the *credo* of capital. And with the emergence of State debt, the sin against the Holy Spirit, for which there is no forgiveness, is replaced by the betrayal of State debt.

The public debt becomes one of the most powerful levers of primitive accumulation. As with the stroke of an enchanter's wand, it endows barren money with the power of breeding and thus turns it into capital, without the necessity of its exposing itself to the troubles and risks inseparable from its employment in industry or even in usury. The State creditors actually give nothing away, for the sum lent is transformed into public bonds, easily negotiable, which go on functioning in their hands just as so much hard cash would. But further, apart from the class of lazy annuitants thus created, and from the improvised wealth of the financiers, middlemen between the government and the nation – not to mention the tax-collectors, merchants, private manufacturers, to whom a good part of every government loan renders the service of a capital fallen from heaven – the public debt has given rise to joint-stock companies, trading in all kinds of negotiable securities, agiotage, in a word: the stock market and the modern bankocracy.

From the moment of their birth, the big banks, decorated with national titles, were nothing more than associations of private speculators who sided with the governments and, thanks to the privileges they received, were able to advance money to the State.

Hence the accumulation of the national debt has no more infallible measure than the successive rise in the stock of these banks, whose full development dates from the founding of the Bank of England in 1694. The Bank of England began with lending its money to the Government at 8%; at the same time it was authorised by Parliament to coin money out of the same capital, by lending it again to the public in the form of banknotes. It was allowed to use these notes for discounting bills, making advances on commodities, and for buying precious metals. It was not long before the bank's own credit money became the coin in which the Bank of England made its loans to the State and paid the interest on the public debt on the State's behalf. It was not enough that the bank gave with one hand to receive more in return with the other; it remained, even whilst receiving, the eternal creditor of the nation, right down to the last shilling. Gradually it became the inevitable repository of the country's metal treasures and the centre of gravity for all commercial credit. Around the same time that they stopped burning witches in England, they began hanging banknote counterfeiters there. The effect on contemporaries of the sudden emergence of this brood of bankocrats, financiers, rentiers, brokers, stockjobbers and stock wolves is evident from the writings of the time, for example those by Bolingbroke.

With the national debts, an international credit system emerged, which often conceals one of the sources of original accumulation among a particular people. The meanness of the Venetian robbery system, for example, forms such a hidden basis of the capital wealth of Holland, to which the decaying Venice lent large sums of money. The same applies to the relationship between Holland and England. By the beginning of the 18th century, the Dutch manufactories were already in decline and the country had ceased to be a dominant

commercial and industrial nation. One of its main lines of business, therefore, from 1701-1776, is the lending out of enormous amounts of capital, especially to its great rival England. The same thing is going on today between England and the United States. A great deal of capital, which appears today in the United States without any certificate of birth, was yesterday, in England, the capitalised blood of children.

As the national debt is backed by the State's revenue, which must cover the yearly payments for interest and other payments, the modern system of taxation was the necessary complement of the system of national loans. The loans enable the government to meet extraordinary expenses, without the tax-payers feeling it immediately, but they necessitate, as a consequence, increased taxes. On the other hand, the raising of taxation caused by the accumulation of debts contracted one after another, compels the government always to have recourse to new loans for new extraordinary expenditure. Modern fiscal policy, with its primary focus on taxes on the most necessary means of subsistence (thereby increasing their price), thus contains within itself the germ of automatic progression. Over-taxation is not an accident, but rather a principle. In Holland, where this system was first introduced, the great patriot de Witt celebrated it in his maxims as the best system to make the wage-worker submissive, frugal, hardworking and... overburdened with work.

However, the destructive influence it has on the situation of wage labourers concerns us less here than the violent expropriation of the peasant, the craftsman, in short, of all the components of the lower middle class. There is no disagreement on this point, even among bourgeois economists. Its expropriating effect is intensified by the system of protection, of which it is an integral part.

The great part that the public debt, and the fiscal system corresponding with it, has played in the capitalisation of wealth and the expropriation of the masses, has led many writers, like Cobbett,

Doubleday and others, to seek in this, incorrectly, the fundamental cause of the misery of the modern peoples.

The system of protection was an artificial means of manufacturing manufacturers, of expropriating independent labourers, of capitalising the national means of production and subsistence, of forcibly abbreviating the transition from the ancient to the modern mode of production. The European States scrambled for the patent of this invention, and, once entered into the service of the profiteers, they plundered for this purpose also their own people, indirectly through protective tariffs, directly through export subsidies, and other means.

They also forcibly rooted out, in their dependent countries, all industry, as, for example, England did with the Irish woollen manufacture. On the continent of Europe, after Colbert's example, the process was greatly simplified. The original capital of industry here flows directly from the State treasury. "Why," cries Mirabeau, "look so far afield for the cause of the Saxony's manufacturing boom before the Seven Years War? 180 million in State debt!"

State debt and the birth of the big industry

Colonial system, public debts, heavy taxes, protection, commercial wars, etc., these children of the true manufacturing period, increase gigantically during the infancy of the large-scale industry. The birth of the latter is heralded by a great slaughter of the innocents. Like the royal navy, the factories recruit people through the press. Sir F. M. Eden is so *blasé* as to the horrors of the expropriation of the rural population from land and property, from the last third of the 15th century to his own time; so smugly he congratulates himself on this process, 'necessary' to establish capitalist agriculture and 'the true relationship between arable land and pasture,' — he does not, by contrast, demonstrate the same economic insight into the necessity of child abduction and child slavery for the transformation of the manu-

factory exploitation into factory exploitation and the establishment of the true relationship between capital and labour. He says:

“It may, perhaps, be worthy the attention of the public to consider, whether any manufacture, which, in order to be carried on successfully, requires that cottages and workhouses should be ransacked for poor children; that they should be employed by turns during the greater part of the night and robbed of that rest which, though indispensable to all, is most required by the young; and that numbers of both sexes, of different ages and dispositions, should be collected together in such a manner that the contagion of example cannot but lead to depravity and licentiousness; – can such a manufacture increase the sum of national and individual happiness?” [F. M. Eden, *The state of the poor*, vol. II, cap. I].

“In the counties of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and more particularly in Lancashire,” says Fielden, “the newly-invented machinery was used in large factories built on the sides of streams capable of turning the water-wheel. Thousands of hands were suddenly required in these places, remote from towns; and Lancashire, in particular, being, till then, comparatively thinly populated and barren, now particularly needed population. The small and nimble fingers of little children were in particular demand. The custom instantly sprang up of taking *apprentices* (!) from the different parish workhouses of London, Birmingham, and elsewhere. Many, many thousands of these little, helpless creatures, from 7 to 13 or 14 years of age, were sent up to the north. It was the custom for the master [i.e., the child thief] to clothe, feed, and lodge his apprentices in an apprentice house near the factory. Overseers were appointed to supervise their work. It was in the interest of these slave-drivers to work the children to the utmost, for their payment was in proportion to the quantity of produce that could be wrung from the child. Cruelty was a natural consequence... In many of the manufacturing districts, but particularly, I am afraid, in the guilty county to which

I belong [Lancashire], cruelties the most heart-rending were practised upon the harmless and friendless creatures who were thus consigned to the charge of master-manufacturers. They were harassed to the brink of death by excess of labour ... they were whipped, chained and tortured with the most exquisite refinement of cruelty; they were starved to the bone in many cases while the whip kept them working... Yes, in some cases they were driven to suicide The beautiful and romantic valleys of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Lancashire, closed from the public eye, became horrible wastelands of torture and, often, of murder! ... The profits of the manufacturers were enormous. That only whetted their werewolf appetite. They began the practice of night work, that is, having tired one set of hands, by working them throughout the day, they had another set ready to go on working throughout the night; the day-set getting into the beds that the night-set had just quitted, and in their turn again, the night-set getting into the beds that the day-set quitted in the morning. It is a popular tradition in Lancashire, that the beds *never get cold*." [John Fielden, *The curse of the factory system*, 1836].

With the development of capitalist production during the manufacturing period, the public opinion of Europe had lost the last remnant of shame and conscience. The nations bragged cynically of every infamy that served them as a means to capitalistic accumulation. Read, for instance, the naïve *Annals of Commerce* of the worthy A. Anderson. Here it is trumpeted out as a triumph of English statesmanship that in the Peace of Utrecht England forced the Spaniards, through the *Treaty of Asiento* in 1340, to grant it the privilege of trading in Negroes, which it had previously only done between Africa and the English West Indies, now also between Africa and Spanish America.

England obtained the right to supply the Spanish Americas with 4,800 negroes annually until 1743. This also provided official cover

for British smuggling. Liverpool grew up on the basis of the slave trade. This was its method of primitive accumulation. And, even to the present day, Liverpool “respectability” is the Pindar of the slave trade which — see the work of Doctor Aikin already quoted —

“increased the commercial spirit of enterprise to the point of passion, formed excellent seafarers and brought in vast sum of money.” [*Description of the country from 30 to 40 miles round Manchester*, 1795].

In 1730, Liverpool employed 15 ships in the slave trade, in 1751: 53, in 1760: 74, in 1770: 96 and in 1792: 132. While introducing child slavery into England, the cotton industry also provided the impetus for transforming the former more or less patriarchal slave economy of the United States into a commercial system of exploitation. In fact, the veiled slavery of wage labourers in Europe required the unspoken slavery in the New World to be elevated to a pedestal.

Tantae molis erat [So great a task it was], to establish the “eternal laws of Nature” of the capitalist mode of production, to complete the process of separation between labourers and conditions of labour, to transform, at one pole, the social means of production and subsistence into capital, and at the opposite pole, the mass of the population into wage labourers, into “free working poor,” that artificial product of modern history. If money, according to Augier, “comes into the world with a congenital blood-stain on one cheek,” [Marie Augier, *Du crédit public*, 1842], capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and filth.

Hilaire Belloc

The Rise of the Capitalist State (1912)

A very interesting text that presents an original thesis on the concentration of property in a few hands in England. According to Belloc, this concentration resulted from the expropriation, by the Crown, of properties that belonged to the Monasteries, and their subsequent fall into the hands of a few big landlords. Out of it the Capitalist State rose to dominate English society, by controlling the means of production during the time of the Industrial Revolution. Belloc says that a different development could have been possible, which would have produced a wider sharing of the benefits of the Industrial Revolution, without the horrors of proletarianization, exploitation and alienation.

Source: Hilaire Belloc, *The Servile State*, Section Four, 1912.

With the close of the Middle Ages the societies of Western Christendom and England among the rest were economically free.

Property was an institution native to the State and enjoyed by the great mass of its citizens. Cooperative institutions, voluntary regulations of labour, restricted the completely independent use of property by its owners only in order to keep that institution intact and to prevent the absorption of small property by great.

This excellent state of affairs which we had reached after many centuries of Christian development, and in which the old institution of slavery had been finally eliminated from Christendom, did not everywhere survive. In England in particular it was ruined. The seeds of the disaster were sown in the sixteenth century. Its first apparent effects came to light in the seventeenth. During the eighteenth century England came to be finally, though insecurely, established upon a proletarian basis, that is, it had already become a society of rich men possessed of the means of production on the one hand, and a majority dispossessed of those means upon the other. With the nineteenth century the evil plant had come to its maturity, and England had become before the close of that period a purely Capitalist State, the type and model of capitalism for the whole world: with the means of production tightly held by a very small group of citizens, and the whole determining mass of the nation dispossessed of capital and land, and dispossessed, therefore, in all cases of security, and in many of sufficiency as well. The mass of Englishmen, still possessed of political, lacked more and more the elements of economic, freedom, and were in a worse posture than free citizens have ever found themselves before in the history of Europe.

By what steps did so enormous a catastrophe fall upon us?

The first step in the process consisted in the mishandling of a great economic revolution which marked the sixteenth century. The lands and the accumulated wealth of the monasteries were taken out of the hands of their old possessors with the intention of vesting them in the Crown — but they passed, as a fact, not into the hands of the Crown,

but into the hands of an already wealthy section of the community who, after the change was complete, became in the succeeding hundred years the governing power of England.

This is what happened: The England of the early sixteenth century, the England over which Henry VIII inherited his powerful Crown in youth, though it was an England in which the great mass of men owned the land they tilled and the houses in which they dwelt, and the implements with which they worked, was yet an England in which these goods, though widely distributed, were distributed unequally.

Then, as now, the soil and its fixtures were the basis of all wealth, but the proportion between the value of the soil and its fixtures and the value of other means of production (implements, stores of clothing and of subsistence, etc.) was different from what it is now. The land and the fixtures upon it formed a very much larger fraction of the totality of the means of production than they do to-day. They represent to-day not one-half the total means of production of this country; and though they are the necessary foundation for all wealth production, yet our great machines, our stores of food and clothing, our coal and oil, our ships and the rest of it, come to more than the true value of the land and of the fixtures upon the land: they come to more than the arable soil and the pasture, the constructional value of the houses, wharves and docks, and so forth. In the early sixteenth century the land and the fixtures upon it came, upon the contrary, to very much more than all other forms of wealth combined.

Now this form of wealth was here, more than in any other Western European country, already in the hands of a wealthy land-owning class at the end of the Middle Ages.

It is impossible to give exact statistics, because none were gathered, and we can only make general statements based upon inference and research. But, roughly speaking, we may say that of the total value of

the land and its fixtures, probably rather more than a quarter, though less than a third, was in the hands of this wealthy class.

The England of that day was mainly agricultural, and consisted of more than four, but less than six million people, and in every agricultural community you would have the Lord, as he was legally called (the Squire, as he was already conversationally termed), in possession of more demesne land than in any other country. On the average you found him, I say, owning in this absolute fashion rather more than a quarter, perhaps a third of the land of the village: in the towns the distribution was more even. Sometimes it was a private individual who was in this position, sometimes a corporation, but in every village you would have found this demesne land absolutely owned by the political head of the village, occupying a considerable proportion of its acreage. The rest, though distributed as property among the less fortunate of the population, and carrying with it houses and implements from which they could not be dispossessed, paid certain dues to the Lord, and, what was more, the Lord exercised local justice. This class of wealthy land-owners had been also for now one hundred years the Justices upon whom local administration depended.

There was no reason why this state of affairs should not gradually have led to the rise of the Peasant and the decay of the Lord. That is what happened in France, and it might perfectly well have happened here. A peasantry eager to purchase might have gradually extended their holdings at the expense of the demesne land, and to the distribution of property, which was already fairly complete, there might have been added another excellent element, namely, the more equal possession of that property. But any such process of gradual buying by the small man from the great, such as would seem natural to the temper of us European people, and such as has since taken place nearly everywhere in countries which were left free to act upon their popular instincts, was interrupted in this country by an artificial

revolution of the most violent kind. This artificial revolution consisted in the seizing of the monastic lands by the Crown.

It is important to grasp clearly the nature of this operation, for the whole economic future of England was to flow from it.

Of the demesne lands, and the power of local administration which they carried with them (a very important feature, as we shall see later), rather more than a quarter were in the hands of the Church; the Church was therefore the "Lord" of something over 25 per cent, say 28 per cent, or perhaps nearly 30 per cent, of English agricultural communities, and the overseers of a like proportion of all English agricultural produce. The Church was further the absolute owner in practice of something like 30 per cent, of the demesne land in the villages, and the receiver of something like 30 per cent of the customary dues, etc., paid by the smaller owners to the greater. All this economic power lay until 1535 in the hands of Cathedral Chapters, communities of monks and nuns, educational establishments conducted by the clergy, and so forth.

When the Monastic lands were confiscated by Henry VIII, not the whole of this vast economic influence was suddenly extinguished. The secular clergy remained endowed, and most of the educational establishments, though looted, retained some revenue; but though the whole 30 per cent did not suffer confiscation, something well over 20 per cent, did, and the revolution effected by this vast operation was by far the most complete, the most sudden, and the most momentous of any that has taken place in the economic history of any European people.

It was at first *intended* to retain this great mass of the means of production in the hands of the Crown: that must be clearly remembered by any student of the fortunes of England, and by all who marvel at the contrast between the old England and the new.

Had that intention been firmly maintained, the English State and its government would have been the most powerful in Europe.

The Executive (which in those days meant the King) would have had a greater opportunity for crushing the resistance of the wealthy, for backing its political power with economic power, and for ordering the social life of its subjects than any other executive in Christendom.

Had Henry VIII and his successors kept the land thus confiscated, the power of the French Monarchy, at which we are astonished, would have been nothing to the power of the English. The King of England would have had in his own hands an instrument of control of the most absolute sort. He would presumably have used it, as a strong central government always does, for the weakening of the wealthier classes, and to the indirect advantage of the mass of the people. At any rate, it would have been a very different England indeed from the England we know, if the King had held fast to his own after the dissolution of the monasteries.

Now it is precisely here that the capital point in this great revolution appears. *The King failed to keep the lands he had seized.* That class of large landowners which already existed and controlled, as I have said, anything from a quarter to a third of the agricultural values of England, were too strong for the monarchy. They insisted upon land being granted to themselves, sometimes freely, sometimes for ridiculously small sums, and they were strong enough in Parliament, and through the local administrative power they had, to see that their demands were satisfied. Nothing that the Crown let go ever went back to the Crown, and year after year more and more of what had once been the monastic land became the absolute possession of the large land-owners.

Observe the effect of this. All over England men who already held in virtually absolute property from one-quarter to one-third of the soil and the ploughs and the barns of a village, became possessed in a

very few years of a further great section of the means of production, which turned the scale wholly in their favour. They added to that third a new and extra fifth. They became at a blow the owners of *half* the land! In many centres of capital importance they had come to own *more* than half the land. They were in many districts not only the unquestioned superiors, but the economic masters of the rest of the community. They could buy to the greatest advantage. They were strictly *competitive*, getting every shilling of due and of rent where the old clerical landlords had been *customary* — leaving much to the tenant. They began to fill the universities, the judiciary. The Crown less and less decided between great and small. More and more the great could decide in their own favour.

They soon possessed by these operations the bulk of the means of production, and they immediately began the process of eating up the small independent men and gradually forming those great estates which, in the course of a few generations, became identical with the village itself. All over England you may notice that the great squires' houses date from this revolution or after it. The manorial house, the house of the local great man as it was in the Middle Ages, survives here and there to show of what immense effect this revolution was. The low-timbered place with its steadings and outbuildings, only a larger farmhouse among the other farmhouses, is turned after the Reformation and thenceforward into a palace. Save where great castles (which were only held of the Crown and not owned) made an exception, the pre-Reformation gentry lived as men richer than, but not the masters of, other farmers around them. *After* the Reformation there began to arise all over England those great "country houses" which rapidly became the typical centres of English agricultural life.

The process was in full swing before Henry died. Unfortunately for England, he left as his heir a sickly child, during the six years of whose reign, from 1547 to 1553, the loot went on at an appalling rate. When he died and Mary came to the throne it was nearly completed. A mass of new families had arisen, wealthy out of all

proportion to anything which the older England had known, and bound by a common interest to the older families which had joined in the grab. Every single man who sat in Parliament for a country required his price for voting the dissolution of the monasteries; every single man received it. A list of the members of the Dissolution Parliament is enough to prove this, and, apart from their power in Parliament, this class had a hundred other ways of insisting on their will. The Howards (already of some lineage), the Cavendishes, the Cecils, the Russels, and fifty other new families thus rose upon the ruins of religion; and the process went steadily on until, about one hundred years after its inception, the whole face of England was changed.

In the place of a powerful Crown disposing of revenues far greater than that of any subject, you had a Crown at its wit's end for money, and dominated by subjects some of whom were its equals in wealth, and who could, especially through the action of Parliament (which they now controlled), do much what they willed with Government.

In other words, by the first third of the seventeenth century, by 1630-40, the economic revolution was finally accomplished, and the new economic reality thrusting itself upon the old traditions of England was a powerful oligarchy of large owners overshadowing an impoverished and dwindled monarchy.

Other causes had contributed to this deplorable result. The change in the value of money had hit the Crown very hard; the peculiar history of the Tudor family, their violent passions, their lack of resolution and of any continuous policy, to some extent the character of Charles I himself, and many another subsidiary cause may be quoted. But the great main fact upon which the whole thing is dependent is the fact that the Monastic Lands, at least a fifth of the wealth of the country, had been transferred to the great land-owners, and that this transference had tipped the scale over entirely in their favour as against the peasantry.

The diminished and impoverished Crown could no longer stand. It fought against the new wealth, the struggle of the Civil Wars; it was utterly defeated; and when a final settlement was arrived at in 1660, you have all the realities of power in the hands of a small powerful class of wealthy men, the King still surrounded by the forms and traditions of his old power, but in practice a salaried puppet. And in that social world which underlies all political appearances, the great dominating note was that a few wealthy families had got hold of the bulk of the means of production in England, while the same families exercised all local administrative power and were moreover the Judges, the Higher Education, the Church, and the Generals. They quite overshadowed what was left of central government in this country.

Take, as a starting-point for what followed, the date 1700. By that time more than half of the English were dispossessed of capital and of land. Not one man in two, even if you reckon the very small owners, inhabited a house of which he was the secure possessor, or tilled land from which he could not be turned off.

Such a proportion may seem to us to-day a wonderfully free arrangement, and certainly if nearly one-half of our population were possessed of the means of production, we should be in a very different situation from that in which we find ourselves. But the point to seize is that, though the bad business was very far from completion in or about the year 1700, yet by that date England had already become Capitalist. She had already permitted a vast section of her population to become Proletarian, and it is this and *not* the so-called "Industrial Revolution," a later thing, which accounts for the terrible social condition in which we find ourselves to-day.

How true this is what I still have to say in this section will prove.

In an England thus already cursed with a very large Proletariat class, and in an England already directed by a dominating Capitalist class,

possessing the means of production, there came a great industrial development.

Had that industrial development come upon a people economically free, it would have taken a co-operative form. Coming as it did upon a people which had already largely lost its economic freedom, it took at its very origin a Capitalist form, and this form it has retained, expanded, and perfected throughout two hundred years.

It was in England that the Industrial System arose. It was in England that all its traditions and habits were formed; and because the England in which it arose was already a Capitalist England, modern Industrialism, wherever you see it at work to-day, having spread from England, has proceeded upon the Capitalist model.

It was in 1705 that the first practical steam-engine, Newcomen's, was set to work. The life of a man elapsed before this invention was made, by Watt's introduction of the condenser, into the great instrument of production which has transformed our industry — but in those sixty years all the origins of the Industrial System are to be discovered. It was just before Watt's patent that Hargreaves' spinning-jenny appeared. Thirty years earlier, Abraham Darby of Colebrook Dale, at the end of a long series of experiments which had covered more than a century, smelted iron-ore successfully with coke. Not twenty years later, John Kay introduced the flying shuttle, the first great improvement in the hand-loom; and in general the period covered by such a life as that of Dr. Johnson, born just after Newcomen's engine was first set working, and dying seventy-four years afterwards, when the Industrial System was in full blast, covers that great transformation of England. A man who, as a child, could remember the last years of Queen Anne, and who lived to the eve of the French Revolution, saw passing before his eyes the change which transformed English society and has led it to the expansion and peril in which we see it to-day.

What was the characteristic mark of that half-century and more? Why did the new inventions give us the form of society now known and hated under the name of Industrial? Why did the vast increase in the powers of production, in population and in accumulation of wealth, turn the mass of Englishmen into a poverty-stricken proletariat, cut off the rich from the rest of the nation, and develop to the full all the evils which we associate with the Capitalist State?

To that question an answer almost as universal as it is unintelligent has been given. That answer is not only unintelligent but false, and it will be my business here to show how false it is. The answer so provided in innumerable text-books, and taken almost as a commonplace in our universities, is that the new methods of production — the new machinery, the new implements — fatally and of themselves developed a Capitalist State in which a few should own the means of production and the mass should be proletarian.

The new instruments, it is pointed out, were on so vastly greater a scale than the old, and were so much more expensive, that the small man could not afford them; while the rich man, who could afford them, ate up by his competition, and reduced from the position of a small owner to that of a wage-earner, his insufficiently equipped competitor who still attempted to struggle on with the older and cheaper tools. To this (we are told) the advantages of concentration were added in favour of the large owner against the small.

Not only were the new instruments expensive almost in proportion to their efficiency, but, especially after the introduction of steam, they were efficient in proportion to their concentration in few places and under the direction of a few men.

Under the effect of such false arguments as these we have been taught to believe that the horrors of the Industrial System were a blind and necessary product of material and impersonal forces, and that wherever the steam engine, the power loom, the blast furnace,

and the rest were introduced, there fatally would soon appear a little group of owners exploiting a vast majority of the dispossessed.

It is astonishing that a statement so unhistorical should have gained so general a credence. Indeed, were the main truths of English history taught in our schools and universities to-day, were educated men familiar with the determining and major facts of the national past, such follies could never have taken root.

The vast growth of the proletariat, the concentration of ownership into the hands of a few owners, and the exploitation by those owners of the mass of the community, had no fatal or necessary connection with the discovery of new and perpetually improving methods of production. The evil proceeded in direct historical sequence, proceeded patently and demonstrably, from the fact that England, the seed-plot of the Industrial System, was *already* captured by a wealthy oligarchy *before* the series of great discoveries began.

Consider in what way the Industrial System developed upon Capitalist lines. Why were a few rich men put with such ease into possession of the new methods? Why was it normal and natural in their eyes and in that of contemporary society that those who produced the new wealth with the new machinery should be proletarian and dispossessed? Simply because the England upon which the new discoveries had come was *already* an England owned as to its soil and accumulations of wealth by a small minority: it was *already* an England in which perhaps half of the whole population was proletarian, and a medium for exploitation ready to hand.

When any one of the new industries was launched it had to be capitalized; that is, accumulated wealth from some source or other had to be found which would support labour in the process of production until that process should be complete. Someone must find the corn and the meat and the housing and the clothing by which should be supported, between the extraction of the raw material and the moment when the consumption of the finished article could

begin, the human agents which dealt with that raw material and turned it into the finished product. Had property been well distributed, protected by co-operative guilds fenced round and supported by custom and by the autonomy of great artisan corporations, those accumulations of wealth, necessary for the launching of each new method of production and for each new perfection of it, would have been discovered in the mass of small owners. *Their* corporations, *their* little parcels of wealth combined would have furnished the capitalization required for the new processes, and men already owners would, as one invention succeeded another, have increased the total wealth of the community without disturbing the balance of distribution. There is no conceivable link in reason or in experience which binds the capitalization of a new process with the idea of a few employing owners and a mass of employed non-owners working at a wage. Such great discoveries coming in a society like that of the thirteenth century would have blest and enriched mankind. Coming upon the diseased moral conditions of the eighteenth century in this country, they proved a curse.

To whom could the new industry turn for capitalization? The small owner had already largely disappeared. The corporate life and mutual obligations which had supported him and confirmed him in his property had been broken to pieces by no "economic development," but by the deliberate action of the rich.

He was ignorant because his schools had been taken from him and the universities closed to him. He was the more ignorant because the common life which once nourished his social sense and the co-operative arrangements which had once been his defence had disappeared. When you sought an accumulation of corn, of clothing, of housing, of fuel as the indispensable preliminary to the launching of your new industry; when you looked round for someone who could find the accumulated wealth necessary for these considerable experiments, you had to turn to the class which had already monopolized

the bulk of the means of production in England. The rich men alone could furnish you with those supplies.

Nor was this all. The supplies once found and the adventure "capitalized," that form of human energy which lay best to hand, which was indefinitely exploitable, weak, ignorant, and desperately necessitous, ready to produce for you upon almost any terms, and glad enough if you would only keep it alive, was the existing proletariat which the new plutocracy had created when, in cornering the wealth of the country after the Reformation, they had thrust out the mass of Englishmen from the possession of implements, of houses, and of land.

The rich class, adopting some new process of production for its private gain, worked it upon those lines of mere competition which its avarice had already established. Co-operative tradition was dead. Where would it find its cheapest labour? Obviously among the proletariat, not among the remaining small owners. What class would increase under the new wealth? Obviously the proletariat again, without responsibilities, with nothing to leave to its progeny; and as they swelled the capitalist's gain, they enabled him with increasing power to buy out the small owner and send him to swell by another tributary the proletarian mass.

It was upon this account that the Industrial Revolution, as it is called, took in its very origins the form which has made it an almost unmixed curse for the unhappy society in which it has flourished. The rich, already possessed of the accumulations by which that industrial change could alone be nourished, inherited all its succeeding accumulations of implements and all its increasing accumulations of subsistence. The factory system, starting upon a basis of capitalist and proletariat, grew in the mould which had determined its origins. With every new advance the capitalist looked for proletariat grist to feed the productive mill. Every circumstance of that society, the form in which the laws that governed ownership and

profit were cast, the obligations of partners, the relations between “master” and “man,” directly made for the indefinite expansion of a subject, formless, wage-earning class controlled by a small body of owners, which body would tend to become smaller and richer still, and to be possessed of power ever greater and greater as the bad business unfolded.

The spread of economic oligarchy was everywhere, and not in industry alone. The great landlords destroyed deliberately and of set purpose and to their own advantage the common rights over common land. The small plutocracy with which they were knit up, and with whose mercantile elements they were now fused, directed everything to its own ends. That strong central government which should protect the community against the rapacity of a few had gone generations before. Capitalism triumphant wielded all the mechanism of legislation and of information too. It still holds them; and there is not an example of so-called “Social Reform” to-day which is not demonstrably (though often subconsciously) directed to the further entrenchment and confirmation of an industrial society in which it is taken for granted that a few shall own, that the vast majority shall live at a wage under them, and that all the bulk of Englishmen may hope for is the amelioration of their lot by regulations and by control from above — but not by property; not by freedom.

We all feel — and those few of us who have analyzed the matter not only feel but know that the Capitalist society thus gradually developed from its origins in the capture of the land four hundred years ago has reached its term. It is almost self-evident that it cannot continue in the form which now three generations have known, and it is equally self-evident that some solution must be found for the intolerable and increasing instability with which it has poisoned our lives

Pyotr Kropotkin

Monopolies (1913)

A historical analysis of the formation and growth of monopolies that shows the close link between Capitalism and the State. And to go beyond the State, we must overcome Capitalism as a system based on privileges and exploitation.

Source: Pyotr Kropotkin, *La Science Moderne et L'Anarchie*, Partie IV, L'État Moderne, 1913.

Monopolies from the 16th century onwards

Let us continue to examine how the modern State, the one that was established in Europe after the sixteenth century, and later in the young republics of the two Americas, worked to enslave the individual. After having accepted the personal emancipation of some sections of society that had broken the yoke of serfdom in the free cities, it endeavoured, as we have seen, to maintain serfdom for the peasants for as long as possible, and to re-establish economic servitude for all in a new form, bringing its subjects under the yoke of its

officials and a whole new class of privileged people: the bureaucracy, the Church, the landowners, the merchants and the capitalists. And we have just seen how the State wielded taxation for this purpose.

Now we are going to take a look at another weapon that the State knew how to use so well: the creation of privileges and monopolies for the benefit of some of its subjects, to the detriment of others. Here we see the State in its true function, fulfilling its true mission. From the outset, it applied this very principle, which enabled it to establish itself and bring together under its aegis the lord, the soldier, the priest and the judge. It was under these conditions that the sovereign was recognised. He has remained faithful to this mission to this day; and if he were to fail, if he were to cease to represent a mutual insurance between the privileged, that would be the death of the institution — of the historical growth which has taken a specific form for this purpose and that we call the State.

It is striking, in fact, to note the extent to which the creation of monopolies for the benefit of those who already possessed privileges from birth, or the power of theocracy or military power, was the very essence of the organisation that started to develop in Europe in the sixteenth century, to replace that of the free cities of the Middle Ages.

We can take any nation: France, England, the German, Italian or Slavic States, — everywhere we find this same character in the emerging State. That is why we need only look at the development of monopolies in a single nation — England, for example, where this development has been studied in greatest detail — to understand and grasp this essential role of the State in all modern nations. None offer the slightest exception.

It is very clear, in fact, how the constitution of the nascent State in England, from the end of the sixteenth century, and the establishment of monopolies in favour of the privileged went hand in hand.

Even before the reign of Elizabeth, when the English State was still in its infancy, the Tudor kings were constantly creating monopolies for their favourites. Under Elizabeth, when maritime trade began to develop and a whole series of new industries were introduced in England, this tendency became even more pronounced. Each new industry was set up as a monopoly, either for foreigners who paid the Queen or for people at court who were to be rewarded.

The exploitation of the Yorkshire alum deposits, of the salt, of the tin mines and the coal mines of Newcastle, the glass industry, the advanced manufacture of soap, of pins and so on — everything was set up as a monopoly which prevented the development of industries and tended to kill off the small industrialists. To protect the people at court, to whom the soap monopoly had been granted, they went so far as to forbid individuals from making their own laundry soap at home.

Under James I, the creation of concessions and the distribution of licences continued to increase until 1624, when, finally, on the eve of the Revolution, a law against monopolies was passed. But this law was a double-edged one: it condemned monopolies, and at the same time, not only did it maintain the existing ones, it sanctioned new and very important ones. Moreover, as soon as it was passed, it was violated. One of its paragraphs, which favoured the old city corporations, was used to establish monopolies in a particular city, and later to extend them to entire regions. From 1630 to 1650, the government also used the 'patents' to establish new monopolies.

It took the revolution of 1688 to put a stop to this orgy of monopolies. And it was not until 1689, when a new Parliament (which represented an alliance between the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie and the landed aristocracy against royal absolutism and the *camarilla*) began to operate, that these measures were taken against the creation of monopolies by the monarchy. Economic historians even say that for almost a whole century after 1689 the English

Parliament was watchful of not allowing the creation of industrial monopolies that could have favoured certain industrialists to the detriment of others.

It must be recognised that the Revolution and the coming to power of the bourgeoisie had this consequence, and that in this way large industries, such as cotton, wool, iron, coal, etc., were able to develop without being hampered by the monopolists. They were even able to develop into *national* industries, in which a mass of small entrepreneurs could take part. This allowed thousands of workers to make many improvements in the small workshops, without which these industries could never have perfected themselves.

But in the meantime, the bureaucracy of the State was taking shape and growing stronger. Governmental centralisation, which is the essence of any State, was gaining ground, and soon the creation of new monopolies in new spheres began again, this time on a much larger scale than in the days of the Tudors. At that time, the art of monopolising was in its infancy. Now, with the State, it was coming of age.

While the Parliament was prevented to a certain extent by the representatives of the local bourgeoisie from intervening in the emerging industries in England itself and from favouring some to the detriment of others, it focused its monopolistic activity on the colonies. Here, it operated on a grand scale. The East India Company and the Hudson's Bay Company in Canada became extremely wealthy kingdoms, given to groups of individuals. Later, land concessions in America, gold mining concessions in Australia, navigation privileges and control over new branches of industry became means for the State to grant its *protégés* fabulous incomes. Colossal fortunes were amassed in this way.

True to its dual composition of bourgeois in the House of Commons and landed aristocracy in the House of Lords, the English Parliament applied itself throughout the 18th century to proletarianising

the peasants and delivering the tillers of the soil, bound hand and foot, to the great landowners. By means of the Enclosure Acts, by which Parliament declared common land to be the personal property of the lord as soon as the lord had enclosed it in any way, nearly 3,000,000 hectares of common land passed from the hands of the communes into those of the lords between 1709 and 1869. In general, the result of the monopolistic legislation of the English Parliament is that one third of all cultivable land in England today belongs to 523 families.

The enclosure was an act of open banditry; but in the 18th century the State, renewed by the Revolution, already felt strong enough to brave the discontent and possible insurrections of the peasants. Did it not have the support of the bourgeoisie for this? Because, if Parliament thus endowed the lords with landed property, it also favoured the industrial bourgeoisie.

By driving peasants from the villages into the cities, it delivered the 'labour' of starving peasants to the industrialists. Moreover, by virtue of the Parliament's interpretation of the Poor Law, the agents of the cotton manufacturers scoured the workhouses, that is to say, the prisons where the proletarians without work were locked up with their families; and from these prisons they took away vans full of children who, under the name of *workhouse apprentices*, had to work fourteen and sixteen hours a day in the cotton mills.

One town in Lancashire still bears on its population, to this day, the stamp of its origins, The impoverished blood of those starving children, brought from the workhouses of the South to enrich the bourgeoisie of the Midlands, and made to work under the lash of overseers, very often from the age of seven, can still be seen in the stunted and anaemic population of these villages.

This lasted until the 19th century.

Finally, again to assist fledgling industries in mainland Britain, Parliament used its legislation to crush the national industries in the colonies. Thus was killed the cloth industry in India, which had reached such a high degree of artistic perfection. This extremely rich market was thus handed over to English junk. The weaving of cloth in Ireland was killed in the same way in favour of Manchester cotton.

We can see that while the bourgeois Parliament, anxious to enrich its customers through the development of major national industries, opposed the idea during the 18th century that isolated industrialists or separate branches of English industry should be favoured at the expense of others, it made up for this through the proletarianisation of the large mass of the agricultural population and the colonies, that it delivered to the most ignoble exploitation by powerful monopolists. At the same time, whenever it could, it maintained and favoured in England itself the mining monopolies established in the previous century, such as that of the Newcastle coal masters, which lasted until 1844, or that of the copper mines, which lasted until 1820.

Monopolies in the 19th century

From the first half of the 19th century, new monopolies, which made the old ones look like children's toys, began to emerge under the protection of the law.

Initially, the attention of businessmen was drawn to the railways and the major ocean shipping lines, which were subsidised by the State. Colossal fortunes were made in a few decades in England and France, with the help of the 'concessions' received by individuals and companies for the construction of railway lines, generally with the guarantee of a certain income.

Added to this were the major metallurgical and mining companies, which supplied the railways with rails, iron or steel bridges, rolling

stock and fuel, all managing to make fabulous profits and huge speculations on the land acquired. The major companies for the construction of iron ships and especially for the preparation of iron, steel and copper for war material, as well as for this material itself — battle-ships, cannons, rifles, sabres, etc.; the major canal companies (Suez, Panama, etc.) and finally what was called the ‘development’ of countries lagging behind in industry followed closely behind. The millionaires were then churned out by half-starved workers who were mercilessly shot or transported to forced labour camps as soon as they made the slightest attempt at revolt.

The construction of an extensive railway network in Russia (began in the 1860s), in the European peninsulas, in the United States, in Mexico, in the republics of South America — all these were sources of unprecedented wealth, accumulated by outright robbery under the protection of the State. What a cry of misery there was in the past, when a feudal baron would plunder any merchant caravans passing near his castle! Now, hundreds of millions of human herds were fleeced by wheeler-dealers with the open connivance of States and Governments — autocratic, parliamentary or republican.

But that's not all. Soon to be added were the construction of ships for the merchant navy, subsidised by the various States, shipping lines too subsidised, submarine cables and telegraphs, the digging of isthmuses and tunnels, the embellishment of cities inaugurated under Napoleon III, and finally, dominating it all like the Eiffel Tower dominates the neighbouring houses — the borrowing by the States and the banks financially supported!

All this dancing of the billions became material for ‘concessions’. Finance, trade, war, armaments, education — everything was used to create monopolies, to manufacture billionaires.

And let no one seek to excuse these monopolies and concessions by saying that in this way it was possible to carry out a mass of useful undertakings. Because, for every million of capital usefully employed

in these undertakings, the founders of the Companies added three, four, five, sometimes as many as ten million to the burden of the public debt. We only have to remember Panama, where millions poured in to make the Companies 'float', and only a tenth of the money paid by the shareholders went towards the actual work of digging the isthmus. But what happened with Panama happened with all companies, without exception, in America, in the United States of America, as well as in the European monarchies. "Almost all our railway companies and other enterprises," wrote Henry George in his *Progress and Poverty*, "are overburdened in this way. Where one dollar was actually employed, bonds were issued for two, three, four, five, and even as many as ten dollars; *and it is on these fictitious sums that interest and dividends are paid.*"

And if that were not all! When these large companies are formed, their power over human agglomerations is such that it can only be compared to that of the brigands who once held the roads and levied a tax on every traveller, whether he was on foot or the head of a merchant caravan. And for every billionaire who emerges with the help of the State, there are enormous sum of money in bribes that pour down in the ministries.

The plundering of national wealth that has taken place, and is still taking place, with the consent and with the help of the State — especially where there are still natural resources to grab — is simply sickening. You only have to look at the great Trans-Canada Railway, for example, to get an idea of this State-sanctioned plundering. All the best land for development on the shores of North America's great lakes, or in the big cities on the banks of rivers, belongs to the company [the Canadian Pacific Railway] that was granted the privilege of building this line. A strip of land, seven and a half kilometres wide, on both sides of the line along its entire length, was given to the capitalists who undertook to build the Trans-Canada Railway; and when this line, advancing westward, crossed unproductive plateaus, the equivalent of this strip of land was allocated almost everywhere, where there

was fertile land that would soon reach a high value. Whereas the State still distributed land free of charge to new settlers, the land allocated to the Trans-Canada Railway was divided into one-square-mile lots, placed like the black squares on a chessboard, in the middle of the land that the State gave to the settlers. As a result, today, the squares belonging to the State and given to the emigrants are all inhabited, and the land given to the capitalists of the Trans-Canada Railway is worth hundreds of millions of dollars. As for the capital that the Company was supposed to have spent to build the line, it is generally agreed that it represents three or four times the sum that was actually spent.

Wherever we look, it is absolutely the same, so much so that it becomes difficult to name a single great fortune due solely to industry, without the help of some government-created monopoly. In the United States, as Henry George had already pointed out, it is absolutely impossible

Thus the Rothschilds' immense fortune owes its origin entirely to the loans taken out with the family's founding banker by kings to fight either other kings or their own subjects.

The no less colossal fortune of the Dukes of Westminster is due entirely to the fact that their ancestors obtained by the good pleasure of kings the lands on which a large part of London is now built, and this fortune is maintained only because the English Parliament, contrary to all justice, does not want to raise the question of the blatant appropriation of the land of the English nation by the lords.

As for the fortunes of the great American billionaires — the Astors, the Vanderbilts, the Goulds, those of the oil, steel, mining, railway and even matches companies, etc. — they all originated in monopolies created by the State.

In a word, if someone were to make a list of the wealth that was monopolised by financiers and wheeler-dealers, with the aid of the

privileges and monopolies established by the States; if someone were to evaluate the riches that was thus taken from the public purse by all the governments — parliamentary, monarchist and republican — and given to private individuals in exchange for more or less disguised bribes — the workers would be amazed and outraged. These are incredible figures, difficult to conceive for those who live on their meagre salaries.

Alongside these figures — the product of legalised plundering — those which the treatises on political economy talk about with such reverence are trifles, crumbs. When economists want us to believe that at the origin of Capital are small sums of money set aside by the masters from the profits of their industrial establishments, these gentlemen are either ignorant, or they are knowingly telling lies. The robbery, appropriation and plundering of national wealth, with the help of the State, by ‘involving’ the powerful in it, is the true source of the immense fortunes accumulated every year by the lords and the bourgeois.

But you are talking to us — some people might say — about the monopolisation of wealth in virgin countries, newly conquered by the industrial civilisation of the 19th century. This is no longer the case — they will add — for countries that are older, so to speak, in their political life, such as England or France.

Well, it's exactly the same in the most advanced countries in terms of their political life. The governments of these States are constantly finding new ways of fleecing the citizens for the benefit of their *protégés*. Wasn't the 'Panama,' which served to enrich so many wheeler-dealers, purely French? Wasn't it an application of the *Enrichissez-vous!* attributed to Guizot; and besides the Panama that ended in scandal, have there not been hundreds of others that are flourishing to this day? We only have to think of Morocco, the Tripolitania adventure, the Yalu River in Korea, the plundering of

Persia, etc. These acts of high-level fraud are still happening every day, and they will only end after the social revolution.

Capital and the State are two parallel growths that would be impossible without each other, and for this reason must always be fought together, both at the same time. The State would never have managed to form and acquire the power it has today, or even the power it had in the Rome of the emperors, in the Egypt of the Pharaohs, in Assyria, etc., if it had not favoured, as it did, the growth of landed and industrial capital and the exploitation — first of the tribes of pastoral peoples, then of peasant farmers and later of industrial workers. It was by protecting with his whip and his sword those whom he gave the opportunity to take over the land and to obtain, firstly through looting, and later through the forced labour of the defeated, certain tools, either for cultivating the soil or for obtaining industrial products; it was by forcing those who owned nothing to work for those who did (the landowners, the ironmasters, the slave owners) that this formidable organisation called the State gradually came into being. And if capitalism had never reached its current form without the constant, precise and continuous support of the State, the State for its part would never have attained this formidable force, this power of absorption, this ability to hold in its hands the entire life of each citizen, which it has today, if it had not worked consciously, patiently and systematically to build up Capital. Without the help of Capital, the royal power would never even have succeeded in freeing itself from the Church, and without the help of the capitalist it would never have been able to get its hands on the entire existence of the modern human being, from his first days at school to the grave.

This is why, when it is said that Capitalism dates from the 15th or 16th century, this statement can be considered to have a certain usefulness, *as long as it serves to affirm the parallelism of the evolution of the State and Capital*. But the fact is that the exploitation of capital already existed where there were the first seeds of individual

land ownership, where the exclusive right of such individuals to graze livestock on such land, and later the possibility of cultivating such land by forced or hired labour, had been established. At this very moment, we can see Capital already accomplishing its pernicious work among pastoral peoples (the Mongols, the Buryats) who are just emerging from the tribal phase. All it takes is for trade to leave the tribal phase (during which nothing could be sold by one member of the tribe to another member), all it takes is for trade to become *individual*, for capitalism to already appear. And as soon as the State (coming from outside, or developed in a particular tribe) gets its hands on the tribe through taxation and its officials, as it does with the Mongol tribes, the proletariat and capitalism are already born, and inevitably begin their evolution. It is precisely in order to deliver the Kabyles, the Moroccans, the Arabs of Tripolitania, the Egyptian fellahs, the Persians, etc., to the capitalists imported from Europe and to the indigenous exploiters, that the European States are currently making their conquests in Africa and Asia. And in these recently conquered countries, one can see at first hand how the State and Capital are intimately linked, how one produces the other, how they mutually determine their parallel evolution.

James Burnham

The Bourgeoisie takes over the State (1941)

The relationship between the State and the Bourgeoisie is described by the author as the occupation of State Power by the bourgeoisie in order to overcome all the obstacles that the feudal conception of society placed on the road leading to the economic and social triumph of the bourgeoisie itself. All this should clear the field of the mythical illusion of a radical contrast and opposition between the Modern State and the Capitalist Bourgeoisie.

Source: James Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution*, Chapter V
The struggle for power, 1941.

So long as important institutions of society were dominated by the feudal lords and feudal ideas, the position of the capitalists was insecure, and the possibilities of capitalist expansion were severely restricted. In particular was this true in the case of the political institutions of society, of the State, since the State comprises the coercive instrumentalities of society, charged with enforcing rights and obliga-

tions. A feudal State, to take obvious examples, might at any time, and often did, back the cancellation of debts with an appeal to the violated Church doctrines against taking interest, might prevent serfs from leaving the land to seek work as free labourers, might permit the exaction of feudal dues on capitalist enterprises, and so on.

Capitalism and the capitalists confronted the problem of State power. To assure their dominance and advance, the *bourgeoisie* had to "take over State Power." Here again we deal in a metaphor. What was needed for the development of capitalism and the dominance of the capitalists, and what in time, in fact, resulted, was a transformation in State institutions such that, instead of enforcing the rights and obligations of feudal society adjusted to the dominance of the feudal lords, they enforced the rights and obligations of capitalist society, adjusted to the dominance of the capitalists. In saying that the *bourgeoisie* took over State power and held it in England, France, the United States, or wherever it may have been, we do not necessarily mean that capitalists walked in physically or even that many government officials were drawn from the ranks of the capitalists. A Bourgeois State, a State "controlled" by the *bourgeoisie*, means fundamentally a State which, by and large, most of the time and on the most important occasions, upholds those rights, those ways of acting and thinking, which are such as to permit the continued social dominance of the *bourgeoisie*.

As a matter of fact, the transformation of the State institutions into integral parts of a capitalist society was a lengthy and complicated process, sometimes, but not always, including bitter civil wars as decisive steps.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth and even the seventeenth centuries, the early capitalists, we know from the records of those times, worked closely with the princes or kings. The king in feudal society had been relatively unimportant, one feudal lord among others, often with less actual power than his chief vassals. When the kings began

to strengthen their central authority and to try to build nations in the modern sense, their most obvious enemies were the feudal lords, including feudal lords who were supposed to be their own vassals. The kings sought support from the capitalists. The capitalists gave support to the kings because they, too, wanted stronger nations with national armies and navies to protect trade routes, and uniform laws, currencies, and taxes, so that trade could be carried on without constant interruption from a hundred feudal barons who considered themselves independent lords; because they made huge sums of money from dealings with the princes; and because they exacted protection and privileges in return for the aid they gave. In the war and peace treaties, the elections of popes or emperors, the voyages of explorers and conquering armies during the sixteenth century, we always find a most prominent part played by the money of the Fugger or Medici or Welser or the other great merchant bankers of Augsburg or Antwerp or Lyon or Genoa.

But the princes, too, could not be trusted in business matters, as many of these same great sixteenth-century capitalists found to their bankruptcy and ruin. The *de facto* alliance between prince and capitalists was dissolved, and the prince was ousted, made a figurehead, or at least restricted in the area of society over which his power extended. There were more wars and revolutions, and the “ideal” Bourgeois State of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries emerged: political power vested in the lower house of a parliament with full assurance that the parliament was, by constitution, law, habit, custom, and belief, dedicated to the upholding of the structure of rights and obligations in terms of which society is organized as capitalist.

One last observation in connexion with the “struggle for power” of the *bourgeoisie*. Where did the early capitalists come from? They came from several sections of society: adventurers and brigands turned easily into capitalists after success in some escapade; artisans or master craftsmen became capitalists when they began to hire

workers for wages; the biggest capitalists of the early period came from the ranks of the merchant shippers, who were, as we saw, a special group even in the Middle Ages proper. The point I wish to note is that in some, not a few, cases the capitalists came from the ranks of the old ruling class, from among the feudal lords themselves. Many of the feudal lords were killed off in the various wars; the family lines of many others died out or sank into impoverished obscurity. But some of them turned themselves into capitalists: by driving the serfs off their land and engaging in agriculture as capitalist landlords; by undertaking the capitalist exploitation of mines on their land; or by using for capitalist ventures gold or jewels or money that they had acquired. We must remember, for the future also, that for a ruling class to be eliminated from society in favour of another ruling class does not mean that all of its individual members and their families disappear. Some of them may be found, perhaps prominently found, economically and socially metamorphosed, in the ranks of the new ruling class.

Richard Heffner

The Gilded Age (1952)

This is a very caustic portrait of the corruptive and predatory practices carried out by politicians and businessmen in the decades after the Civil War and up to the end of the 19th century, a period known as the Gilded Age. Afterwards, the Progressive Era would represent only a change of facade, with the use of a new deceptive vocabulary in which the fight against monopolies and political corruption occupied a relevant place. However, behind the scenes, the cosy rapacious alliance between business and politics went on and on, as usual.

Source: Richard D. Heffner, *A Documentary History of the United States*, 1952.

Industrial expansion — ruthless, audacious, and unrelenting — was undeniably a major theme of American life in the decades from Appomattox [battle of the American Civil War, 1865] to the end of the nineteenth century. Characterized by industry's rapid exploita-

tion of the nation's vast human and material resources, and by the feverish accumulation of huge personal and corporate fortunes, this was America's great Age of Enterprise. But it was also America's Gilded Age, an age of aggressiveness, of unbridled acquisitiveness, of coarseness and vulgarity, when concern for the traditional principles of public and private morality had been supplanted by the worship of Mammon. By 1900 American businessmen had guided the nation to such heights of material success that she entered the new century a stridently powerful industrial giant. But to some thoughtful Americans it seemed that the high human values of an earlier America had been tragically sacrificed in the process.

By the end of the Civil War the scene had been well set for the phenomenal growth of business and for the ideological as well as physical conquest of America by her mighty captains of industry. Investment capital was readily available, for numbers of entrepreneurs had made large profits in the war years. Incredibly rich natural resources in timber, fertile lands, metals, coal, iron, and oil were at the disposal of business. A practically unlimited supply of cheap labor, increased yearly by an ever growing stream of immigrants from distant shores, waited to serve the industrial colossus. An enormous continent guaranteed a profitable and seemingly insatiable domestic market, and a rapidly developing railroad network provided an extensive transportation system to bring together these abundant resources. But the triumph of business enterprise cannot be accounted for in these terms alone. Three other factors played a particularly decisive role: the personalities and genius of American business leaders, the constant assistance rendered business by a friendly national government, and the nation's acceptance of an ethic that transformed its social order into a business civilization.

In the harsh competitiveness of an industrial age, business leaders rose rapidly to positions of prestige and power: Andrew Carnegie in steel, John D. Rockefeller in oil, Philip D. Armour in meat-packing, J. Pierpont Morgan in finance, and James J. Hill, Leland Stanford,

and Edward H. Harriman in railroads. These were the leaders of a new American aristocracy, the giants who controlled the nation's industries, its wealth, and, some maintained, its very destinies. Family, education and gentility were not, however, the usual adornments of America's new overlords. Most often they were of humble origin, without education or training. Yet almost to a man they possessed aggressive personal traits and an unlimited capacity for business affairs that went far to secure them treasure in a brutally piratical age. They were hard-headed, hard-working, enterprising, domineering and imaginative men. Their extravagant visions of personal gain were seldom beclouded with concern for the welfare of their laborers or the many weaker competitors whom they frequently destroyed by fair means or foul. They combined shrewdness in the manipulation of men and materials with a genius for organization to create fabulous industrial empires that astounded the world. And the business elite's thorough mastery of the art of monopolization was clearly evidenced in Rockefeller's consolidation of the nation's oil industry into the Standard Oil trust and Carnegie's domination of almost the entire steel industry.

To these lords of industry and their admirers, the boldness and the enormity of their accomplishments, the development of the continent's natural riches, the construction of an immense national productive plant, and the creation of unheard-of wealth, raised them to heroic stature. But to the critics of the Gilded Age they were simply Robber Barons whose arts were those of the rapacious, though often romantic, highwayman. The magnitude of their achievements could not be gainsaid, yet the cost seemed truly appalling.

And their critics argued cogently that to admire the Robber Barons was not only to condone trickery, cruelty, and frequently robbery, but also to applaud men whose very fortunes proved them most adept at these practices.

Those who criticized and would restrain the venal spirit of the age were to find no effective recourse in the political arena, however, for there the cunning of the entrepreneur found its counterpart in the chicanery of the politician. Like her *nouveaux riches*, America's politicians were fiercely dedicated to private profit and unconcerned with the public good. Throughout the period unscrupulous national and state legislators were openly bought and sold by the highest bidders, and during Ulysses S. Grant's [*] administrations (1869-1877) a large segment of the Executive branch of the national government was viciously corrupt. The disgraceful *Credit Mobilier* railroad scandal — involving among others two Vice-Presidents of the United States, Schuyler Colfax and Henry Wilson, as well as a future President, James A. Garfield — proved to be truly symptomatic of the times. American political life, with many of its practitioners engaged in an orgy of thievery that permeated every level of government activity, was at its lowest ebb.

Though businessmen spent large sums to purchase vulnerable politicians, their investments in political power paid lush dividends in governmental assistance to industry's unrestrained expansion. Railroad interests alone received from friendly Federal and State governments land grants and subsidies that attained staggering proportions. These land grants equaled in size the State of Texas, and their value, together with direct money grants made to the railroads, totalled almost three-quarters of a billion dollars! Meanwhile the industrial community at large profited enormously from steep tariff walls erected against foreign competitors. And government assistance was by no means limited only to such positive forms. For government again served industry well in maintaining a consistently negative, hands-off attitude toward steadily mushrooming trusts and monopolies that trampled indifferently over all who stood in the path to profit. And when, under the pressures of an aroused and angry citizenry, some State legislatures did actually pass regulatory acts, these acts were swept aside as unconstitutional

by a conservative Supreme Court that later emerged as industry's most ardent champion. Supported by the highest court in the land, the alliance between business and government seemed truly impregnable.

These economic and political developments were greatly facilitated by equally significant changes in the whole course of American thought. Embracing the ideological and ethical assumptions that underlay the Gilded Age, Americans generally viewed with enthusiasm the triumphant emergence of a business civilization whose most appropriate symbol was the dollar sign. And the coarse standards of the business community were clearly reflected in almost every aspect of American behavior. Yet men like E. L. Godkin, the caustic editor of the *Nation*, Henry Adams, grandson and great-grandson of Presidents, the poet James Russell Lowell, and others of their circle who composed America's older, declining intellectual aristocracy, inveighed bitterly against what Godkin termed a "chromo civilization."

Even Walt Whitman, the poet who once had sung most exuberantly of America's democratic virtues, strength and cultural creativeness, now pondered whether his nation's rampant, materialistic post-war individualism hadn't bequeathed her a "hollowness of heart" that in the Gilded Age was manifest everywhere in deceit, faithlessness, cruelty, corruption. Whitman's *Democratic Vistas*, published in 1871, lacked the broad optimism of *Leaves of Grass* and his other early affirmations of faith in democracy. Now Whitman felt that "vulgarians" dominated America and that the democratic individualism which a generation before seemed have promised great national poetry, art, creativeness, had actually degenerated into petty and depraved self-seeking. Not that Whitman had lost all faith in democracy — which for him, as for Lincoln, was synonymous with America — but now he saw its promise and true grandeur in the future only, its materialistic failures in the "chromo civilization" around him.

Despite these criticisms, however, the very materialistic “values” that Whitman and the others deplored were widely accepted. And most Americans, though separated from the rising plutocracy by a vast gulf of riches, came fervently to share its material standards of success. Thus, when the multimillionaire steel magnate, Andrew Carnegie, propounded an elaborate rationalization of the new highly competitive economic order, he faithfully reflected the temper of contemporary America.

Though concerned in large part with the philanthropic duties of the man of wealth as the “mere agent and trustee for his poorer brethren,” Carnegie’s essay, *Wealth*, was significantly couched in the language of Darwinian evolutionary ideas that had already made a deep impression upon American thought. In his *Origin of Species*, the English scientist Charles Darwin had explained the evolution from low to higher living forms in terms of Nature’s inexorable struggle for existence and the consequent survival of the fittest. Immediately industry’s apologists seized upon these ideas in self-justification, seeking to translate Darwin’s observations of natural phenomena into laws of social behavior. As a major spokesman for the Social Darwinists, Carnegie wrote that though competitiveness “may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it insures the survival of the fittest in every department.” We must accept “great inequality of environment, the concentration of business . . . in the hands of a few, and the law of competition between these as being not only beneficial, but essential for the future progress of the race.” Thus the cut-throat competition of the Age of Enterprise was equated with Nature’s own struggle for existence and sanctioned as natural and right. The giants who survived the struggle, the economic masters of the nation, were judged the “fittest” of the race; and even the most brutal business practices were esteemed as tools of survival and human progress.

Yet the Social Darwinists were not wholly consistent. They demanded for themselves positive assistance from government in the

form of tariffs, land grants and subsidies. At the same time they condemned regulatory or social legislation as unwarranted interference with the law of the jungle, fraught with the most dire consequences for the “future progress of the race.” Despite these inconsistencies, however, until the advent of Progressivism at the end of the century, large numbers of Americans remained imbued with the ideas of the Social Darwinists.

Note

[*] This is what another author had to say about State politics at the time of Ulysses Grant presidency:

It is high time that we cease to think of the spoliation of the general Grant as “accidental” phenomena, as regrettable lapses into moral frailty, arising in an age of transition, of emotional release after war. We must turn rather to examine the systematic, rational, organized nature of the plundering which was carried on at this time.

Have not men always been frail, and quick to embrace temptation? Why then do periods of governmental sobriety, marked only with petty official venalities, alternate with periods in which “corruption” takes on a vast scope?

The Grant terms recall the epoch of Walpole’s ministry in England, when a tumultuous economic expansion and revolution and “corrupt” patronage politics developed simultaneously. In contemporary France it was paralleled almost exactly by an industrial and real-estate boom, by scandalous “excesses” in administration and public-works programs — like that of Baron Haussmann in rebuilding Paris. Likewise in Bismarck’s Germany, after the Franco-Prussian War (of 1870-71), in spite of a long-established, trained

bureaucracy, there were not a few sensational administrative and financial frauds.

In all these great nations of the capitalist era, war, in itself a social-economic symptom, was followed by disordered, heightened economic expansion, and strain upon the apparatus of political government. But in the decade after the Civil War in America, the process assumed Brobdingnagian [gigantic] proportions which were connected with the special tribal character of our political institutions and which earned for the period a historical reputation as “the nadir of national disgrace.” (W. A. Dunning, *Reconstruction, Political and Economic*, 1907).

(From Matthew Josephson, *The Politicos 1865-1896*, Book one, Chapter 3: The Spoilsmen in Power, 1938)

Gabriel Kolko

Political Capitalism

(1963)

In his anti-conventional analysis of the Progressive era in the United States, the author highlights the importance of State intervention stimulated and promoted by those same businessmen who were all intent on spreading the myth of capitalism of free enterprise and free trade. For this reason the author speaks of Political Capitalism as the true essence of American Capitalism.

Source: Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism. A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900-1946*, Conclusion, 1963.

The American experience justifies different theoretical conclusions than those reached by Marx, Weber, or Veblen. Any reasonable generalization on the phenomenon of progressivism must necessarily take into account the economic realities and problems of the period, and the responses that were set in motion. Yet the crucial factor in the American experience was the nature of economic power which

required political tools to rationalize the economic process, and that resulted in a synthesis of politics and economics.

This integration is the dominant fact of American society in the twentieth century, although once political capitalism is created a dissection of causes and effects becomes extraordinarily difficult. The economy had its own problems, dictated by technological innovation, under-consumption, crises, and competition. But these difficulties were increasingly controlled by political means to the extent that the consideration of economic problems outside their political context is meaningless. The “laws of capitalist development” were not self-contained imperatives in the technological, economic, or political sphere, but an inseparable unification of all three elements. The object of such a combination was not merely capital accumulation, although it was that as well, but a desire to defend and exercise power through new media more appropriate to the structural conditions of the new century: the destructive potential of growing competition and the dangerous possibilities of a formal political democracy that might lead to a radical alteration of the distribution of wealth or even its total expropriation.

Politics and the State become the means of attaining order in the economic sphere and security in the political arena. And they were accessible tools because the major political parties and leaders of the period were also conservative in the sense that they believed in the basic value of capitalist social relations — of some variation of the *status quo*. The resilience of capitalism, under these circumstances, becomes something that cannot be evaluated in isolated economic terms. Behind the economy, resting on new foundations in which effective collusion and price stability is now the rule, stands the organized power of the national government.

The stability and future of the economy is grounded, in the last analysis, on the power of the State to act to preserve it. Such support

does not end crises, nor does it eliminate antagonisms inherent in the very nature of the economy, but it does assure the ability of the existing social order to overcome, or survive, the consequences of its own deficiencies. The theory of the national government as a neutral intermediary in its intervention into the economic process is a convenient ideological myth, but such a contention will not survive a serious inquiry into the origins and consequences of such intervention. The rhetoric of reform is invariably different than its structural results. Such mythology is based on the assumption that those who control the State will not use it for their own welfare.

It is important to stress that under conditions of political capitalism the form of the industrialization process, and of the political machinery of society, take on those characteristics necessary to fulfill the peculiar values, attributes, and goals of the ascendant class of that society. The rationalized, dominated, and essentially totalitarian decision-making process is not a consequence of forces inherent in industrialism, but in political capitalism in all its components. The organization of industry is based on the decisions of men whose motives have nothing whatsoever to do with inexorable destiny. Mergers, the scale of effective production, the nature of the production itself, and the direction given to the fruits of technology — all these were decisions made by men whose motives, interests, and weaknesses were peculiar to the basic capitalist assumptions upon which they operated. Their errors were many, as were the possibilities for their failure; but the national government stood behind them so that the consequences of their mistakes would not be calamitous.

Perhaps industrialization would not have permitted democratic control and direct participation in the work process under any circumstances. All one can do is point to the large extent to which the concentration of industry in this period had nothing to do with considerations of efficient technology, and suggest that no effort whatsoever was ever made to democratize the work situation and

industrial control, much less consider the desirability of reducing technological efficiency, if necessary, in such a way as to make decentralization or workers' control possible.

Nor is there any evidence to suggest that the bureaucratization of the political machinery of society, to the extent it took place, was as inevitable as the concentration of industry. It was perfectly logical for men who had spent years solving their economic problems or making their fortunes through political means to also welcome the intervention of a centralized State power to meet problems they could not solve themselves. Social forces, dynamic institutional factors, were the cause of bureaucratic developments in the form of new political agencies and the strengthening of many of the older ones.

American capitalism was not merely interested in having law that operated like a piece of machinery, as Weber suggested, but in utilizing the State on terms and conditions which made bureaucratic functions class functions. Bureaucracy, in itself, needed a power base in order to operate in a roughly continuous, systematic fashion. Since it had no economic power itself, it had to support, and hence be supported by, powerful economic groups. This was especially true in a situation where the conditions of political activity were defined by political parties which in turn reflected economic interests, or where the idea of the bureaucracy originated with those operating in the very area in which the bureaucracy was to function.

The skeptical reader may ask whether political capitalism changed after 1916, or perhaps whether capitalism was made more socially responsible by virtue of the stability and rationalization it attained through political means. The question is a moot one, and would take at least one more volume to answer properly. All one can do is point to the continuity in the nature of the political parties and their key leaders, but, more important, to the perpetuation of the same distrib-

ution of wealth and the same social relations over the larger part of this century. The solution of economic problems has continued to take place in the political sphere, and the strength of the *status quo* is based ultimately on the synthesis of politics and economics. Crises have been overcome, or frozen, as much by the power of the State as by internal economic resources applied by business in isolation.

Seymour Melman

State Capitalism (1985)

The growing importance of military spending and the corresponding weight of the military-industrial complex in the American economy lead the author to speak of State Capitalism in reference to the political and economic system existing in the United States (and also in other Western States, in Japan and in the Soviet Union).

Source: Seymour Melman, *The Permanent War Economy*, Chapter III, 1985.

State Capitalism is a business economy whose top directorate is located in government. The State-Capitalist part dominates the entire economy even though private business may still operate within it. With respect to decision-making on production, the enterprises and the top management of State Capitalism retain the essential characteristics of private-business capitalism. These features include separation of decision-making from producing; income linked to decision-making role; organization of decision-making on a

hierarchical basis; a professional-occupational imperative among the decision-makers to extend their decision power individually and in competition with other management groups. These features continue under State Capitalism even as the forms of control are different from private-business capitalism.

In the classic business economy, the chiefs of the larger industrial and financial units usually had substantial political influence. In State Capitalism the chiefs of the economy are also the political chiefs of government. Hence, State Capitalism joins peak political and economic decision power. This is visible in the mainly civilian-oriented State Capitalism of Western Europe and Japan. In the United States and in the U.S.S.R., with their permanent war economies, military power is added to this concentration.

At the enterprise level, State Capitalism involves substantial changes for the management of individual firms. Typically, the management of an enterprise cannot be autonomous as under private capitalism, where a business may be small but still independent, controlled by its managers or manager-owners. Owing to the location of the chiefs of State Capitalism in government, political considerations are introduced into the relationships among local-enterprise managers. In dealing with higher authority they do not confront senior managers, as in private capitalism, but top managers who also wield political power.

Since the top management of State Capitalism spans the whole economy in its sphere of control, its enterprise planning takes the effective form of national planning, even affecting enterprises that may be privately owned and controlled. At once this opens up opportunities for stability for the individual State-Capitalist enterprise insofar as it is relieved of at least a part of the uncertainties stemming from dependence on unpredictable market behaviors. Thus a State-Capitalist top management can, if it so wishes, guarantee the market for its subordinate firms. This is notably the case

under the military form of State Capitalism, where the government is the only legal purchaser of the product.

However, instability (as in unresolved class and race antagonisms, prices, production levels and relative value of national currency) remains a feature of State Capitalism. The sustained competition for extension of managerial control among the sub-managers, competition among the State managers of nations with State-Capitalist economies, and the effects of the parasitic qualities of military economy all contribute to instability.

Under both private and State Capitalism, access to capital is a crucial consideration. The State-Capitalist enterprise manager (civilian-oriented) must compete for his share of capital by political-economic methods. The position is changed for the State-Capitalist enterprise manager in military economy. He is assured of priority in capital allocation, since the military economy is given first place in the attention of government decision-makers.

In place of the self-correcting mechanisms of private capitalism, State-Capitalist economy, especially in its military form, is more typically regulated by a system of subsidies. Such payments from government appear under private capitalism when government moves in to regulate parts of the economy. But subsidy systems flourish to their fullest under State Capitalism, where the chiefs of the economy use their political decision power to enforce their economic priorities. Subsidies appear in civilian-oriented State Capitalism, but they take on special characteristics where military economy is the priority State activity. In the latter case the subsidy is rendered on behalf of economically parasitic activity, thereby yielding no economic return to the society for the subsidy grant.

In the Marxist school of economics in particular, attention has been focused on inequality of income under capitalism, associated with occupational (class) position. From this standpoint, military economy introduces a new factor; relatively higher pay, job for job, in the mili-

tary economy encourages loyalty to that system, thus blurring class and other interest-group conflicts. Thereby, State Capitalism, in its military form, cuts through conflict of class versus class and introduces income inequality based upon type of industry and even geographical location, rather than upon occupation. Classic conditions of exploitation are thus revised in accordance with the military priorities of the State-Capitalist rulers.

The military economy is more than a collection of enterprises and assorted research organizations that maximize costs and subsidies. On a macroeconomic or system level it is the core of a specifically American form of State Capitalism.

Socialism – Communism

The very moment that the conception of Socialism became an ideology, adopted and promoted by self-proclaimed Socialist Parties, the destiny of the idea was to become pure and simple Statism. In other words, an ideology and a programme to conquer State power and to manage it for the benefit of the Party members and the mass of supporters attracted by the scent and reality of favours and positions that the holding of State power makes possible.

For carrying out this deformation of the idea the leaders of the Socialist parties could rely on some formulations contained in the *Communist Manifesto* (later abandoned by Marx and Engels) and especially on the writings and activities of Ferdinand Lassalle and the propaganda and action of the German Social Democratic Party.

The increasing electoral success of this party constituted an example for the foundation and conduct of other “socialist” parties in Europe and gave a formidable pretext for presenting the State as a progressive enlightened and emancipatory entity.

Antoine Martinet

Statolatry or Legal Communism (1848)

Antoine Martinet (1802-1871) was an abbot who wrote several texts of social criticism and in defence of the Catholic religion.

In this pamphlet, of which we present an extract from the first chapter, he qualifies communism imposed by law as Statolatry (the worship of the State).

Indeed, as early as 1848, he had understood that “we will rush into communism with the cry: Down with communism!” The necessary condition for reaching this unpalatable end is for leaders and followers of all parties (conservative and liberal included) to fight, as they regularly do, for gaining State Power. The inevitable result will be the “Omnipotence of the State” i.e. legal communism, better described as Statolatry.

Clearly this has nothing to do with equality (absence of privileges) and fraternity (solidarity and mutual aid), and everything to do with State domination and lack of freedom (i.e. statism).

Source: Antoine Martinet, *STATOLATRIE ou Le Communisme Légal*, Paris, 1848.

Where is communism and where does it come from?

To arms! Communism is here! is what people everywhere are saying with a shudder, and everywhere they are right to say it and to shudder. Communism, in fact, is the total moral and physical degradation of the human being. The individual, in this system, is no longer even a machine, a complete automaton: he is an imperceptible cog in the vast mechanism of the State.

Communism is everywhere. It is in France, and even more so elsewhere. After trying to follow us through Berne, which could only lead to triumph in Fribourg and Valais, it is now manoeuvring on our front. If he wins the battle, he will climb one of the towers of Saint-Sulpice to say to Europe: The city capital is taken, surrender!

- But he was beaten.

- Do you believe that? I think, on the contrary, that this defeat saved communism. It lost only those who were going to lose it by a violent and premature application. Defeated in the streets, where it would have triumphed only to lose, it returned to its fortress, by which I mean the legislative assemblies, where its enemies would consolidate its throne, believing that they were sealing its tomb. What they would refuse him under the cloak of the worker in arms, he will probably obtain under the cloak of legality.

If communism is wise; if, while preserving and propagating its principles, it abjures its justly abhorred name; if it covers itself with the adored name of State, and, exploiting the fears it inspires, solicits, in the name of the State threatened by communism, the sacrifice of the remnants of liberties that the vanquished wanted to abolish with bayonets, there is much to bet that it will succeed. People will rush into communism [i.e. statism — editor's note] shouting: Down with communism!

And believe me, there is very little left to do. What will it take for Europe to achieve this last evolution (it would not be a revolution)? Perhaps less time than it will take me to complete and publish this pamphlet, which I expose to perish, like two of its siblings, in the midst of the barricades.

- But don't you see that communism is impossible? It is the dream of a few madmen.

- Yes, I see what you see; nobody wants communism, not even those who preach it, except a few dupes. But I see what you don't see, because you don't pay enough attention; everyone, with a few exceptions, has been working up to now, and is still working, for the triumph of communism.

It was also said a few months ago: In France, the Republic? impossible! It is the dream of an imperceptible minority. It would be a dreadful anarchy.

No sooner had those words been spoken than the Republic was greeted by unanimous cheers; the wind of anarchy may have been blowing strong, but it wasn't fanning any flames.

But why not?

The eye of the nation, eminently fair when it wants to see, saw that the so-called impossible was only possible, that it was no longer to be made, but well and truly made, adult, capable of killing France if France pretended to kill it. The name hardly suited most of them, but it suited the thing they all wanted or accepted so well that there was only one voice: République!

Can you tell me who made a scarecrow out of the word Republic? The Republican Party. And who had made the Republic a necessity? Its most ardent enemy, the bourgeois monarchy aided by the monarchical bourgeoisie.

Well, I say it with conviction: if we don't change course immediately, Europe will be smashed by communism, so much so that the general manoeuvring is pointing in that direction! We might already be there, were it not for the impatience of the Communists to seize the helm.

- You are an alarmist. A visionary.

- Not at all: an alarmist preaches, shouts, thunders, lashes out and gets irritated when people don't share his fear. A visionary speaks in the name of heaven, announces supernatural events. I do nothing of the kind.

Based on the most unquestionable historical data, here is what I say to the friends of order and to what is commonly known as the conservative party:

Communism or socialism (basically, it's one and the same thing) is not what you may think, the dream of a few fanatical club members. It is the logical application to the social order of religious, philosophical and political principles that have been generally accepted, advocated and glorified by all the governments of Europe for three centuries. The politics of middle ground, the recent defeat of which still excites so much foolish surprise and so many thoughtless regrets, was merely the persevering realisation, for the benefit of the governing coterie, of the principles of socialism.

What is the political symbol of our modern statesmen? It is all in these two words: *Omnipotence of the State!* And here is the meaning of this article of constitutional faith:

The State or the Nation being the primary source of all sovereignty, of all power, it follows that public reason or the national will is the supreme rule of rights and duties, of right and wrong.

But who is responsible for formulating the will of the nation and transforming it into law? The majority of citizens admitted by the

fundamental law to exercise sovereign power by themselves or through their proxies. This majority and the men of their choice have the privilege of imposing their will on the nation. The citizens who are friends of order have the obligation to submit their religious and civil liberties, the education of their children, their rights and their most cherished interests to the sovereign action and supervision of the agents of the State. In this way, they will be good citizens, docile atoms following the guidance of the State. However, if they deviate from these principles, if they claim to be autonomous, to do their own thing, to associate in whatever way and for whatever purpose, without the State holding the chain and getting paid for it, oh! Then they constitute societies within society, States within the State; they attack political unity, the principle of all power, of all national life: there is anarchy, chaos, imminent danger of death for the State; and if the State, this great whole of modern politics, dies, what will happen to the poor human species and its absolute impossibility to survive this tragedy.

Such is the faithful summary of the so-called liberal doctrines of the most ardent defenders of conservative politics. Whether these doctrines were clearly formulated in their minds and whether they foresaw their disastrous consequences, I do not think so. Men of action and movement, devoid of political convictions, they paraded from the rostrum, they willingly abandoned the direction of the highest affairs to chance, to the blind inspirations of parliamentary coteries, to the pull of routine, to what they called the irresistible power of accomplished facts and dominant ideas.

Thus, among so many tireless talkers, who ever thought of asking himself these very natural questions?

- What, then, is this State whose magical and ever-undisputed rights crush taxpayers under the weight of burdens and rapidly confiscate the exercise of all public and private freedoms?

- What is the basis of the cult of the State, an abstract divinity as elusive in its essence as it is insatiable in its appetites?

- This national will, which translates into laws that are brutally illiberal and rapacious, that penetrate to the inviolable heart of conscience and rob citizens of their most sacred rights and their last penny, what is it, in the final analysis, if not the good pleasure of a minister or a bureau chief, whose entire talent consists in transforming the most vital questions, the elements of the religious and moral life of a people, into matters of money and employment?

No. Never did such audacious questions arise in the minds of the beneficiaries of the State: in the sacred name of the master, they uncovered themselves, bowed and voted with imperturbable love, knowing that the State was as tender towards its chosen as it was merciless towards its damned. The same was true of members of the opposition, who, as heirs presumptive to power, were careful not to challenge the marvellous prerogatives of State power.

As long as the supreme exponents of the State confined themselves to seizing the freedoms of thought, speech, religion, education, the family, the communes and the provinces, all of which were of little importance in themselves and of great benefit to the feudatories of the State, the Conservative majority and the opposition combined their efforts to defend the most odious monopolies and to encourage the appalling invasions of government action.

One recalls the contempt with which they greeted the so-called outdated claims of the defenders of religious liberty, who dared to invoke a right prior to and superior to the rights of the State.

But today the organs of popular socialism, supported by the omnipotence of the State, are saying to the opulent class: You have taken away from public circulation land, capital and you have circumscribed the sphere of action of certain human beings. In the name of

the State, which needs them, return all this to the fertile air of the street, or else!

Against these savage pretensions the Conservatives raise their cry of horror.

There is no doubt that these claims are indeed savage and lead straight to barbarism. But, gentlemen of the Conservatives, isn't it time to recognise that these claims, instead of being doctrinal eccentricities, are in reality nothing more than a rigorous deduction of your principles and the worthy crowning achievement of your works?

Ferdinand Lassalle

The State as the agent of Socialism (1862)

This is an excerpt from a famous speech by Lassalle in which he criticises the position of the liberals who, according to him, saw the State only as a night watchman. Clearly, the State dominated by the liberals had only that function, to protect the wealth of the ruling class, because the ruling class reserved to herself a free hand in all economic activities and demanded State intervention in her favour only in times of crisis.

For Lassalle, on the other hand, the State was to be the agent of protection of the working class, promoting freedom and solidarity. Clearly an idyllic image, based on illusions that would be swept away when the bureaucracy, largely formed by the sons of the bourgeoisie, took the reins of the State that would then be called the People's State, the Democratic State or even the Proletarian State.

Source: Extract from a *Lecture* given on 12 April 1862 in Berlin at the craftsmen's association of the *Oranienburger Vorstadt*, a historic district of Berlin.

The moral idea of the State held by the bourgeoisie is that nothing other than the unhindered self-actualisation of one's powers is to be guaranteed to each individual.

If we were all equally strong, equally clever, equally educated and equally rich, this idea would be considered sufficient and moral.

But since we *are not* and *cannot be* equal, this idea is not sufficient and therefore necessarily leads to a deep immorality in its consequences. For it leads to the stronger, cleverer and richer exploiting the weaker and manipulating him.

The moral idea of the State according to the working class, on the contrary, is that the unhindered and free exercise of individual powers by the individual is *not enough*, but that in a morally ordered community it *must be supplemented* by *solidarity* of interests, by commonality and reciprocity in development.

In accordance with this difference, the bourgeoisie understands the moral purpose of the State as consisting exclusively and solely in protecting the personal freedom of the individual and his property.

This is a night watchman's idea, gentlemen, a night watchman's idea because it can only conceive of the State itself in the image of a night watchman [*nachtwächter*] whose entire function is to prevent robbery and burglary. Unfortunately, this night watchman idea is not only to be found among the real liberals, but often enough even among many alleged democrats, due to a lack of thought.

If the bourgeoisie wished to pronounce its last word consistently, it would have to confess that, according to these ideas, if there were no robbers and thieves, the State itself would be quite superfluous.

The fourth estate [the proletarians], gentlemen, has a completely different view of the purpose of the State, and indeed it understands things as they truly are.

History, gentlemen, is a struggle with nature; with the misery, the ignorance, the poverty, the powerlessness and thus the lack of freedom of all kinds in which we found ourselves when the human race emerged at the beginning of history. The progressive *victory* over this powerlessness means the development of freedom which history represents.

We would never have made a step forward in this struggle, nor shall we ever make any further progress by acting on the principle of *each one for himself, each one alone*.

It is the *State* that has the function of realising this *development of freedom*, this *development of the human race* towards freedom.

The *State* is this unity of individuals in a moral whole, a unity which multiplies a millionfold the powers of all the individuals who are included in this union, multiplies a millionfold the powers which would be available to them *all* as individuals.

The object of the State, therefore, is not merely to *protect* the personal freedom and property of the individual, with which, according to the idea of the bourgeoisie, he is supposed to have become member of the State. The purpose of the State is rather precisely to enable individuals, *through this union*, to attain *such ends*, such a *stage of existence*, which they could never attain as single individuals, to make them capable of acquiring a sum of *education, power, and liberty*, which would be absolutely unattainable to them all as individuals.

The purpose of the State is thus to bring the human being to *positive fulfilment* and *progressive development*, in other words, to shape *human destiny*, i.e. to bring into *real existence* the culture of which the human race *is capable*. The purpose is the education and *development* of the human race towards freedom.

This is the very moral nature of the State, gentlemen, its true and higher mission. It is so much so that from all times this task has there-

fore been more or less carried out by the State itself, even unwillingly, even unconsciously, even against the will of its leaders.

But the working classes, gentlemen, the lower classes of society in general, through the helpless situation in which their members find themselves as individuals, already have the deep instinct that this is and must be the aim of the State, to help the individual through the union of all to such a *development* as he would *not be capable* of as an individual.

A State, therefore, which is ruled by the idea of the working class, would no longer be driven unconsciously and often even reluctantly by the nature of things and the compulsion of circumstances, as, of course, all States have done hitherto, but it would make this moral nature of the State its mission with the utmost clarity and complete consciousness.

It would accomplish with *free* desire and the most perfect *consistency* what has hitherto been wrested only piecemeal in the most meagre outlines from the reluctant will, and it would thus necessarily — even if time no longer permits me to do so, to explain to you the more detailed nature of this necessary connection — bring about an upsurge of the spirit, the development of a sum of happiness, education, well-being and freedom such as is unparalleled in world history and against which even the most vaunted conditions of earlier times would appear but dim shadows of the reality.

That, gentlemen, is what must be called the idea of the State of the working class, its conception of the purpose of the State, which, as you see, is as different from the conception of the purpose of the State of the bourgeoisie, as the principle of the working class of the participation of all in the determination of the will of the State, or universal suffrage, is different from the principle held by the bourgeoisie, the census.

It is therefore the series of ideas developed here that must be regarded as the idea of the working class. It is this that I had in mind when I spoke to you at the beginning about the connection between the particular historical period in which we live and the idea of the Workers' State. It is *this* period of history, beginning in February 1848, to which the task of realising this idea of the State has fallen, and we can congratulate ourselves, gentlemen, that we were born in a time which is destined to witness this most glorious work of history, and we are privileged to participate in its furtherance.

But, for all those who belong to the working class, it follows from what has been said that they must adopt an entirely new attitude.

Nothing is more suited to impress upon a class a dignified and deeply moral character than the consciousness that it is destined to be the ruling class, that it is called upon to elevate the principle of its class to the principle of the whole age, to make *its idea* the leading idea of the whole society, and thus to mould this society into a reflection of its own character.

The high world-historical honour of this destiny must occupy all your thoughts. No longer are the vices of the oppressed, nor the idle distractions of the thoughtless, nor even the harmless frivolity of the insignificant befitting you. You are the rock on which the church of the present is to be built!

It is the high moral seriousness of *this* thought which must take possession of your mind with a consuming exclusiveness, fill your spirit and shape your whole life as a life worthy of it, appropriate to it and always related to it. It is the moral earnestness of *this* thought which, without ever leaving you, must stand before your inner being in your workshops during the hours of labour, in your hours of leisure, during your walks, your meetings; and even when you stretch out your limbs on your hard bed to rest, it is this thought which must fill and occupy your soul until it glides over into the arms of the God of dreams.

The more fully you immerse yourself in the moral seriousness of this thought, the more fully you give yourself over to the fervour of it, the more you will in turn — of this you may be sure — *hasten* the time within which our present historical period has to accomplish its task, *the more quickly* you will bring about the *fulfilment* of this task.

If there were only *two* or *three* of you, gentlemen, who are listening to me today, in whom I had succeeded in kindling the moral fervour of this idea, in the depth that I mean and have described to you, I would already consider that a great gain and myself richly rewarded for my lecture.

Friedrich Nietzsche

Socialism as State despotism

(1878)

Already during Nietzsche lifetime socialism was appearing as the ideology and the praxis favouring and demanding the dominion of the State over the individuals instead of promoting societies based on free individuals and their voluntary intercourses.

And socialism as statism will dominate the first half of the XX century, taking the names of bolshevism, fascism, national socialism, welfarism and many other local and less known qualifications.

Source: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, 1878.

Socialism with regard to its means

Socialism is the fantastic younger brother of the almost obsolete despotism which it wants to inherit; its endeavours are therefore reactionary in the deepest sense.

For Socialism desires an abundance of State power such as only despotism has ever had. Indeed, Socialism surpasses all despotisms of the past in that it strives for the formal annihilation of the individual, which appears to it an unjustified luxury of nature, to be transformed by it into a useful *organ of the community*.

Because of this kinship, Socialism always appears close to all excesses of power, like the old typical socialist Plato at the court of the Sicilian tyrant; it desires (and under certain circumstances promotes) the Caesarian violent State of the present century because, as I said, it wants to become its heir.

But even this inheritance would not suffice for its purposes. Socialism requires the most abject prostration of all citizens to the Absolute State that has ever existed before.

And since it can no longer even count on the old religious reverence for the State, but must involuntarily and continually work to eliminate it — namely because it is working for the abolition of all existing States — Socialism can hope to exist only for a brief period of time, here and there, through the exercise of the most extreme terrorism.

That is why it is quietly preparing for reigns of terror and driving the word “justice” like a nail into the heads of the semi-educated masses in order to rob them completely of their intellect (and this intellect has already suffered greatly through exposure to semi-education) and to create in them a good conscience for the evil game they are supposed to play.

Socialism can serve to teach quite brutally and forcefully the danger of all accumulations of State power, and in this respect to instil distrust of the State itself. When its harsh voice takes up the watch-word “*As Much State As Possible*,” this initially sounds noisier than ever. But soon the opposite cry emerges with all the greater force: “*as little state as possible*.”

Georges Sorel

Socialist Parties and Intellectuals as State Pillars

(1908)

The role of socialist parties and intellectuals as the essential agents for the growth of statism is well outlined in these passages taken from a text by Georges Sorel not often quoted.

Source: Georges Sorel, *La décomposition du marxisme*, 1908.

The rise of the intellectuals and of the political parties

Thanks to the intervention of a party at the head of the revolution, the historical movement [for the emancipation of the proletariat] takes on a completely new and unexpected direction. We are no longer dealing with a class of poor people acting under the influence of instincts, but with educated men who reason about the interests of a party, as industrialists do about the prosperity of their business.

Political parties are coalitions formed to conquer the advantages that possession of the State can give, whether their promoters are driven

by hatred, whether they are seeking material profit, or whether their ambition is above all to impose their will.

However skilful the organisers of a party may be, they will never be able to assemble more than a very small staff, whose task is to act upon the discontented masses, that are full of far away hopes and ready to make immediate sacrifices. The party will make broad concessions to them in the event of success; it will pay for the services rendered in economic, legal and religious transformations, the repercussions of which might greatly exceed expectations.

Very often, the party leaders who most deeply shake society belong to the aristocracy which the revolution is going to affect in a very direct way. This is because these men, not having found in their own class the means to seize power, have had to recruit a loyal army from classes whose interests are in opposition to those of their family. History shows that it would be misleading to suppose that the revolutions are made for the reasons that the philosophers are so often inclined to attribute to their promoters.

When the events are long past, the passions that drove the first actors of the drama seem negligible compared with the great changes that have taken place in society, which we try to relate to the obscure tendencies of the masses. Generally, contemporaries had seen things in the opposite order and had been more interested in the rivalries that had existed between the party leaders.

It should be noted, however, that nowadays, since ideologies have been given such wide role, every party is obliged to parade its doctrines; the boldest politicians could not retain their prestige if they did not manage to establish a certain harmony between their actions and the principles they are supposed to represent.

The introduction of political parties into a revolutionary movement takes us a long way from primitive *simplicity*. At first, the rebels were intoxicated by the idea that their will would encounter no obstacle,

since they were the majority. It seemed obvious to them that they would only have to designate delegates to formulate a new legality in accordance with their needs; but now they accept the leadership of men who have interests other than their own. These men are willing to do them a favour, but on condition that the masses hand over to them the State, the object of their covetousness.

In this way, the instinct of revolt of the poor can serve as the basis for the formation of a *Popular State*, made up of bourgeois who wish to continue bourgeois life, who maintain bourgeois ideologies, but who appear as the representatives of the proletariat.

The Popular State is forced to extend its tentacles ever wider, because the masses become more and more difficult to dupe when the first moment of struggle has passed, and yet an instinct to revolt must be sustained in a time of calm. This requires complicated *electoral machinery* and, consequently, the granting of a very large number of favours.

By constantly increasing the number of its employees, the government of the Popular State aims to bring into existence a group of intellectuals with interests separate from those of the proletariat of producers; it thus strengthens the defence of the bourgeois structure against the proletarian revolution. Experience shows that, even though this bourgeoisie of clerks has a very feeble culture, it is nevertheless very attached to bourgeois ideas. We even see, by many examples, that if a few propagandists of the revolution penetrate the apparatus of government, they become excellent bourgeois with the greatest ease.

It could therefore be said that, by a sort of paradox, the politicians who see themselves as the true bearers of the revolutionary idea are conservatives. But, after all, had the Convention been anything else? Has it not often been said that it continued the traditions of Louis XIV and paved the way for Napoleon?

From the extinction of the State to the conquest of the State

The object of the party, in all countries and at all times, is to conquer the State and to use it in the best interests of the party and its allies. Until recent years, Marxists taught, on the contrary, that they wanted to abolish the State. This doctrine was presented by them with a wealth of detail, and sometimes even paradoxes, which left no doubt as to their thinking.

Things naturally changed when electoral successes led socialist leaders to find that the possession of power offers great advantages, even if this possession would be minimal, like that which can be obtained by the conquest of municipalities. It is the party spirit which has regained its place in Marxism, as a result of a purely material reason: the organisation of the socialist workers into a political party.

In the *Aperçu sur le socialisme scientifique* (Overview of Scientific Socialism), written in 1883 by Gabriel Deville, and printed at the beginning of his analysis of *Capital*, we read:

“The State is not — as expressed by a certain bourgeois who entered the Socialist Party like a worm in the fruit, to satisfy his unhealthy appetites by messing it up — the set of public services already constituted, that is to say something which only needs corrections here, corrections there. The State needs to be abolished, not improved... It’s a bad strategy when, for destroying something, we start by fortifying it. And it would increase the State’s power of resistance to encourage it to monopolise the means of production, that is to say, the means of domination.”

We could quote many other opinions from the same period on the danger that the extension of State services poses to socialism.

I believe that Engels wrote his book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* because he wanted to show through history that the existence of the State is not as necessary as many people think.

For example, it contains the following conclusions:

“At a certain stage of economic development, which was necessarily bound up with the division of society into classes, the State became a necessity because of this division. We are now rapidly approaching a stage in the development of production in which the existence of these classes will not only cease to be a necessity, but will become an obstacle to production. Classes will disappear as inevitably as they have arisen. Along with them *the State will inevitably fall*. Society, which will reorganise production on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers, will put the whole machinery of the State where it then belongs: into the Museum of Antiquities, by the side of the spinning wheel and the bronze axe.”

To understand the transformation that has taken place in socialist thought, it is necessary to examine the composition of the modern State. It is a body of intellectuals invested with privileges to defend itself against attacks from other groups of intellectuals eager to possess the profits of State employment.

Parties are formed to gain these State jobs, and they are forms of organisation similar to the State. We could therefore clarify the thesis that Marx put forward in the *Communist Manifesto*: “All social movements up to now,” he says, “have been accomplished by minorities for the benefit of minorities”. We would say that all our political crises consist in the replacement of intellectuals by other intellectuals; they therefore always have the result of preserving the State, and sometimes even strengthening it, by increasing the number of co-interested individuals.

Marx contrasted the proletarian revolution with all the other revolutions recorded in history, and saw this future revolution as destroying "the whole layered superstructure of official society." Such a phenomenon implies the disappearance of the intellectuals and, above all, of their strongholds, the State and the political parties.

In the Marxist conception, the revolution is made by the producers who, accustomed to the form of organization of the large industrial workshop, reduce the intellectuals to being no more than clerks carrying out as few tasks as possible. Everyone knows that the smaller the administrative staff, the better a business is considered to be run.

Many accounts of Marx's opinions on revolutionary intellectuals can be found in the *Circular of the International* of July 21, 1873 [*]. It matters little whether the facts of which Bakunin's friends are accused are strictly accurate; what matters only is Marx's assessment of these facts. It is the whole of Blanquism, with its bourgeois headquarters, which is condemned with the harshest energy.

He reproaches his opponent [Bakunin] for having formed a political association so strongly authoritarian that it could be thought to have been inspired by the Bonapartist spirit.

"We have thus reconstituted, even more perfectly, all the elements of the authoritarian State, and it matters little whether we call this *common revolutionary machine organised from the bottom to the top*. The name makes no difference." (*Circular of the International*)

At the head of this association were the initiators against whom Marx's anger was particularly directed:

"To say that the hundred international brothers must serve as intermediaries between the revolutionary idea and popular instincts is to dig an impassable abyss between the revolutionary idea and popular

instincts; it is to proclaim the impossibility of recruiting these hundred guards anywhere but among the privileged classes.”
(*Circular of the International*)

The outcome is a staff of revolutionary bourgeois, who elaborate ideas and tell the people what to think; and the people's army, which remains, in Marx's words, *the cannon fodder*.

It is above all against the Italian members of the 'Alliance' that we find violent reproaches. Bakunin having written, in a letter of 5 April 1872, that there existed in Italy “an ardent, energetic youth, without a career, without a way out, which was throwing itself wholeheartedly into revolutionary socialism” — Marx made the following remarks on the subject:

“All the so-called sections of the Italian International are led by advocates without causes, doctors without patients and without science, pool players, travelling salesmen and other commercial employees, and above all journalists from the small press.... It is by seizing the official posts in the sections that the Alliance succeeds in forcing the Italian workers to enter into an arrangement whereby communication with the other sections of the International would pass through the hands of the déclassé members of the Alliance who, in the International, would find a career and a way out.”
(*Circular of the International*)

It is difficult to show more repugnance for the invasion of proletarian organisations by intellectuals who bring with them the mores of the *political machines*. Marx sees very clearly that such a way of proceeding cannot lead to the emancipation of the world of the producers. How could they possess the necessary capacity to direct industry, if they are obliged to place themselves under the tutelage of politicians in order to organise themselves? There is an absurdity here that could not fail to strike Marx as revolting.

Note

[*] The circular, here referred to, was a report drafted in French by Friedrich Engels and Paul Lafargue (with probably some notes by Marx) under the title *L'Alliance de la démocratie socialiste et l'Association internationale des travailleurs. Rapport et documents publiés par ordre du Congrès International de La Haye*. (The Alliance of Socialist Democracy and the International Working Men's Association. Report and documents published by order of the International Congress at The Hague).

Élie Halévy

The Age of Tyrannies

(1936)

An interesting analysis of the similarities between socialism and fascism, both under the banner of statism or national socialism.

M. Élie Halévy, professor at the École des Sciences politiques, submitted, under the title *The Age of Tyrannies*, the following considerations to the *Société Française de Philosophie*.

Source: *Société Française de Philosophie*. Meeting of 28 November 1936.

Since its birth at the beginning of the 19th century, socialism has suffered from an internal contradiction. On the one hand, it is often presented by its adherents as the culmination and completion of the Revolution of 1789, which was a revolution of freedom, a liberation from the last remaining bondage after all the others had been destroyed by capital. But it is also, on the other hand, a reaction against individualism and liberalism; it proposes a new organisation

based on constraint in place of the outdated organisations destroyed by the Revolution:

a) Socialism, in its primitive form, is neither liberal nor democratic; it is organisational and hierarchical. See in particular Saint-Simonian socialism;

b) The socialist revolution of 1848 led, through a double movement of reaction against socialist anarchy and development of the organising principle embodied in socialism, to the Caesarism of 1851 (strongly influenced by Saint-Simonism);

c) At the origin of German democratic socialism was Karl Marx, an internationalist and founder of the International Workingmen's Association, who aspired to a definitive condition of mankind which would be one of anarchy and communism. But there was also Ferdinand Lassalle, a nationalist as well as a socialist, who directly inspired Bismarck's "social monarchy."

These remarks seem to us to find sensational confirmation in the general evolution of European society since the beginning of the Great War and the opening of what we propose to call the era of tyrannies (*).

The era of tyrannies dates from August 1914, in other words from the moment when the belligerent nations adopted a regime that can be defined as follows:

a) From the economic point of view, extremely extensive State control of all the means of production, distribution and exchange; and, on the other hand, governments appealing to the leaders of workers' organisations to help them in this work of State control — hence trade unionism, corporatism, at the same time as statism.

b) From the intellectual point of view, the nationalization (*étatisation*) of thought, this nationalization itself taking two forms: one

negative, by the suppression of all expressions of opinion deemed unfavourable to the national interest; the other positive, by what we shall call the organisation of enthusiasm.

It is from this regime of war, much more than from Marxist doctrine, that all post-war socialism derives. The paradox of post-war Socialism is that it recruits followers who come to it out of hatred and disgust of war, and that it proposes to them a programme which consists in the prolongation of the war regime in peacetime. Russian Bolshevism presented, to begin with, the characteristics we are talking about. The Russian Revolution, born of a movement of revolt against the war, consolidated and organised itself in the form of "war communism" during the two years of war with the allied armies, from the peace of Brest-Litowsk to the definitive victory of the communist armies in 1920.

A new feature has been added here to those defined above. Because of the chaotic collapse, of the total disappearance of the State, a group of armed men, animated by a common faith, has decreed that they were the State. Sovietism, in this form, is, literally, "Fascism."

In Central Europe, it was precisely "Fascism," a direct imitation of Russian methods of government, which reacted against socialist "anarchy." However, under the name of "corporatism," it has come to constitute a kind of counter-socialism, which we are prepared to take more seriously than is generally the case in anti-fascist circles, and which consists of an increasing degree of nationalization of the economic society, with the collaboration of certain working-class elements. We shall define the internal contradiction from which European society suffers as follows.

The conservative parties are calling for an almost indefinite strength-

ening of the State with an almost indefinite reduction of its economic functions.

The socialist parties call for an indefinite extension of the functions of the State and, at the same time, an indefinite weakening of its authority. The conciliatory solution is “national socialism.”

What are the chances of the new regimes spreading further? What are the possibilities of internal decomposition? But above all, is the explanation we have tried to give for their genesis, by the contradictory nature of the essence of socialism, valid? These are the questions we submit for the consideration of the Philosophical Society.

Note by the author

(*) I shall confine myself to saying a few words about why I prefer the term “tyranny” to “dictatorship.” The Latin word dictatorship implies the idea of a provisional regime, which leaves intact, in the long term, a regime of freedom, considered, in spite of everything, as normal.

The Greek word tyranny, on the other hand, expresses the idea of a normal form of government, which the scientific observer of societies must place alongside the other normal forms: kingship, aristocracy and democracy.

We cannot therefore speak of an “era of dictatorships.” It occurred to me — without knowing enough, I confess, about the history of the ancient world, but I am happy to have received Marcel Mauss’s unreserved approval on this point — that Plato’s and Aristotle’s complementary analyses of the way in which the transition from democracy to tyranny took place in the ancient world have a profound application to the historical phenomena we are witnessing today.

Gregory Petrovich Maximoff

Communism as Ultra-Statism

(1940)

Gregory Maximoff was a Russian anarcho-syndicalist that played a leading role during the early stages of the Russian Revolution as organiser of the syndicalist movement. He grew increasingly critical of the authoritarian and centralist tendencies of the Bolsheviks and for this reason was arrested and finally expelled from the country (1922). In his main work, from which this extract is taken, the author offers a powerful portrait of the horrors of State dominance under the label of Communism.

Source: Gregory Petrovich Maximoff, *The Guillotine at Work*. Twenty Years of Terror in Russia, Part one, Chapter XIII, 1940.

Dictatorship, like other forms of absolutism, is the highest expression of political centralization. But socialist dictatorship, “the dictatorship of the proletariat,” is absolute centralization; it denotes a totalitarian State that is not confined to the realm of the political but centralizes all industries, all human activity. Every sphere of life is subject to its

control and regulation. The State becomes the sole capitalist, the sole monarch, but also likewise the sole teacher, landowner, policeman, philosopher, priest; in a word, it becomes God, omnipresent and ubiquitous. It dominates man completely from the cradle to the grave; death alone frees him from its power.

It is this kind of a State that the Marxists have built in Russia.

In order to execute its infinite authority, such a State requires a great number of officials. And so, a bureaucracy has stepped forth into the arena of world history that is utterly free from political and economic dependence upon capitalism, a bureaucracy that constitutes a new class.

If capitalism is based upon the right of private ownership of the tools and means of production, State Capitalism is based upon the private ownership of knowledge; that is why the dominant class under State Capitalism (the bureaucracy), as distinguished from the capitalist class (the bourgeoisie), does not need the right of ownership of the tools and means of production. It strives rather for a monopoly of legality, of government, of industrial management, for the monopolist right to organize the political and economic life of the country and to distribute all the products in accordance with its own appraisal of personal merits, and contributions to the State, that is, to itself.

These rights give it unlimited power over the entire population. The army, fleet, police, courts and a monopoly of legal murders, being at its disposal, are powerful weapons for the consolidation and perpetuation of its domination and privileges.

Through the schools and universities its ranks are replaced by way of an artificial and hereditary selection.

Stalin's "general line" gave the strongest impetus to the process of the consolidation of the bureaucratic class. With this process completed, a new class has become stabilized, and now it occupies itself with the finishing touches *a la Europe*: in the political realm it imitates

Hitlerism, as the new constitution shows, and in the realm of everyday life — the bourgeoisie.

It stands to reason that the new class tries not only to secure for itself the “legal” possession of its class privileges and licenses but also to live in accordance with its status; it wants to enjoy the fruit of its victory.

Hence its tendency to keep aloof from the rabble — from the workers and peasants — to exploit the national economy for the satisfaction of its own needs and pleasures: extravagant furniture; country villas; expensive automobiles; servants; all kinds of bread and pastries while the masses are starved. Class distinction in transportation; fashionable stores of women’s clothes (charging for a single dress prices many times greater than the average monthly wage of workers); beauty salons; stores of cosmetics and perfume; expensive restaurants and cabarets with excellent cuisines, with the choicest wines, with the ultra-modern music and dances; high-priced food stores with innumerable native and imported delicacies; fashionable hotels favourably comparing in their luxury with those of Europe and America.

In short, the new class wants to live like the old rich classes: in luxury and joy. The slogan of Abbé Sieyès “*enrich yourselves*,” [*] reiterated by Bukharin in the NEP [New Economic Policy] period, has now been replaced by the slogan, “*enjoy yourselves*.”

The words “Communism,” “Socialism,” “Economic Equality,” “Freedom” have lost their original meaning and have become indispensable abracadabra — mumbo-jumbo of the new sorcerers.

The ideology of Bolshevism has now as its basic principle: to each according to the services he renders to the State, that is, the bureaucratic class. The fighting slogan of this ideology at home is “struggle against levelling” and abroad, “aggrandizement of the Fatherland.”

Economic inequality is consolidated and justified by Socialism. Conditions have been created which are similar to those of the capitalist States: *everyone has equal rights, but not everyone has the equal opportunity to make use of these rights.*

A new ruling class took definite shape, expanded numerically, and henceforth there is no more and cannot be any more of that wide access to its ranks that took place in the initial period of its formation. Access to the new ruling class has already become very limited. A sharp line of demarcation has been drawn between it and the mass of workers and peasants.

But the ruling class must have some sort of backing in the lower classes. In Capitalist States the bourgeoisie depend for support upon the well-to-do farmers and, in the cities, upon the small property owners and the highly skilled, well paid workers. Those categories were hostile to Bolshevism and it destroyed them.

Instead, it built up its own petty, well-to-do bureaucracy, its own Communist kulaks in the villages, and its own categories of well-paid workers in the cities.

It is these elements that the soviet bourgeoisie leans upon and glorifies. They are being imbued with an anti-social, anti-socialistic, petty bourgeois psychology. They are fully aware that they owe their prosperity to the existing regime and they are devoted to it body and soul.

Those classes want not revolutionary progress but the preservation of the *status quo*, the enjoyment of the fruits of the revolution and some easy military victory for glory's sake. Stalin gives them these opportunities and that is why they overwhelm the Great Leader with hosannas and manifestations of loyalty. They accord him almost divine honours.

Stalin is the Hitler of the new class in Russia and the fact that the new constitution replaced Sovietism with Hitlerian parliamentarism

is hardly surprising. In Russia there is a unique sort of fascism: social-fascism, com-fascism.

It is quite natural that in the process of this transformation of Bolshevism, oppositions should arise. It does not follow, however, that had the power been in the hands of the oppositionists the development would have taken a different course.

Its intrinsic nature destines Bolshevism to develop along fascist lines, irrespective of personnel. Had Trotsky been in power, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Stalin and others would have become the victims of terror; had Zinoviev and Kamenev been in power, Trotsky and Stalin would have shared the fate now meted out to the former [exile and then assassination].

Whatever the distribution of roles among the acting characters of the Russian drama, the essential characters of the parts would remain: there would be the executioner and the victim.

Whatever it is, the new class cements with the blood of the old Bolsheviks its class solidarity in the struggle for existence and for its privileges. The first and most decisive step, the most difficult step has been taken: *October Bolshevism has been shot down*. The next steps proved to be much easier.

The leaders of various oppositions were shot several times: they were shot morally and politically. That was followed by their physical execution, preceded by a campaign of vilification and character accusation which was based upon absurd and fantastic charges and extorted confessions of complicity in crimes that were never committed.

The new ruling class killed the oppositionists in order to destroy the banner under which the inchoate unrest within the Party and among the people began to crystallize. Their murder was meant to intimidate the discontented and to reassure the international bourgeoisie of the regime's stability and its rapprochement policy.

These murders characterized the nature of the new ruling class which emerged from the State Capitalism ultra-centralism and dictatorship, and which began its existence in Russia. These murders mark also the full triumph of counter-revolution in Russia, the completion of the fascist transformation of Bolshevism, just lately crowned by the Stalin-Hitler pact [August 1939].

Such are the sources and causes of Stalin's most recent intra-Party terror.

Note

[*] These words are generally attributed to François Guizot, historian and French statesman, and the full sentence seems to have been: "Enrichissez-vous par le travail et par l'épargne et vous deviendrez électeurs." ["Get rich by working and saving and you'll become voters."]

Svetozar Stojanović

Stalinism as Oligarchic Statism

(1973)

Svetozar Stojanović was a Serbian academic engaged in philosophical studies and social activities. He was critical of official Marxism reduced to bureaucratic statism. In this extract he strongly rejects the idea that State ownership signifies that the workers are in control of production and of the means of production. On the contrary, the workers find themselves in a condition worse than under capitalism and more similar to abject feudalism.

Source: Svetozar Stojanović, *Between Ideals and Reality. A Critique of Socialism and its Future*, Chapter 3: The Statist Myth of Socialism, 1973.

The Stalinist system possesses all the essential properties of statism. Stalinists equate the State with society in every respect, even with reference to ownership of the means of production and management of production.

Some critics of Stalinism are not able to see through the socialist mystification of statist property because they adhere to the practice of connecting the concept of ruling class ownership with *private* ownership of the means of production. But according to this logic, the church hierarchy was not part of the feudal ruling class since its members did not privately own the means of production, nor did their children (!) inherit any property.

In statist society, as has been stated already, the ruling class is the *collective* owner of the means of production. The share of surplus value appropriated by its members is defined by their position in the State hierarchy. Actually, the nature and degree of their participation in *all* decisions about production and the distribution of surplus value is defined in this manner. One peculiarity of the statist class is that its economic power derives from its political power, while the opposite is true of the bourgeoisie. We must admit that Marxist theory has not left enough latitude for this type of political determinism.

Since members of the ruling class, as individuals, cannot dispose of the means of production, many people suppose that the means of production are not the property of the State apparatus. The observation that nepotism plays no significant role in the rejuvenation of the statist class, in contrast to other ruling classes in history, adds to this impression. Yet the State apparatus does, in fact, control production and dispose of surplus value (primarily in its own interest), and it is therefore *de facto* the owner of the means of production, regardless of any formal legal decrees to the contrary. We need not puzzle over the concept of *collective class ownership*, for it has not been unknown in history — I again cite the example of feudal church ownership.

One would have to have a vivid imagination indeed to believe that the proletariat is the ruling class in the Stalinist system. This ideological myth derives its strength from the fact that an occasional worker does

enter the State apparatus. Do not such workers, it may be asked, represent above all the interests of the working class? But first, we may note that there are fewer workers than is usually supposed and that the further the revolution recedes into the past the fewer workers there are relative to other groups. Moreover, it doesn't occur to anyone to deny that the bourgeoisie is the ruling class in a capitalist society solely on the grounds that an occasional worker breaks into its ranks, albeit less frequently than he penetrates the Stalinist State apparatus.

The bourgeoisie renews itself as a class primarily by means of inheritance, while this does not play a significant role in the case of the statist class. As it came into being as a consequence of the degeneration of the revolutionary State apparatus, it is natural for the statist class to recruit workers in a deliberate manner. It thus reaffirms its status as the representative of the working class. But it is naïve to believe that these workers retain the same attitudes and interests permanently. A "Marxist" who does so must also hold that one's consciousness is determined primarily by his past, and not by his present social existence! Finally, it must also be noted that the social origin of members of a given social group is not one of Marx's criteria for identification of the ruling class.

Short of irony or cynicism, there is no sense in which the working class in the Stalinist system may be called the ruling class, not even in the most liberal sense of the term. The working class is completely subjugated and severely exploited. Not only is it barred from controlling production and making decisions concerning the distribution of surplus value (either directly or indirectly); it does not even possess certain rights that it has realized in capitalism — the rights to choose one's employer and to negotiate over working conditions and wage levels. In this respect we might draw an analogy between Stalinism and feudalism: in Stalinism, in addition to the reification of the labour force, even the workers themselves are reified to a significant degree.

Independent organizations that might really represent the rights of the proletariat are unknown in Stalinism. Nominal workers' organizations do exist, but in practice are nationalized and transformed into transmission belts of the statist class. Work is done not only under economic pressure, but under strong noneconomic pressure as well. As for the peasantry, in fully developed statism it becomes part of the proletariat through nationalization of land holdings and control of agriculture; as such, it is employed by the ruling class.

Some analysts and critics prefer to speak of a ruling caste rather than of a ruling class. But this is really an overly free use of an otherwise quite precise sociological concept. A caste is an exclusive sociological grouping based upon inheritance. Surely the ruling statist group does not have these characteristics.

Many Marxists apply only the mildest analytical-critical term to this group, calling it a social *stratum*. But this procedure only plays into the hands of the ideological mystification of the ruling class. In State socialism one can indeed talk meaningfully about the working class and the stratum of its representatives, the State officials. But in Stalinist society, where there are concentrations of political and economic power, wealth, and social prestige on the one hand, and of subjugation and exploitation on the other, the real relations between the ruling group and the proletariat can only be seen in terms of the following categorical symmetry: statist class - working class.

The statist class "adheres" firmly to Marxism (adapted, of course, to meet the circumstances) as its ideology. It uses the Marxist interpretation of socialism as the stage of preparation for classless society in order to lower an ideological veil over class reality. When the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. was proclaimed in 1937, Stalin declared that the exploiting class had disappeared forever — and this at the very time that the new ruling class was passing through an intensive formative period. This is hardly unusual:

For each new class which puts itself in the place of one ruling class before it, is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society . . . ; it will give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones. (Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, 1846).

The statist class modestly legitimizes itself as the representative of the class which it actually exploits.

As difficult as it is for a Marxist to concede the possibility of a socialist revolution degenerating into a new form of class exploitative society, it is even harder for him to admit that it has actually happened. He thinks that his admission would dim the further prospects of socialism. The accurate observation that strong, although suppressed elements of socialism do exist in Stalinist society, above all in the working class, only reinforces his emotive resistance. The degree of violence which Stalinism had to employ attests to the strength of the socialist resistance to statist decadence. Still, we ought not confuse the existence of forces that resist the establishment of a socioeconomic system, or that hope to change it, with the nature of the system itself.

We shall call the Stalinist type of statism *oligarchic*. The monopoly of the ruling class — economic, political, cultural, moral — is direct and full. In addition to the conditions enumerated earlier, another role in the construction of this type of statism was played by the model of the ruling Stalinist party. *Permanently* based upon the principles of strict centralism, hierarchy and the absolute monopolization of social life, the party naturally aspired to fashion the entire social system in its own image.

Fascism - National Socialism

The economic development of European countries toward the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century (the so-called belle-époque) was marked also by an economic and political competition between the European States. This competition engendered nationalistic passions and militaristic tendencies having as objective the supremacy of one State over the others. The final result was the first World War (1914-1918).

The war made all the States very powerful entities from whom the masses expected the solution of all their social and economic troubles that had become even more acute because of the war. The answer to this situation was, in quite a few countries, the rise of Fascism and National Socialism as a more cogent way to control the masses from the top. These two ideologies are nothing else than State Socialism (statism) plus Nationalism. In this way, even the last remnant of the socialist conception, i.e. internationalism, was totally erased, leading to the nationalization of the masses under the omnipotent State.

Benito Mussolini

Speech on the third anniversary of the March on Rome (1925)

An analysis, at some points even quite lucid, of the complexity of social reality to which a wholly inadequate and outlandish response is given through the famous formula: *Everything in the State, Nothing outside the State, Nothing against the State*. Unfortunately, this formula is considered by many to be valid nowadays, even if not in the blatant and crude manner of the times of fascism. Today, through the Bureaucratic-Busybody Welfare State, a numbing of the brains has been achieved that does not bode well for the future. A devastating social and economic crisis might then bring back in too many people the desire for a new criminal buffoon to whom everything should be entrusted, and the illusion that, by doing so, everything can be solved.

Source: *Speech* given in Milan, 28 October 1925.

When I look back on these three years of hard work and heavy responsibility, I have a clear conscience because I feel I have

provided an impressive amount of work for the Nation. I do not want to say that everything that has been done is perfect. But how could it be? Just think that in three years we have taken no less than three thousand administrative, political and legislative measures. You also understand that if we had had to submit each of these measures to the discussion and approval of a parliamentary assembly of 535 respectable people, we would find ourselves today having concluded nothing.

There are those who blame the ruling party for imposing strict discipline on the Nation. It is true. I recognise it, and I am very pleased about it. It is a state of war discipline.

You will say to me: but the war is over, and it ended gloriously with a splendid Victory in October-November 1918. I reply that the military war is over, but the war as a competition of the people in the arena of world civilisation continues.

There are three orders of reasons that impose this discipline: reasons of political, economic, and moral order.

A government ruler must be vigilant and attentive not only to the speeches made at official ceremonies, but also to all that is being worked out within the deep mass of the people.

There are currents elsewhere that are not yet resigned to the *fait accompli* of our borders. It must be said once more, and once for all, that if there are any sacred frontiers, they are the ones we have reached by war, and I would add that if these frontiers were in the slightest bit at stake tomorrow, I would beg His Majesty the King to unsheathe his sword.

There are economic reasons that impose discipline. We have no reason to hide them: we have gone through and are going through a period of financial difficulties; we will overcome them, but we must realise this and we must react with a solid internal and external discipline to all tendencies that would lead us to be spendthrifts: we

must save our currency and to save it we must not increase its volume.

Finally, there are moral reasons. For too long the image of the Italian people circulating abroad was that of a small, disorderly, tumultuous, restless people. Today, that image is fundamentally different; and, what is more important, the Italian people, deeply inside in the cities and in the countryside, is perfectly aware of the need for this discipline and resists all the suggestions and excitements of the men of the *ancien regime*. And this is the sign of the profound maturity reached by the Italian people.

You must not believe that this is the result of contingent considerations. No. At the bottom there is a system, there is a doctrine, there is an idea. Which one? It has been said that the 19th century is stupid. I do not accept this definition. In general, there are no stupid or intelligent centuries. I would dare say that, as in all individuals, including myself, intelligence and stupidity are intermittent. I refuse to call stupid a century in which Europe dominated world civilisation, during which industries, the arts, science and the wonders of the spirit asserted themselves as in a wonderful spring.

For us Italians, it is important to remember that, without the revival of the ideas of freedom and independence that were thrown upon the world by the great bloody wind stirred up by Napoleon, we would probably not have found the primitive ferment to arrive at the independence of the fatherland. I therefore admit that, throughout the first half of the 19th century, liberalism was a driving idea; today it is no longer so because the conditions of time, environment and people have changed profoundly.

Another strong idea is that of socialist claims and it too is in decline. All that was pompously called scientific socialism is nothing but a scrap; and a scrap is the enormous, theatrical and grotesque conception of a humanity divided into two irreconcilable classes; a scrap is the growing misery and concentration of capital, when there is a

precisely opposite process; a scrap, finally, is the idea of social palinogenesis.

Then there was an experience: the Russian experience that was the tombstone put on the wreckage of this doctrine. We are faced with ideas that have exhausted their propelling force. We are faced, I would say, with degenerations of these ideas, which Fascism repudiates by overcoming them.

The strength of Fascism consists in this: that it takes from all programmes the vital part, and has the energy to realise it. The central idea of our movement is the State. The State is the political and legal organisation of National Societies, and is expressed in a series of institutions of various orders.

Our formula is this:

**Everything in the State,
Nothing outside the State,
Nothing against the State.**

I believe that the political controversy in Italy would take a different course if we realised one fact, that in October 1922 there was no change of ministry, but rather the creation of a new political regime. I will speak clearly on this subject.

This political regime starts from an unquestionable and intangible premise: the Monarchy and the Dynasty. For the rest, we had institutions that were not perfect when they arose and are even less so today.

Gentlemen! The Italy of 1925 cannot wear the costume that was good enough for the little Piedmont of 1848. Cavour himself, the day after the promulgation of the Statute, declared that it was revisable, modifiable, perfectible.

What evil have we suffered from? From a high-handedness by the Parliament. What is the remedy? Reduce the dominant power of Parliament. Great solutions can never be adopted by assemblies if the assemblies have not first been properly prepared. A battle is either won by one general alone or lost by an assembly of generals. You still have to consider that modern life, fast and complex, constantly presents problems. When the liberal regime arose, modern nations then had ten to fifteen million inhabitants, and small, narrow political classes, taken from a determined number of families, with a special education.

Today, the environment has radically changed. People can no longer wait; they are beset by their problems, driven by their needs. These are the reasons why I place executive power at the forefront of all the powers of the State; because executive power is the omni-present and omni-operating power in the everyday life of the Nation.

What's more, the Fascist regime has spread and expanded throughout the entire nation, and is no longer just a government. It is seventy provinces, it is seven thousand municipalities, it is eight hundred thousand party members, it is two million peasants and workers, it is three hundred thousand soldiers.

Gentlemen! This regime can only be overthrown by force. Those who think they can get rid of us with petty corridor conspiracies, or with rivers of more or less filthy ink, let them be disillusioned: Ministries retire, but a Regime born of a revolution crushes all attempts at counter-revolution and achieves all its conquests. What used to be called the rotation of portfolios no longer exists, and if it starts again tomorrow, it could only take place within the framework of the National Fascist Party.

Where do we go in this century? We need to set goals and have the courage to reach them. The last century was the century of our independence. The present century must be the century of our power.

Power in all fields, from that of the matter to that of the spirit. But what is the magic key that opens the door to power? The disciplined will. So, you realise how today Italy achieves the prodigy of seeing, after a century of attempts, of wars, of sacrifices, of martyrs, the Italian people enter the scene of history, and invest itself with the consciousness of its destiny. It is no longer the population, as a century ago, divided into seven states. That population has become the People. Then the People, through the sacrifice of war, has become the Nation. Today, the Nation gives itself its legal and political and moral framework and becomes a State.

We are now at the perfect summit. All this imposes on us rude duties, and a high and conscious sense of responsibility, not only collective, but individual. Each one of you must consider himself a soldier; a soldier even when he is not wearing a uniform, a soldier even when he is working, in the office, in the workshops, on the building sites, or in the fields; a soldier linked to the rest of the army; a molecule that feels and pulsates with the entire organism.

Gentlemen! I firmly believe in the destiny of power that awaits our young Nation. And all my efforts, all my labours, all my anxieties, all my sorrows are directed to this end. From what does this sense of confidence, of unshakeable trust, ever derive in me? There is something fatal in the march of our People. Think of the path we have travelled during a century; think that the first uprisings for Italian independence were in 1821, that the fascist insurrection was in 1922. In a century, we have made gigantic progress. Today, this movement is accelerated; accelerated by our will, and all the people participate in this effort.

We will win, because that is our precise will. The Government sees itself as the general staff of the Nation that labours in the civil work of peace. The Government is sleepless, because it does not allow its citizens to be lazy; the Government is tough, because it considers

that enemies of the State have no right to citizenship in the State; the Government is inflexible, because it feels that in these iron times only inflexible wills can make us advance. Everything else is fog, which dissipates with the first rays of the sun.

Fascism Exceptional Decrees

Law for the Defence of the State (1926)

The Special Tribunal for the Defence of the State is one of the clearest examples of what it means to entrust the administration of justice to the State. The State is in fact more interested in protecting itself by enacting exceptional measures than in safeguarding the citizens through the law. During the course of its nefarious activities, the Special Tribunal for the Defence of the Fascist State handed down sentences against 4596 individuals. For others, such as the Rosselli brothers, the sentence was issued in the form of a murder commissioned by the Fascist State and carried out by Fascist hitmen.

Source: Decree-Law No. 2008, November 25, 1926, published in the Official Journal of the Kingdom [Gazzetta Ufficiale], No. 281 (December 6, 1926).

Art. 1

Anyone committing an act against the life, integrity or personal freedom of the King or Regent shall be punished by death.

The same penalty shall apply if the act is committed against the life, integrity or personal freedom of the Queen, the Hereditary Prince or the Head of the Government.

Art. 2

The crimes referred to in articles 104, 107, 108, 120 and 252 of the Penal Code are also punishable by death.

Art. 3

When two or more persons conspire to commit any of the crimes foreseen in the preceding articles, they are punished, for the mere fact of the conspiracy, with imprisonment from five to fifteen years. The leaders, promoters and organisers are punished with imprisonment from fifteen to thirty years.

Whoever, publicly through the press, instigates the committing of any of the crimes foreseen in the preceding articles or justifies them, shall be punished, for the mere fact of the instigation or justification, with imprisonment from five to fifteen years.

Art. 4

Anyone who re-establishes, even under a different name or form, associations, organisations or political parties dissolved by order of the public authority, is punished with imprisonment from three to ten years, in addition to perpetual disqualification from public office.

Those who are part of such associations, organisations or parties are punished, for the sole fact of participation, with imprisonment from two to five years, and with perpetual disqualification from holding public office.

The same penalty applies to those who in any way propagate the doctrine, programmes and methods of action of such associations, organisations or parties.

Art. 5

Any citizen who, outside the territory of the State, disseminates or communicates, in any form, false, exaggerated or tendentious rumours or news about the internal conditions of the State, in such a way as to impair the credit or prestige of the State abroad, or who in any case carries out an activity that is detrimental to national interests, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term of between five and fifteen years, and with perpetual disqualification from public office.

In the case provided for in this article, the sentence pronounced *in absentia* automatically entails the loss of citizenship and the confiscation of property. The judge may substitute seizure for confiscation; in this case, he determines its duration and establishes the destination of the income from the property.

The loss of citizenship does not affect the citizenship status of the convicted person's spouse and children.

All transfers of assets made by the convicted person after committing the offence and in the year prior to it are presumed to have been made in fraud of the State, and the assets themselves are included in the confiscation or seizure.

The effects of the conviction *in absentia*, as referred to in the preceding paragraphs, cease with the appearance or arrest of the convicted person. In this case, the assets are returned to him in their current state, without prejudice to the rights legitimately acquired by third parties.

Art. 6

For the crimes covered by this law, when the offence is of a minor nature, or there are circumstances which, under the terms of the Penal Code, result in a reduction of sentence, the judge has the right to substitute the death penalty with imprisonment for a period of

between fifteen and thirty years, to substitute a permanent ban on holding public office with a temporary ban, and to reduce the other sentences by up to a half.

For the same offences, all those who, in any way, have contributed to committing them, shall be punished with the penalties established by the present law.

Art. 7

Jurisdiction for the crimes referred to in this law is devolved to a Special Tribunal consisting of a President, chosen from among the general officers of the Royal Army, the Royal Navy, the Royal Air Force and the Voluntary Militia for National Security, five judges chosen from among the officers of the Voluntary Militia for National Security, with the rank of consul, both of them, whether on permanent active service, on leave or temporarily employed in other positions, and a non-voting rapporteur chosen from among the military justice personnel. The Special Tribunal may operate, when the need arises, with several sections, and the hearings may be held both in the place where the court is based or in any other municipality of the Kingdom.

The establishment of such a Tribunal is ordered by the Minister of War, who determines its composition, its seat and the command to which it is attached.

When the conditions set forth in art. 559 of the Penal Code for the Army are met, extraordinary Tribunals may also be established.

The provisions of the Military Penal Code regarding penal procedure in time of war shall apply in the procedure for crimes covered under the present law. All powers that by the terms of that code belong to the commander-in-chief are hereby conferred on the Minister of War.

The sentences of the Special Tribunal are not subject to appeal, nor to any other type of opposition, except for review.

The legal proceedings for the crimes covered under the present law, and that are in effect on the day it is promulgated, are hereby transferred to the competency of the Special Tribunal that is described in the first part of the present article.

Art. 8

Nothing is altered regarding the faculties conferred on the Government with the law n. 2260 of 24 December 1925.

The present law goes into effect on the day of its publication in the Official Journal of the Kingdom [Gazzetta Ufficiale], and ceases to be in effect after five years from that date, except for the execution of sentences already handed down.

Within the same period of time, the Government of the King has the right to promulgate norms for the carrying out of the present law, and for its coordination with the Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Military Penal Code and other laws.

We order that the present law, bearing the seal of the State, be inserted in the official collection of the laws and decrees of the Kingdom of Italy, sending it to whoever is responsible for observing it and enforcing it as law of the State.

Dated in Rome, on the 25th of November 1926.

VITTORIO EMANUELE.

Mussolini - Rocco.

Seen by the Keeper of the Seals: Rocco.

Giovanni Gentile

The Doctrine of Fascism

(1932)

Written in two parts by Giovanni Gentile and by Benito Mussolini, the ‘Doctrine of Fascism’ was published in 1932 as an entry in the *Enciclopedia Italiana*. The central point of the fascist doctrine, repeatedly reiterated, is that “for the fascist, everything is in the State, and nothing human or spiritual exists, let alone has value, outside the State.”

Thus, alongside Russian communism and German national socialism, fascism is one of the most obvious manifestations of the totalising statism of the 20th century.

Here we present the text drafted by the philosopher Giovanni Gentile.

Source: Giovanni Gentile, *Fascism*, *Enciclopedia Italiana*, 1932.

1. Like all sound political conceptions, Fascism is action and it is thought; action in which doctrine is immanent, and doctrine arising

from a given system of historical forces in which it is inserted, and working on them from within. It has therefore a form correlated to contingencies of time and space; but it has also an ideal content which makes it an expression of truth in the higher region of the history of thought. There is no way of exercising a spiritual influence in the world as a human will dominating the will of others, unless one has a conception both of the transient and the specific reality on which that action is to be exercised, and of the permanent and universal reality in which the transient dwells and has its being. To know men one must know the man; and to know the man one must be acquainted with reality and its laws. There can be no conception of the State which is not fundamentally a conception of life: philosophy or intuition, system of ideas evolving within the framework of logic or concentrated in a vision or a faith, but always, at least potentially, an organic conception of the world.

2. Thus many of the practical expressions of Fascism such as party organization, system of education, and discipline can only be understood when considered in relation to its general attitude toward life. A spiritual attitude. Fascism sees in the world not only those superficial, material aspects in which man appears as an individual, standing by himself, self-centered, subject to natural law, which instinctively urges him toward a life of selfish momentary pleasure. The man of fascism is an individual who is both nation and fatherland, a moral law that binds individuals and generations together in a tradition and a mission, that suppresses the instinct of life closed within the narrow circle of pleasure to found, on duty, a higher life, free from the limitations of time and space, a life in which the individual, through self-denial, the sacrifice of his particular interests, death itself, achieves that wholly spiritual existence in which his value as a man consists.

3. The conception is therefore a spiritual one, arising from the general reaction of the century against the materialistic positivism of the 19th century. Anti-positivistic but positive; neither skeptical nor agnostic; neither pessimistic nor supinely optimistic as are, generally speaking, the doctrines (all negative) which place the center of life outside man; whereas, by the exercise of his free will, man can and must create his own world. Fascism wants man to be active and to engage in action with all his energies. It wants him to be manfully aware of the difficulties besetting him and ready to face them.

It conceives of life as a struggle, thinking that it is up to man to conquer that which is truly worthy of him, first of all creating within himself the instrument (physical, moral, intellectual) to build it. This is true for the individual, for the nation, and for mankind. Hence the high value of culture in all its forms (artistic, religious, scientific) and the outstanding importance of education. Hence also the essential value of work, by which man subjugates nature and creates the human world (economic, political, ethical, and intellectual).

4. This positive conception of life is obviously an ethical one. It invests the whole field of reality as well as the human activities which master it. No action is exempt from moral judgment; no activity can be despoiled of the value which a moral purpose confers on all things. Therefore life, as conceived of by the Fascist, is serious, austere, and religious; all its manifestations are poised in a world sustained by moral forces and subject to spiritual responsibilities. The Fascist disdains an "easy" life.

5. The Fascist conception of life is a religious one, in which man is viewed in his immanent relation to a higher law, endowed with an objective will transcending the individual and raising him to conscious membership of a spiritual society. Those who perceive

nothing beyond opportunistic considerations in the religious policy of the Fascist regime fail to realize that Fascism is not only a system of government but also and above all a system of thought.

6. Fascism is a historical conception, in which man is not what he is except as a function of the spiritual process to which he contributes, in the family and social group, in the nation and in history, in which all nations bring their contribution. Hence the great value of tradition in records, in language, in customs, in the norms of social life. Outside history man is a nonentity. Fascism is therefore opposed to all individualistic abstractions based on eighteenth century materialism; and it is opposed to all Jacobinistic utopias and innovations. It does not believe in the possibility of "happiness" on earth as conceived by the economic literature of the 18th century, and it therefore rejects the theological notion that at some future time the human family will secure a final settlement of all its difficulties. This notion runs counter to experience which teaches that life is in continual flux and in process of evolution. In politics Fascism aims at realism; in practice it desires to deal only with those problems which are the spontaneous product of historic conditions and which find or suggest their own solutions. Only by entering the process of reality and taking possession of the forces at work within it, can man act on man and on nature.

7. Anti-individualistic, the Fascist conception of life stresses the importance of the State and accepts the individual only in so far as his interests coincide with those of the State, which stands for the universal consciousness and will of man in his historical existence. It is opposed to classical liberalism which arose as a reaction to absolutism and exhausted its historical function when the State became the expression of the awareness and will of the people. Liberalism denied the State in the name of the individual; Fascism reasserts the

rights of the State as expressing the true reality of the individual. And if freedom is to be the attribute of the real man, and not of those abstract dummies invented by individualistic liberalism, then Fascism stands for freedom. It is for the only freedom worth having, the freedom of the State and of the individual within the State. For the fascist, everything is in the State, and nothing human or spiritual exists, let alone has value, outside the State. In this sense, Fascism is totalitarian, and the Fascist State, the synthesis and unity of all values, interprets, develops and empowers the whole life of the people.

8. Neither individuals outside the State, nor groups (political parties, associations, trade unions, classes). Hence fascism is against socialism, which stiffens the historical movement in the class struggle and ignores the unity of the State that fuses the classes into a single economic and moral reality; and similarly, it is against trade unionism as a class weapon. But when brought within the orbit of the State, Fascism recognizes the real needs which gave rise to socialism and trade unionism, giving them due weight in the guild or corporative system in which divergent interests are coordinated and harmonized in the unity of the State.

9. Grouped according to their several interests, individuals form classes; they form trade-unions when organized according to their several economic activities; but first and foremost they form the State, which is no mere matter of numbers, the sum of the individuals forming the majority of the people. Fascism is therefore opposed to that form of democracy which equates a nation to the majority, lowering it to the level of the largest number; but it is the purest form of democracy if the people be considered, as it should be, from the point of view of quality rather than quantity, as an idea, the mightiest because the most ethical, the most coherent, the truest, expressing

itself in a people as the conscience and will of the few, if not, indeed, of One, and as an ideal that tends to be implemented in the conscience and will of all. Of all those who from nature and history, ethnically, derive reason to form a nation, set out on the same line of development and spiritual formation, as one consciousness and one will. Not a race, nor a geographically identified region, but a historically perpetuating lineage, a multitude unified by an idea, which is the will to exist, the will to power: self-consciousness, personality.

10. In so far as it is embodied in a State, this higher personality becomes a Nation. It is not the Nation that gives rise to the State, according to the antiquated naturalistic concept that served as the basis for the publicising of Nation-States in the 19th century. Rather is it the State which creates the Nation, conferring volition and therefore real life on a people made aware of their moral unity. The right to national independence does not arise from any merely literary and idealistic form of self-consciousness; still less from a more or less passive and unconscious *de facto* situation, but from an active, self-conscious, political will expressing itself in action and ready to prove its rights to national independence. It arises, in short, from the existence, at least *in fieri*, of a State. For the State, as the expression of universal ethical will, is the creator of the right to national independence.

11. The Nation as State is a living, ethical entity only in so far as it is active. Inactivity is death. Therefore the State is not only Authority which governs and confers legal form and spiritual value on individual wills, but it is also a Power that enforces its will externally, causing it to be recognised and respected, that is, demonstrating its universality in all the necessary determinations of its activity. This implies organization and expansion, potential if not actual. Thus the State equates itself to the will of man, whose development cannot be

checked by obstacles and which, by achieving self-expression, demonstrates its own infinity.

12. The Fascist State, as a higher and more powerful expression of personality, is a force, but a spiritual one. It sums up all the manifestations of the moral and intellectual life of man. Its functions cannot therefore be limited to those of enforcing order and keeping the peace, as the liberal doctrine had it. It is no mere mechanical device for defining the sphere within which the individual may duly exercise his supposed rights. The Fascist State is an inwardly accepted standard and rule of conduct, a discipline of the whole person; it permeates the will no less than the intellect. It stands for a principle which becomes the central motive of man as a member of civilized society, sinking deep down into his personality; it dwells in the heart of the man of action and of the thinker, of the artist and of the man of science: soul of the soul.

13. Fascism, in short, is not just a law-giver and a founder of institutions, but an educator and a promoter of spiritual life. It aims at refashioning not only the forms of human life but their content — man, his character, and his faith. And to this end, Fascism wants discipline, and authority that descends deep into the spirits and dominates them unchallenged. Therefore it has chosen as its emblem the *fascis lictoriae*, a bundle of rods representing unity, strength, and justice.

José Antonio Primo de Rivera

Programme of the Falange Española de las JONS (Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista) (1934)

The National-Syndicalist State here advocated by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, a Spanish national syndicalist politician who founded the *Falange Española* (“Spanish Phalanx”), is in perfect syntony with the spirit of the time that demanded a strong National State, ready to face all the other States on a level of parity if not of pre-eminence.

Source: The *Falange Programme* was published in the *ABC newspaper* on 30th November 1934.

Nation – Unity – Empire

We believe in the supreme reality of Spain. Strengthening, elevating and aggrandising it is the pressing collective task of all Spaniards. The interests of individuals, groups and classes will have to bend inexorably to the accomplishment of that task.

Spain has a destiny of unity in the world. Any conspiracy against that unity is repulsive. Any separatism is a crime that we will not forgive.

The current Constitution, insofar as it encourages disintegration, threatens the unity of Spain's destiny. That is why we demand its immediate annulment.

We have the will to be an Empire. We affirm that the historical fulfilment of Spain is as an Empire. We demand a pre-eminent position for Spain in Europe. We cannot bear international isolation or foreign interference. With regard to the countries of Latin America, we favour the unification with their culture, economic interests and power. Spain claims her status as the spiritual axis of the Hispanic world as a title of her pre-eminence in universal enterprises.

Our armed forces — on land, at sea and in the air — must be as capable and sufficiently large as is necessary to ensure that Spain at all times enjoys complete independence and the world status it deserves. We will restore to the army, navy and air force all the public dignity they deserve and, in their image, we will ensure that a military sense of life informs every aspect of Spanish existence.

Spain will once again seek its glory and its wealth along the sea routes. Spain must aspire to be a great maritime power, for defence and for commerce.

We demand for the Fatherland the same status with others in maritime power and in the air.

State – Individual – Freedom

Our State will be a totalitarian instrument at the service of the integrity of the Fatherland. All Spaniards will participate in it through their family, municipal and syndical roles. Nobody will

participate through political parties. The system of political parties will be ruthlessly abolished, with all its consequences: inorganic suffrage, representation by warring factions and a Parliament of the type we all know too well.

Human dignity, the integrity of man and his freedom are eternal and intangible values. But only those who form part of a strong and free Nation are truly free. No one shall be allowed to use his freedom against the unity, strength and freedom of the Fatherland. Rigorous discipline will prevent any attempt to poison or divide the Spanish people or to turn them against the destiny of the Fatherland.

The National-Syndicalist State will allow all private initiatives compatible with the collective interest, and will even protect and encourage beneficial ones.

Economy – Work – Class Struggle

Our vision of Spain in the economic realm is that of a gigantic syndicate of producers. We will organise Spanish society corporately, through a system of vertical syndicates for the various branches of production, all working toward national economic unity.

We repudiate the capitalist system, which ignores the needs of the people, dehumanises private property and lumps workers together into shapeless masses, conducive to misery and despair. Our spiritual and national conception of life also repudiates Marxism. We will direct the impetus of the working classes, today led astray by Marxism, in the sense of demanding their direct participation in the great task of the National State.

The National-Syndicalist State will not cruelly stand apart from the economic struggles between men, nor will it impassively witness the domination of the weakest class by the strongest. Our regime will

make the class struggle radically impossible, in that all those who cooperate in production constitute an organic whole. We condemn and will prevent at all costs the abuse of one partial interest over another and the anarchy in the field of labor relations.

The primary purpose of wealth — and our State shall so affirm — is to improve the living conditions of all members of the community. It is not tolerable that huge masses of people live in misery while a few enjoy all kinds of luxury.

The State will recognise private property as a legitimate means for the fulfilment of individual, family and social ends, and will protect it against the abuses of big finance, speculators and moneylenders.

We support the trend towards the nationalisation of the banking services and, through a system of Corporations, that of the large public utilities.

All Spaniards have the right to work. Public agencies will necessarily support those who are without employment. As we proceed toward a totally new structure, we shall maintain and strengthen all the advantages that existing social legislation provides to the workers.

All able-bodied Spaniards have a duty to work. The National-Syndicalist State will not give the slightest consideration to those who do fail to perform some useful function and aspire to live at the expense of the efforts of others.

The Land

We must raise, at all costs, the standard of living in the countryside, Spain's permanent source of food. To this end, we are committed to carrying out without hesitation economic and social reform in agriculture.

We will enrich agricultural production (economic reform) by the following means:

- Ensuring a minimum remunerative price for all products of the land.
- Demanding that a large part of what the city currently absorbs in payment for its intellectual and commercial services be returned to the countryside, to provide it with sufficient resources.
- Organising a truly National Agricultural Credit, which, by lending money to the farmer at low interest against the guarantee of their property and crops, will free him from usury and despotism.
- Spreading agricultural and livestock education.
- Organising the use of land in accordance with its suitability and for the possible sale of agricultural products.
- Adjusting tariff policy in a way that protects agriculture and livestock.
- Accelerating hydraulic works.
- Rationalising the units of cultivation, to eliminate both wasteful large estates (*latifundia*) and uneconomically small holdings with low yields.

We will socially organise agriculture by the following means:

- Redistributing arable land to establish family ownership and strongly encourage the unionisation of farmers.
- Redeeming from misery those masses of people who presently are barely eking out a living on sterile land, and transferring such people to new and arable lands.

We will undertake a relentless campaign of reforestation and live-stock breeding, sanctioning with severe measures those who hinder it

and even resorting to the temporary forced mobilisation of all Spanish youth for this historic task of rebuilding the wealth of the Nation.

The State may expropriate without compensation lands whose ownership has been acquired or enjoyed illegitimately.

The reconstruction of the communal heritage of the villages shall be the primary goal of the National-Syndicalist State.

National Education – Religion

It is the essential mission of the State, through a rigorous discipline of education, to achieve a strong and united National Spirit and to instil in the souls of future generations the joy and pride in their Fatherland. All men will receive a pre-military education to prepare them for the honour of joining the National Popular Army of Spain.

Culture will be organised in such a way that no talent is wasted due to lack of financial means. All those who deserve it will have easy access, even to higher education.

Our movement incorporates the Catholic sense of National reconstruction — a glorious and predominant tradition in Spain. The Church and the State will co-ordinate their respective powers so as to permit no interference or activity that may impair the dignity of the State or National unity.

National Revolution

The *Falange Española de las J.O.N.S.* wants a new order, as set out in the previous principles. To implement it, in the face of the resistance from the present order, it calls for a National Revolution. Its method of proceeding will favour directness, ardour and combativeness. Life

is a militia and must be lived with a pure spirit of service and sacrifice.

We will strive to triumph in the struggle with only the forces subject to our discipline. We will make few pacts. Only in the final push for the conquest of the State will the Command arrange the necessary collaborations, provided that our predominance is assured.

Pope Pius XI

Statolatry (1931-1937)

Here are passages from two Encyclicals by Pope Pius XI condemning in unequivocal terms the divinization of the State by the rulers of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. This Statolatry was leading to the closing down of Catholic associations and to a general opposition to Catholic religion seen as a competitor to State religion (Statheism) i.e the State as the new Divinity and the State ruler (*Duce, Führer*) as the new Omnipotent Being.

Non Abbiamo Bisogno, Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on Catholic Action in Italy, 1931.

10. Already on several occasions, Venerable Brethren, in the most solemn and explicit manner and assuming entire responsibility for what We were saying, We have protested against the campaign of false and unjust accusations which preceded the disbanding of the Associations of the young people and of the University students affiliated to Catholic Action. It was a disbanding which was carried out

in such a way and by such methods as to give the impression that action was being taken against a vast and dangerous organization of criminals, although the young men and young women involved are certainly some of the best among the good, concerning whom We are happy and paternally proud to pay tribute still once more. It is noteworthy that even among the officers of the law charged to carry out these orders of suppression, there were many who were ill at ease and showed by their expressions and courtesies that they were almost asking pardon for obeying peremptory orders. We have appreciated the delicate feelings of these officers and We have reserved for them a special blessing.

11. But, in sad contrast with the manner of acting of these officials, how many acts of brutality and of violence there have been, even to the striking of blows and the drawing of blood! How many insults in the press, how many injurious words and acts against things and persons not excluding Ourselves, have preceded, accompanied and followed the carrying into effect of this lightning-like police-order which in many instances either through ignorance or malicious zeal, was extended to include associations and organizations not contemplated in the superior orders, such as the oratories of the little ones and the sodalities of the Children of Mary. And all this sad accompaniment of irreverences and of violences took place in the presence of and with the participation of members of a political party, some of whom were in uniform, and were carried into effect with such a unison of action throughout all Italy and with such a passive acquiescence on the part of the civil authorities and the police as to make one necessarily suspect that some supreme authority had issued an instruction. It is easy to admit, and it was equally easy to have foreseen, that the limits of these directions could and would have, almost necessarily, been exceeded. We must needs refer to these painful and distasteful things, because there has been an attempt made to have the public and the world at large believe that the disbanding of the associations which are so dear to Us took

place without incidents and almost as if it were a normal proceeding.

12. But there have been other attacks on truth and justice on a larger scale. The inventions, falsehoods and real calumnies diffused by the hostile press of the party, which is the only press which is free to say and to dare to say anything and is often ordered or almost ordered what it must say, were largely summarized in a message which was cautiously characterized as unofficial and yet was broadcast to the general public by the most powerful means of diffusion which exist at present.

16. The message further stated that it was ridiculous to try to make the Holy See appear as a victim in a country where thousands of travellers can testify to the respect shown towards priests, prelates, the Church and religious functions. Yes, Venerable Brethren, the attempt unfortunately would be ridiculous, just as it would be ridiculous to break through an open door; because unhappily thousands of visitors who always abound in Italy and in Rome have sadly observed the irreverences, oftentimes of an impious and blasphemous character, and the acts of violence and vandalism committed against places, things and persons throughout the country and in Our very episcopal city; acts which have been repeatedly deplored by Us after We had had sure and precise information about them.

36. There is one first consideration and conclusion. From all which We have explained and still more from the events themselves as they have been evolving, it results that the so-called political activity of Catholic Action, the alleged manifest or disguised hostility of some of its partisans against the regime and the party, as well as its being also “the eventual refuge and haven of those refugees who, up to the present, have been spared” by the regime because they have sheltered under the banner of Catholic Action itself is only a pretext. That which was desired and that which has been attempted is to tear away from Catholic Action and, through

this process, to tear away from the Church the young — all the young. So true is this, that after all the talk about Catholic Action, aim was taken only at the Associations of the young. Nor were these attacks limited to Associations of the young affiliated to Catholic Action. Rough hands were laid upon Associations of a simply devotional character, upon works of pure piety and of primary catechetical nature, such as sodalities of the children of Mary and patronages. So far did this go that in many cases the grossness of the acts was recognized by the perpetrators themselves as a blunder.

44. And here We find Ourselves confronted by a mass of authentic affirmations and no less authentic facts which reveal beyond the slightest possibility of doubt the resolve (already in great measure actually put into effect) to monopolize completely the young, from their tenderest years up to manhood and womanhood, for the exclusive advantage of a party and of a regime based on an ideology which clearly resolves itself into a true, a real pagan worship of the State - the "Statolatry" which is no less in contrast with the natural rights of the family than it is in contradiction with the supernatural rights of the Church. To propose and to promote such a monopoly to persecute for this reason Catholic Action, as has been done for some time more or less openly or under cover to reach this end by striking at the Catholic Association of Youth as has lately been done; all this is truly and literally to "forbid the little children to go to Jesus Christ," since it impedes their access to His Church and where His Church is, there is Jesus Christ. This usurpation goes so far as to snatch the young from Christ and His Church even with violence.

52. A conception of the State which makes the rising generations belong to it entirely, without any exception, from the tenderest years up to adult life, cannot be reconciled by a Catholic either with Catholic doctrine or with the natural rights of the family. It is not possible for a Catholic to accept the claim that the Church and the Pope must limit themselves to the external practices of religion (such

as Mass and the Sacraments), and that all the rest of education belongs to the State.

53. The erroneous and false doctrines and maxims that We have just pointed out and deplored have cropped up many times during these last few years, and it is well known that We have never, with God's help, done any less than Our apostolic duty in exposing them and in confronting them with the just claims of true Catholic doctrine, and with the inviolable rights of the Church of Jesus Christ and of the souls redeemed by His precious Blood.

61. We have tried to speak with calm and with serenity and also with all clarity. However, We cannot be otherwise than concerned that We be well understood — We do not say by you, Venerable Brethren, who are always and now more than ever so united to Us in thoughts and in sentiments — but by everyone.

Rome, from the Vatican, on the Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, June 29, 1931.

Mit Brennender Sorge, Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on The Church and The German Reich, 1937.

1. It is with deep anxiety and growing surprise that We have long been following the painful trials of the Church and the increasing vexations which afflict those who have remained loyal in heart and action in the midst of a people that once received from St. Boniface the bright message and the Gospel of Christ and God's Kingdom.

2. And what the representatives of the venerable episcopate, who visited Us in Our sick room, had to tell Us, in truth and duty bound, has not modified Our feelings. To consoling and edifying information on the stand the Faithful are making for their Faith, they considered themselves bound, in spite of efforts to judge with moderation

and in spite of their own patriotic love, to add reports of things hard and unpleasant. After hearing their account, We could, in grateful acknowledgment to God, exclaim with the Apostle of love: "I have no greater grace than this, to hear that my children walk in truth" (John iii. 4). But the frankness indifferent in Our Apostolic charge and the determination to place before the Christian world the truth in all its reality, prompt Us to add: "Our pastoral heart knows no deeper pain, no disappointment more bitter, than to learn that many are straying from the path of truth."

8. Whoever exalts race, or the people, or the State, or a particular form of State, or the depositories of power, or any other fundamental value of the human community — however necessary and honorable be their function in worldly things — whoever raises these notions above their standard value and divinizes them to an idolatrous level, distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and created by God; he is far from the true faith in God and from the concept of life which that faith upholds.

9. Beware, Venerable Brethren, of that growing abuse, in speech as in writing, of the name of God as though it were a meaningless label, to be affixed to any creation, more or less arbitrary, of human speculation. Use your influence on the Faithful, that they refuse to yield to this aberration. Our God is the Personal God, supernatural, omnipotent, infinitely perfect, one in the Trinity of Persons, tri-personal in the unity of divine essence, the Creator of all existence. Lord, King and ultimate Consummator of the history of the world, who will not, and cannot, tolerate a rival God by His side.

10. This God, this Sovereign Master, has issued commandments whose value is independent of time and space, country and race. As God's sun shines on every human face so His law knows neither privilege nor exception. Rulers and subjects, crowned and uncrowned, rich and poor are equally subject to His word. From the fullness of the Creators' right there naturally arises the fullness of His right to

be obeyed by individuals and communities, whoever they are. This obedience permeates all branches of activity in which moral values claim harmony with the law of God, and pervades all integration of the ever-changing laws of man into the immutable laws of God.

11. None but superficial minds could stumble into concepts of a national God, of a national religion; or attempt to lock within the frontiers of a single people, within the narrow limits of a single race, God, the Creator of the universe, King and Legislator of all nations before whose immensity they are “as a drop of a bucket” (Isaiah xl, 15).

21. In your country, Venerable Brethren, voices are swelling into a chorus urging people to leave the Church, and among the leaders there is more than one whose official position is intended to create the impression that this infidelity to Christ the King constitutes a signal and meritorious act of loyalty to the modern State. Secret and open measures of intimidation, the threat of economic and civic disabilities, bear on the loyalty of certain classes of Catholic functionaries, a pressure which violates every human right and dignity. Our wholehearted paternal sympathy goes out to those who must pay so dearly for their loyalty to Christ and the Church. But, here the point is reached where it is a question of the last and the highest, of salvation or destruction, and where consequently the path of heroic courage is the only way of salvation for the believer. When the tempter or oppressor approaches the believer with the Judas-like suggestion of leaving the Church, he can only counter him with the Savior’s word — even at the cost of heavy earthly sacrifices: “Depart from me, Satan, for it is written: You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him alone.” (Matt. iv. 10). And turning to the Church, he shall say: “Thou, my mother since my infancy, the solace of my life and advocate at my death, may my tongue cleave to my palate if, yielding to worldly promises or threats, I betray the vows of my baptism.” As to those who imagine that they can reconcile exterior infidelity to one and the same Church, let them hear Our Lord’s

warning: "Whoever denies me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven." (Luke xii. 9).

23. You will need to watch carefully, Venerable Brethren, that religious fundamental concepts be not emptied of their content and distorted to profane use. "Revelation" in its Christian sense, means the word of God addressed to man. The use of this word for the "suggestions" of race and blood, for the irradiations of a people's history, is mere equivocation. False coins of this sort do not deserve Christian currency. "Faith" consists in holding as true what God has revealed and proposes through His Church to man's acceptance. It is "the evidence of things that appear not" (Heb. ii. 1). The joyful and proud confidence in the future of one's people, instinct in every heart, is quite a different thing from faith in a religious sense. To substitute the one for the other, and demand on the strength of this, to be numbered among the faithful followers of Christ, is a senseless play on words, if it does not conceal a confusion of concepts, or worse.

30. Such is the rush of present-day life that it severs from the divine foundation of Revelation, not only morality, but also the theoretical and practical rights. We are especially referring to what is called the natural law, written by the Creator's hand on the tablet of the heart (*Romans* ii. 14) and which reason, not blinded by sin or passion, can easily read. It is in the light of the commands of this natural law, that all positive law, whoever be the lawgiver, can be gauged in its moral content, and hence, in the authority it wields over conscience. Human laws in flagrant contradiction with the natural law are vitiated with a taint which no force, no power can mend. The principle that "what is right is what is good for the people" must also be measured by this standard, assuming that what is morally wrong can never serve the true good of the people. However, even ancient paganism recognized that in order to be completely correct, the sentence must actually be reversed and read: "Something is never useful if it is not morally good at the same time. And it is not because it is useful that it is morally good, but because it is morally good that

it is also useful." (Cicero, *De Officiis* iii. 30). Emancipated from this oral rule, the principle would in international law carry a perpetual state of war between nations; for it ignores in national life, by confusion of right and utility, the basic fact that man as a person possesses rights he holds from God, and which any collectivity must protect against denial, suppression or neglect. To overlook this truth is to forget that the real common good ultimately takes its measure from man's nature, which balances personal rights and social obligations, and from the purpose of society, established for the benefit of human nature. Society was intended by the Creator for the full development of individual possibilities, and for the social benefits, which by a give and take process, every one can claim for his own sake and that of others. Higher and more general values, which collectivity alone can provide, also derive from the Creator for the good of man, and for the full development, natural and supernatural, and the realization of his perfection. To neglect this order is to shake the pillars on which society rests, and to compromise social tranquillity, security and existence.

31. The believer has an absolute right to profess his Faith and live according to its dictates. Laws which impede this profession and practice of Faith are against natural law.

Parents who are earnest and conscious of their educative duties, have a primary right to the education of the children God has given them in the spirit of their Faith, and according to its prescriptions. Laws and measures which in school questions fail to respect this freedom of the parents go against natural law, and are immoral. The Church, whose mission it is to preserve and explain the natural law, as it is divine in its origin, cannot but declare that the recent enrolment into schools organized without a semblance of freedom, is the result of unjust pressure, and is a violation of every common right.

43. He who searches the hearts and reins (*Psalm* vii. 10) is Our witness that We have no greater desire than to see in Germany the

restoration of a true peace between Church and State. But if, without any fault of Ours, this peace is not to come, then the Church of God will defend her rights and her freedom in the name of the Almighty whose arm has not shortened. Trusting in Him, "We cease not to pray and to beg" (*Colossians* i. 9) for you, children of the Church, that the days of tribulation may end and that you may be found faithful in the day of judgment; for the persecutors and oppressors, that the Father of light and mercy may enlighten them as He enlightened Saul on the road of Damascus. With this prayer in Our heart and on Our lips We grant to you, as a pledge of Divine help, as a support in your difficult resolutions, as a comfort in the struggle, as a consolation in all trials, to You, Bishops and Pastors of the Faithful, priests, Religious, lay apostles of Catholic Action, to all your diocesans, and specially to the sick and the prisoners, in paternal love, Our Apostolic Benediction.

Given at the Vatican on Passion Sunday, March 14, 1937.

Denis de Rougemont

Totalitarian Statism (1938)

This extract is from a *Diary* published by Denis de Rougemont two years after his stint as lecturer in French literature at Frankfurt University (1935-1936).

The author offers a very interesting explanation for the rise of National Socialism in Germany: the desire of the fragmented masses to believe in something. This something could only be an earthly faith in the mission of a People's Nation. That is why all the explanations given by political propagandists about totalitarian statism based on sophisticated ideologies are just empty words, devoid of any practical meaning and far away from reality.

Source: Denis de Rougemont, *Journal d'Allemagne*, 1938.

Are you saying that there are good and bad aspects in this regime?

Taking things one at a time, I even find more good than bad, if I can put myself in the shoes of a German — and I'm not saying of a

fanatic, not even a nationalist, no: a German of common sense and good faith.

But the fact is that it is no longer a question of taking things one by one when judging a totalitarian regime. It is always about the single principle in the name of which the 'totalisation' is carried out.

This principle can be called STATISM, provided that the word is given its full meaning. It is something other than dictatorship. It is something other than the bourgeois tendency to make the State bear the shortcomings of the individuals. Statism, in the strong sense of the term, is the systematic taking seriously, the systematic realisation of the more or less naive daydreams that *both* the "nationalists" and the "socialists" harbour in our good countries.

The Nazis have understood that economic socialism is only half of a doctrine: the State will be master of money only if it is master of minds. They have learnt the great lesson of the war; to *succeed* in mastering the economy, it is necessary to have the support of a mystique, which paralyses the elements of opposition. All "Statism" (in the attenuated sense of the 19th century) is nowadays condemned to be frankly totalitarian, otherwise failure is assured. It needs the celebrated faith, and a disciplined, foolproof faith.

Only nationalist mysticism will provide this faith. Thus socialism "nationalises" the economy; and nationalism "socialises" patriotic sentiment. One is no longer possible without the other, in the current situation of our societies. One may not like either, but it would be a little stupid to still believe that one can choose, that it is possible to choose between the tertiary phenomena (fascism) and the secondary phenomena (nationalism and socialism) of a disease as old as Europe.

Thus the State becomes the sole expression (even more than the synonym) of the nation, the economy, the culture, the race and society. The ultimate form of oppression? Of course, it is so obvious that

one is left wondering how it is possible; how human beings, millions of human beings, can love this.

I understood it when I heard the Führer speaking; through that thrill of sacred horror. If one has not *felt* that, I fear that one will never *understand* the simple reason for totalitarian triumphs.

Of course, it will always be possible to invoke economic laws, the relative strengths of parties and classes before 1933, the political circumstances of Europe, the Treaty of Versailles, the decomposition of the left, the double game of big business supporting Hitler against the Marxists and von Papen against Hitler: all this is well and good, and provides written materials for Marxists and liberals alike.

Reading them, it is very easy to understand how the mechanics actually played out, and that it was fatal, and that it is very dangerous. The question remains as to *why* it happened. Because we are only ever told about the *how*. And the “explanations” that we are given ultimately boil down to a more or less coherent reconstruction of the apparent phenomena, in other words, a description. And when it comes to such complex phenomena, it is easy to make this description “fit” with whatever doctrine you want: you just have to choose your examples.

But what always slips away is the principle of the actualisation of phenomena, or if I may say so, its effective grace. Things have turned out this way; and it is explained in the name of a suitably readapted doctrine that they could only turn out this way. That is why your daughter is mute. In 1932, the same theorists demonstrated to you, Marx’s *Capital* in hand, that the German situation was leading straight to communism.

What frightens me is their flexibility in error. So little had to be changed to “explain,” through the same schemas, that the opposite had in fact occurred... Nazism is the last defence of capital, the Marxists recite tirelessly. Collective hysteria, say the rationalists.

Tyranny, say the democrats. So many empty words or lies referring to the followers of the German cult.

This is all about religion.

It was not for defending capitalism that the miners of the Saar voted to join the Third Reich. It is not by talking about hysteria that we can understand the fundamental phenomenon of the reconstruction of a community around a “sacred” sentiment. And it was not a thirst for tyranny, in the political and legal sense, that threw Austria into the Führer’s arms. But it was the passionate attraction exerted by a nascent religion, however base, on the masses fragmented by centuries of individualism.

In a society where all original ties have been dissolved; where religion appears to the people and the elites only as a social remnant; where the classes born of economic development abstractly define inorganic masses whose individuals have nothing in common but money or the lack of it; where parties multiply and tear each other apart in a random, superficial political game; where the elites speak a language that the masses are able to hear, but not to understand (and this is often fortunate); where the State becomes the sole representative of the common good, but only manifests itself through tax return forms, the army and the police; where all principle of social and spiritual union, all *common measure* has disappeared. In such a society it is inevitable that anxiety will spread among the masses and take root in the heart of each individual — whence an appeal is born.

It is to this tremendous appeal of the people towards a principle of union, and therefore towards a religion, that the dictators have been able to respond. Everything else is literature, chatter from theorists, or what is worse, from self-proclaimed “realists.”

Recently I have received a letter from Germany that summarises all this. It is from a young National Socialist who, having read, by

chance, one of my books, sets out to refute the criticisms of the Hitler regime that it contains. He begins by explaining that this regime was born out of the poverty and misfortune of his country, which is very true. And he adds:

“But poverty and misfortune can only explain external phenomena. The underlying reason for a movement like ours is irrational. We wanted to believe in something, we wanted to live for something. We were grateful to the one who gave us this opportunity to believe. Christianity, probably through the fault of its ministers, had long since ceased to satisfy the need to believe of the majority of the people. We want to believe in the mission of the German people. We want to believe in the immortality of the people (a tree of which we are but the leaves that fall with each generation) and perhaps we will succeed in believing it.”

The collapse of commonly held beliefs, the failure of Christianity, an irrational appeal for new reasons to live, an anguished willingness to believe in the first thing that comes along – even if it is as implausible as the “immortality” of a people: there is no more precise or succinct way of expressing the truly *religious* nature of the German totalitarian phenomenon.

Let us now consider the naivety of the “realists” who often say: “Not *everything* that happens over there is bad. There are many things to be learnt from it.” It is true that Hitler restored order in the streets. He has ensured social peace. There were six million unemployed in 1933, while there is a labour shortage in 1938. The dignity of the nation has been restored. Authority has been restored. “And here we are, saved from communism.”

This is how many good people think they can find common ground with the dictatorships that they condemn in principle. In this way they make their small, entirely voluntary contribution to the effort of

totalitarian propaganda in our countries. They do so without malice, and in the name of common sense. They remind me of the good old woman who piously brought her small bundle of firewood to the pyre of John Huss's execution: on seeing this, the martyr exclaimed: *O sancta simplicitas!*

Yes, really, it takes a certain simplicity to believe that we can *detach* this or that measure taken by the regime in order to admire it in isolation, or to try to imitate it. This liberal way of "doing justice" to totalitarianism is a beautiful irony on unrepentant liberalism. As if the word *totalitarian* did not mean, precisely, that everything is connected in this regime, and that nothing can be detached from it without losing all meaning!

Do we believe that the social order we admire in Germany can be obtained cheaply, by more or less "skilful," "rational" or "political" methods? Do we not see that this order is simply the brutal and military suppression of any free expression of the dynamic antagonisms that are still the very reality of our society? Do we not see that peace is obtained by crushing the weak? That the unanimity of the workers results from the unions being brought into line? That all this has only been possible through an almost universal and unconscious complicity, even on the part of the opposition? That this complicity itself stems from a religious anxiety more powerful than all the "reasons" and "interests" of this world? And that, in the end, what matters to the dictator is not so much each single measure in itself, but rather the meaning it takes in relation to the total movement, to the religion of the Nation, and to the content of this religion, the collective will to power?

In the face of this religious will, all resistance has given way. The international labour movement has collapsed without making use of its fighting resources. Capital is well on the way to painless nationalisation. Idealism and realism have gone bankrupt. The only opponent

of the regime remains, in fact, the Christian Church. This means that the only thing left to oppose the religion of the Nation and of the Race is faith itself: further proof of the diagnosis that has just been outlined.

Franz Neumann

The Totalitarian State

(1942)

The National Socialist regime was based on the *Führer* (Leader) and the *Volk* (People). And the Totalitarian State played the important function of furnishing the instruments and the scenarios for those two subjects to play their respective roles.

Source: Franz Neumann, *Behemoth*, 1942.

The idea of the totalitarian State grew out of the demand that all power be concentrated in the hands of the President. Immediately after Hitler's accession to power, political theorists began to make much of the totalitarian idea as elaborated by the constitutional lawyers. All power was to be vested in the State; anything less was sabotage of the National Socialist revolution.

The totalitarian State was described as an order of domination and a form of people's community. It was anti-democratic because democracy, with its notion of an identity between the ruler and the ruled, undermined the necessary authority of leadership. Leadership, the

National Socialists declared, is not delegated by the people – ‘authority presupposes rank and is valid against the people’s will because the people do not bestow but recognize it.’

Hitler’s accession to power gave rise to a vast literature re-examining the traditional forms of State and Government. Distinctions were drawn between the *liberaler Rechtsstaat*, born in the French Revolution and embodied in the English constitution, and the *nationaler Rechtsstaat* first developed by Italian fascism and later victorious in National Socialist Germany. The latter was characterized as a State that reconciles justice with political necessity.

The essence of the National Socialist revolution was believed to lie in its revival and further development of the best conservative tradition (formerly exemplified by the rule of Frederick II of Prussia), a tradition that had been ‘desecrated and degraded’ by the liberals with their ‘night watchman’s state.’ For some theorists, Hegel’s idea of the State was the model for National Socialism.

In order to avoid identification of the totalitarian State with the absolutisms of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the theorists insisted further that the State was more than a mere system of coercion: it was a form of life of the racial Volk. Various types of totalitarian States were distinguished in order to mark off the National Socialist brand from the others, whether Italian or Russian.

The totalitarian doctrine, it is important to recognize, was once espoused by the top party leadership. Goebbels declared that

“our party has always aspired to the Totalitarian State . . . The goal of the revolution must be a Totalitarian State pervading all spheres of public life.”

Frick, minister of the interior and a leading figure in the party, signed a circular letter on 1 July 1933, admonishing the federal regents

“to guard the State authority under all circumstances.”

Hitler addressed the S. A. leaders in a similar vein in Bad Reichenhall on 1 July 1933. The third phase of the revolution, he said,

“must be the establishment of the totality of the State, as we understand it; the National Socialist movement must make this State the bearer of its spiritual goods.”

At the 1933 Lawyers Conference, he exhorted his listeners

“to guard the authority of this Totalitarian State.”

And again, as late as 15 November 1934, Frick, speaking to army officers, stressed the need for absolute authority, for

“a strong government unhampered by individual persons, groups, classes, estates, parties, and parliament.”

Such glorification of the State was abandoned a short time later (it is absent from *Mein Kampf*, by the way). Why was it stressed so heavily through 1934? Three factors appear to have been decisive. First, the political theorists and lawyers of the previous era had retained their positions of prominence in the matter of formulating ideology. These men looked upon the National Socialist revolution as a new edition of the imperial system, with its basis in the authority of the bureaucracy and the army. Now that it was back in the hands of reliable leaders, the German State would again embody the highest values.

Italian fascism had developed a doctrine of the Totalitarian State, and since the differences between the two had not yet manifested themselves, the natural attempt was made to tie the Italian doctrine in with the earlier German tradition.

A special twist given the totalitarian doctrine by Carl Schmitt, the most intelligent and reliable of all National Socialist constitutional lawyers, helped greatly. He made it palatable even to big Industry, something he had set out to do as early as 1932. In an address - significantly entitled 'A Strong State and Sound Economics' before the *Langnam Verein* (literally the 'Long Name Association' or north-western industries), he invented a distinction between two kinds of totality, the Roman and the Germanic. Roman totality was quantitative; the Germanic, qualitative. The former regimented all spheres of life, interfering with every human activity. In sharp contrast, the Germanic remained content with a strong and powerful State that demanded full political control but left economic activities unrestricted.

Schmitt's doctrine is, of course, no more Germanic than its opposite is Roman. In fact, it had been formulated much more clearly and realistically by an Italian, Vilfredo Pareto, who espoused political authoritarianism and economic liberalism simultaneously and who influenced the early economic policies of Mussolini.

Both considerations — the appeal to the monarchic tradition of a strong State and to private property and private initiative — loomed large in the last speech Hitler delivered to a (relatively) freely elected Reichstag (23 March 1933). Hitler declared that a monarchical restoration was not subject to discussion at present because the chief task was to establish the unconditional authority of the government. At the same time, he promised the strongest stimulus to private initiative and the recognition of private property.

The totalitarian doctrine of the State thus satisfied the various traditional partisans of German reaction: university professors, bureaucrats, army officers, and big industrialists. It was also acceptable to the western world in general. For, any political theory in which the State is central and dominant and entrusted with the guardianship of

universal interests is in line with the tradition of western civilization, no matter how liberal that tradition may be.

The western tradition does not regard the State as an oppressive machinery opposed to the rights of man, but as an entity watching over the interests of the whole and guarding those interests against infringement by particular groups. State sovereignty expresses the need for security, order, law, and equality before the law, and the National Socialist emphasis on the totality of the State had not yet broken with this European tradition.

Totalitarianism also served the practical needs of the moment. During the first months of the regime, every Brown and Black Shirt functionary tried to grab all the spoils and offices he could.

Rank and file members of the party began to grumble about the betrayal of the revolution; one wing even called for a second revolution. Röhm's Brown Shirts eyed the new power of the Reichswehr enviously.

The situation was difficult and Hitler was prompt to use the weapon of the totalitarian doctrine. The revolution was to proceed in an orderly fashion — in so far as property, the civil service, and the army were concerned. Section 62 of the Army Act and a Prussian decree of 4 May 1933 ruled that party members must surrender their membership while serving in the armed forces or the police, since they were subject to a different disciplinary power.

On 20 November 1933, Rudolf Hess, then deputy leader, came out with a forceful declaration that party leaders had no right to issue ordinances and decrees. Above all, local and provincial party bosses must keep their hands off business. That is the meaning of Dr. Frick's circular letter warning high federal officials, to whom it was addressed, against allowing the party machine to infringe upon the authority of the bureaucracy.

Dr. Frick had no intention of interfering with the terrorization of Jews; the beating of defenseless prisoners in the Brown Shirt barracks; the kidnapping of communists, socialists, and pacifists; or the murder — ‘shot while trying to escape’ — of political enemies. But the party must not interfere in business and administration.

Politics

Political activities and political ideologies are the material and the cultural entities through which the State rulers exert their dominion.

Politics means the existence of political parties, supposedly representing the ideas and wishes of different sections of the population, each one opposing the others in view of gaining consent and so power. That is why politics, by way of parties, means the invention of enemies (the other parties), the spread of illusions (inflated promises) and the manufacturing of lies (distortions of realities).

The age of politics has dominated almost the entire 20th century. In part we are still living under the mark of politics. However, as the printing press greatly reduced if not eliminated the regressive cultural dominion of the high clergy and their partisan interpretation of the holy scriptures, the current age of massive access and circulation of information and the direct control of it by a growing number of critical individuals, might reduce and finally eliminate, in the medium-long term, the power of the party leaders to manufacture enemies, invent illusions and propagate lies.

Max Stirner

Politics and Parties

(1844)

Politics and parties are the materials of and by which the State is composed and made to act. For this reason, the author rejects both of them as enemies of the uniqueness of the individual and obstacles to the full development of the autonomous human being.

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

As with the Greeks, one now wants to make man into a *zoon politicon*, a citizen of the State or a political human being. For a long time, he was considered a 'citizen of heaven'. But the Greek fell into ignominy along with his State, and the citizen of heaven will likewise fall with heaven. We, on the other hand, do not want to perish with the *people*, the nation and nationality; we do not want to be mere *political* men or politicians.

Since the Revolution, some people have been striving to make other people happy, and by making the people happy, great, and the like,

they make us individuals unhappy: the happiness of the people is my unhappiness.

What empty talk the political liberals make with an emphatic conscience, one sees again quite clearly in Carl Nauwerck's *Über die Theilnahme am Staate*, 1844 [On Participation in the State]. There we find a complaint about the indifferent and uninterested person, those who are not in the full sense citizens of the State, and the author speaks as if it were impossible to be a human being without taking a lively part in the affairs of the State, i.e., without being a politician.

In this he is right; for if the State is the guardian of everything 'human,' we cannot have anything human without taking part in it. But what does that say against the single individual? Nothing at all, because the individual is himself the guardian of everything human and speaks to the State by expressing only the words, "Get out of my way!"

Only when the State comes into contact with the person's specificity does the individual take an active interest in it. If a scholar is not concerned about the State of the Nation, should he deal with it because it is his 'sacred duty'?

As long as the State does as he wishes, what need has he to look up from his studies? Let those who, out of their own interest, want conditions to be different, occupy themselves with it. The 'sacred duty' will never make people think about the State any more than they become disciples of science, artists, etc. out of a 'sacred duty.'

Selfishness alone can drive them to it, and it will do so, as soon as things have become much worse. If you showed the people that their selfishness demanded that they busy themselves with State affairs, you would not have to call on them for long; if, on the other hand, you appeal to their patriotism, etc., you will have to preach for a long time to deaf hearts in behalf of this 'service of love.' Of course, in the

sense that you want, the individual will not participate at all in the affairs of the State.

Nauwerck provides a genuinely liberal phrase on p. 16:

“Man only fully fulfils his calling when he feels and knows himself to be a member of the humanity, and being active as such. The individual cannot realise the idea of humanity if he does not rely on the whole of humanity, if he does not draw his strength from it like Antaeus who was invincible as long as he remained in contact with his mother, the earth.”

The same author writes:

“From a theological point of view, the relationship between man and the *res publica* is degraded to a mere private matter, and is thus denied.”

As if the political view treated religion any differently! There, religion is a ‘private matter.’

If, instead of the ‘sacred duty,’ the ‘destiny of man,’ the ‘call to be a full human being’ and similar commandments, people were told that their self-interest would be infringed if they let everything in the State go as it goes, then they would be addressed without tirades, as they will have to be addressed at the decisive moment, if one wants to attain his goals. Instead of this, the author, enemy of theology, says: “If ever there was a time when the State had to appeal to all its people, this is our time.”

The thinking man sees participation in the theory and practice of the State as a *duty*, one of the most sacred duties incumbent on him — and then goes on to consider in more detail the “absolute necessity that every man participate in the State.”

A politician is and will remain forever one for whom the State is in his head or in his heart or in both, one who is possessed by the State or a believer in the State.

“The State is the most necessary means for the complete development of mankind.” It certainly was so and it has been so, if we wanted to develop mankind in the abstract; but if we want to develop ourselves in concrete, it can only be a hindrance to us.

Can the State and the people still be reformed and improved? No more than the nobility, the clergy, the church, etc.: they can be abolished, destroyed, done away with, but not reformed. So can I turn nonsense into sense by reforming it, or must I just let it go?

Henceforth what is to be done is no longer about the State (the State constitution, etc.), but about me. With that, all questions about princely power, constitution, etc. sink into their true abyss and their true nothingness. I, who represents this nothingness, will drive my creations out of me.

The party also belongs to the chapter of society, whose praises have been sung most recently.

In the State, the party holds sway. ‘Party, party, who could not join one!’ But the individual is *unique*, not a member of the party. He freely unites and freely separates again.

The party is nothing but a State within the State, and in this smaller beehive of State there should be ‘peace’ again as in the larger one. Especially those who most loudly call for there to be *opposition* in the State are zealous against any disunity in the party. This is proof that they, too, want only one State. All parties fail not against the State but against the individual.

Nothing is heard more often now than the admonition to remain loyal to one’s party; nothing is more despised by party people than a renegade. You have to go with your party through thick and thin and

unconditionally approve of and represent its main principles. It's not quite as bad as with closed societies, because these bind their members to fixed laws or statutes (e.g. the orders, the Society of Jesus, etc.).

But the party ceases to be an association at the very moment when it makes certain principles *binding* and wants the assurance that they are safe from attack; but this moment is precisely the moment of the birth of the party. As a party, it is already a born society, a dead association, an idea that has become fixed.

[...]

So, one should not side with any party? Precisely by joining them and entering their circle, one forms an association with them that lasts as long as party and I pursue one and the same goal. But today I share the party's tendency, and tomorrow I may no longer do so and become 'disloyal' to it. The party has nothing *binding* (obliging) for me, and I do not respect it; if I no longer like it, I treat it with hostility.

In every party that relies on itself and its existence, the members are unfree or, better said, unfree to the extent that they lack individuality, uniqueness, to the extent that they serve the desires of the party. The independence of the party determines the lack of independence of the party members.

No party, of whatever kind, can ever do without a creed. For the members of the party must believe in the principle of the party; it must not be doubted or questioned by them; it must be the certain, undoubted article of faith for the party member.

That means: one must belong to a party with body and soul, otherwise you are not a true party man, but more or less a self-seeker.

Robert Michels

The tendency of the masses to worship political leaders (1925)

These passages are taken from a text that was quite well known in the past. In it, Robert Michels highlights the oligarchic tendencies of revolutionary political parties and movements (socialist, communist) and how they reproduce, internally and externally, a whole series of characteristics, both theoretical and practical, proper to the institutions and organisations (the State, the Church) they so sternly oppose.

Source: Robert Michels, *Zur Soziologie der Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie*, Second Edition 1925. [English Title: *Political Parties. A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*].

The English anthropologist Frazer said that the superstitious ideas of the masses, which he considers to be a bad means to a good end, contribute greatly to preserving the order and authority of the State. Among these superstitious ideas Frazer notes the belief, frequent

among the people, that their leaders belong to an order of men superior to that to which they themselves belong [1].

The social history of the last fifty years presents us with a similar phenomenon. The authority that the party leaders have over the masses rests, in addition to the other factors we have highlighted, on the widely diffused superstitious cult that is usually paid to the leaders for their superior formal culture, for which a much greater respect is commonly felt than for true intellectual worth.

Pareto also points out that the present-day masses show the same need for subordination of the lower classes to their leaders as in the days of the *ancien régime* [2].

The masses possess a profound tendency towards personality worship. They need, in their primitive idealism, earthly deities to whom they bind themselves with love all the more blindly the more strongly they are oppressed by the harshness of life. There is some truth in what Bernard Shaw, in his paradoxical style, says when he defines democracy as an aggregate of idolaters as opposed to aristocracy, which would be an aggregate of idols [3].

Of course, there is also the case where the mass of a party treats its idol like the niggers treat their fetish and beats him up with a stick [4]. But even more often it follows the psychology of the fetishist in this too, whereby, after having clubbed him, it again sets him up as a fetish.

Generally, the adoration of militants for their leaders remains in a latent state, revealing itself in symptoms perceptible only to the most acute observers, such as the tone of veneration with which the idol's name is pronounced, the absolute docility with which his every word is listened to, the indignation with which any criticism made against his person is rejected. In the Italian democracy, for a long time the reproach "he spoke ill of Garibaldi" counted as the worst moral

reproach that could be made. In German workers' circles, Bebel's name often assumed the same role.

But when it comes to quite exceptional personalities or in moments of most vivid excitement, the latent fervour explodes into noisy paroxysm. The excited people of Rhineland in the year 1864 welcomed Lassalle as a God. Garlands were stretched across the streets. Bridesmaids of honour presented to him a veritable shower of flowers. Whole columns of cars followed the carriage of the "president." With a truly boundless, even uncontested enthusiasm, the crowds listened, amid thunderous applause, to the, in many ways, inflated, extravagant speeches, overflowing with the most bizarre charlatanism, with which the triumphant orator seemed to want to defy criticism rather than to arouse applause. For this was indeed a triumphal march. Nothing was missing: neither the triumphal arches, nor the hymns of greeting, nor the solemn reception of the deputations that came from the neighbouring countries [5].

Lassalle was an ambitious man in the grand style and, as Bismark later said of him, he was uncertain whether the future German empire should be headed by a Hohenzollern dynasty or a Lassalle dynasty [6]. It is therefore not surprising that Lassalle's imagination was stirred by events such as those we have described, to such an extent that, not long after they had taken place, he was able to promise his fiancée that one day, as elected president of the German Republic, he would enter the capital in a carriage drawn by six white horses [7].

In the days when associations of farm labourers, the so-called *fasci* (1872), were organised in Sicily, men and women had an almost supernatural trust in the leaders of the movement. Blending, in their naivety, the social question with religious customs, they often carried the crucifix in their processions alongside the red flag and placards bearing Marx's quotations.

Peasants, male and female, went to fetch their leaders, for conferences, with music, torches and lanterns [8]. Many, to greet them, threw themselves to the ground, drunk with adoration, just as they had done in the past, before their bishops [9].

A bourgeois journalist once asked an old peasant, an adherent of a socialist section, whether the proletarians did not fear that the young students or lawyers who, although bourgeois, worked for the socialist party, did not after all aim exclusively at being elected as town councillors and deputies. "They are angels descended from heaven!" [10] was the peasant's concise and eloquent reply.

One can agree that not all workers would have answered that question in the same way, but the Sicilian populace has always had a peculiar tendency to hero-worship. As every initiate knows, even today in southern and, to some extent, central Italy, leaders are surrounded by the masses with religiously motivated rituals. In Calabria, Enrico Ferri was for a time worshipped as a patron saint against the Camorra. In Rome, where the tradition of classical forms of paganism is still alive in the people, when he, in protest against the censorship inflicted on him by the president of the Chamber of Deputies, vibrated his famous fist breaking a window of the Chamber in order to gain an audience, he was celebrated in the hall of a large beer hall in the name of all "proletarian Quirites" [Quirites being the name of Roman citizens in their peacetime functions] as "the greatest among the greats" (1901) [11].

The fact that such behaviour of the masses is not confined only to "backward" countries, nor can it be considered an atavistic remnant of primitive psychology, is demonstrated by examples from other countries. In Holland, in 1886, Mr. Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, on his return from prison, as he himself tells us, received public honours from the people in a way that no sovereign ever had, and the rooms where he held rallies were transformed into veritable greenhouses of flowers.

It is well known the idolatry to which the person of the Marxist prophet Jules Guesde is subjected in the department of the Nord, i.e. in the region of France where capitalist industrialism is most advanced. Even in the workers' districts of England it still happens nowadays that the masses give their political leaders welcomes reminiscent of the days of Lassalle [13].

Here is an example of mass exaltation in times of war. Karl Liebknecht returned to Berlin from prison: "No monarch has ever found such an enthusiastic welcome in Berlin from such an imposing crowd as he found on his arrival at Anhalt station" [14].

Often the democratic and socialist parties identify themselves so much with the leader that they take his name as if belonging to him; thus, we have in the sixties and early seventies, in Germany, Lassallians and Marxists, or, in socialist France even up to modern times, the parties of the Broussists, Allemanians, Blanquists, Guesdians and Jauresians. Here the analogy with the monastic order and religious sect is obvious. Yves Guyot once rightly remarked that the member of a modern party acts no differently from the medieval monks who, faithful to their master's teaching, named themselves after St. Dominic, St. Benedict, St. Augustine, St. Francis [15].

The fact that these personal designations are today almost disappearing, or in part, as in Germany, have already disappeared, must be attributed on the one hand to the external character of the organisation of the broad masses, which the progress in the electoral field has given to the party; and on the other hand to the oligarchy that exists within it, and above all to the mutual jealousy of a certain number of leaders, which has replaced the dictatorship of a single one; and finally to the lack of outstanding individual personalities [16].

The cult of leaders survives their death. The greatest among them are even called saints. The cult paid to the memory of Lassalle and to his programme, not only by the "female faction" of the Countess Hatzfeld, but also by the "male faction" led by J. B. von Schweitzer,

belongs to the most basic facts of the history of the modern labour movement. The fanatical zeal that can still be seen today in the defence of Marx by certain Marxists shows a certain similarity to idolatry.

Just as once upon a time Christian infants were given the names of the great founders of the new religion, St Peter and St Paul, so at present, in certain parts of central Italy, where the socialist party has made its appearance, socialist parents call their little ones Lassallo and Marxina. The imposition of the famous names of extinct leaders on one's children is almost a badge of the new faith, which is often proudly triumphed over, at the cost of bitterness, against resentful relatives or reluctant registrars, and even at the cost of serious economic damage, such as loss of employment and so on.

Sometimes, it is a sign of the exhibitionist snobbery that infests the workers' circles themselves. More often it is the outward expression of a profound and heartfelt idealism [17]. However it is always proof of the cult that the masses pay to the leaders, a cult that goes beyond the limits of devotion, which would in itself be perfectly natural towards people who have rendered unforgettable services to the party.

Sometimes this cult is combined with speculative intentions: as an example, we have advertisements of "Karl Marx liqueurs" and "Karl Marx buttons," which, especially in America, Italy and Yugoslavia, are offered by skilful traders in the advertisements of socialist newspapers, as well as at festivals and workers' meetings [18].

The fact that speculations of this kind actually yield considerable profits for those who practise them throws a clear light on the psychology of the proletariat.

In the imposition of a famous leader's name on the infants of his followers, one can see a resemblance to ancient religious traditions.

Thus, already at the beginning of the century, the so-called socialist baptism [19] took place in Italy in workers' and masons' circles.

Where socialism has taken on the tone of State religion, through the conquest of power, as in Russia, these name assignments and baptisms are performed with all the pomp imaginable. Because the masses need pomp and festivities at the usual dates, the Bolsheviks seek to substitute religious customs by means of communist festivities, setting up in place of Christmases and Easters, processions and performances that desecrate the Christian religion, and are intended to restore the pomp-filled cult of ancient pagan Russia, the cult of Perun [a Slavic supreme god of the sky and war]. The Reds believe they possess a strong weapon in the rite of the young initiate, which was instituted in several cities of Russia on the sixth anniversary of the existence of the Soviet republic. Thus, for example, the Moscow newspaper *Izvestia* [20] reports of a red baptism in Ischewsk, where the cradle of an infant was illuminated with a red Soviet star:

"The theatre is overflowing. About a thousand people are present. Men and women, young and old fill the hall. In the corridor, on the staircase and in the street, a crowd of onlookers, who could not find a place in the theatre, is packed. An extraordinary act is about to take place in the theatre: the first baptism according to the ritual of the young initiate. Sitting at the table, festively dressed, is the child's father, a worker of the first cloth factory in Moscow, the comrade Soldatov, and next to him his wife with the child in her arms. Around the table sit in a semicircle the local communist party activists, young people, the presidium of the factory committee, guests from the Moscow committee of the *Godless* (an atheist newspaper) and representatives of the labour organisation.

The president solemnly opens the session: 'Comrades! Today an extraordinary act takes place, a baptism according to the rite of the young initiate. And it must make us all the more joyful that the

child's father and mother, who are people without a party, have recognised the total fraud of religion.'

The mother with the child in her arms declares: 'Comrades! For a thousand years our heads have been dulled. I have meditated on this problem for a long time, I have discovered what a lie religion is and I have decided to free myself from prejudice, so I am handing over my son to the local communist group for education.' — Applause resounds in the hall. The mother hands the child over to the local communist party secretary. 'I take the child in hand, — he says, — I arm him with the sign symbolising the proletarian revolution and give him the name Red October.' (This is followed by speeches from the various communist representatives). Then begins a concert attended by all the labour organisations."

In Rostow on the Don, children were baptised with the names "Marx" and "Labour." It is planned to replace over time the old "bourgeois" names with "proletarian" names. Imagining that the surnames would also be changed in a revolutionary direction, in a not-too-distant time, the foreigner who goes to Moscow will read in the red civil register offices: "Labour Man-Socialist and Death To the-Bourgeois, have been betrothed."

The need for worship is often the only sign of unshakeable firmness that survives all the changes in the opinions of the masses. The industrial workers of Saxony have, in recent decades, changed from pious Protestants to social democrats. A radical revision of all their values must have followed this evolution. But the fact remains that they have removed the traditional image of Luther from the best corner of their room only to replace it with that of Bebel. In Emilia [central Italy], where the peasants have gone through a similar evolution, the oleography of the holy Virgin has simply given way to that of the Member of Parliament, Camillo Prampolini. And in southern Italy, faith in the annual miracle of the liquefaction of St. Gennaro's

blood has merely been replaced by faith in the superhuman strength of the "flagellator of the Camorra," Enrico Ferri.

Amidst the ruins of the traditional culture of the masses, the triumphal stele of the need for religion has remained standing, intact. The masses often behave towards their leaders like that sculptor in ancient Greece who, having modelled a thundering Jupiter, fell prostrate on his knees before his work. It is very easy for adoration to provoke megalomania [21] in those who see themselves as its object. The exaggerated vanity, not without sometimes ridiculous overtones that we so often find in the leaders of the modern masses, has its origin not only in the personality of the self-made men themselves, but also in the constant enthusiasm they find in the masses. But this conceit, exercising suggestive power, in turn reacts on the masses, in whom it arouses more and more admiration for the leaders, thus constituting a new element for their supremacy.

Notes by the author

[1] James G. Frazer, *Psyche's Task*, New York-London, 1909, p. 56.

[2] Vilfredo Pareto, *Trattato di sociologia generale*, Firenze, vol. II, p. 348.

[3] Bernard Shaw, *The Revolutionist's Handbook*, in *Man and Superman*, London, 1911, p. 227.

[4] August Müller, in *Annalen für soziale Politik und Gesetzgebung*, 1, 1912, p. 613.

[5] See the introduction (consisting of newspaper reports from the time) to Lassalle's speech given in Ronsdorf, 22 May 1864, in *Ferdinand Lassalles Gesamtwerke*, edited by Erich Blum, Leipzig, vol. II, p. 301.

[6] In his speech to the Reichstag on 17 September 1878 (*Fürst Bismarks Reden*, edited by Philip Stein, Leipzig, vol. VII, p. 85).

[7] Helene von Racowitza, *Meine Beziehungen zu Ferdinand Lassalle*, Breslau, 1879, third edition, p. 84.

[8] Adolfo Rossi, *Die Bewegung in Sizilien*, Stuttgart, 1894, p. 35.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 34. Many years later, De Felice was still venerated as a demigod, especially in Catania, where he had been a socialist mayor with an extremely multifaceted activity. (see Gisela Michels-Lindner, *Geschichte der modernen Gemeindebetriebe in Italien*, Leipzig, 1909, pp. 77 onwards.).

[11] Enrico Ferri, *La questione meridionale*, Roma, 1902, p. 4.

[12] Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Van Christen tot Anarchist. Gedenkschriften*, Amsterdam, 1911, p. 198; see also O. J. Troelstra, *De Wording der S.D.A.P., in Naar Tien Jaar 1894 bis 1904*, Amsterdam, 1904, p. 9.

[13] See for example H. H. Hyndman's report on his agitation tour to Burnley, in *Justice*, 1910, n. 1355.

[14] Karl Kautsky on a book by Radek, in *Der Kampf*, 15, 1921, p. 303.

[15] Yves Guyot, *La comédie socialiste*, Paris, 1897, p. 111.

[16] According to Sombart, in social democracy, quality has been replaced by quantity. He says: "Social democracy must put ingenious people in a position where they cannot do harm and put skilled routiniers in their place. What would Marx do today at the editorial office of *Die Neue Zeit* and *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, what would Lassalle do at the Reichstag?" (Werner Sombart, *Die deutsche Volkswirtschaft in 19 Jahrhundert*, cit., p. 528).

[17] See the article by Savino Varazzani, *Una famiglia socialista and Reo di leso-socialismo*, in «Avanti della Domenica», 2, 1904, pp. 67-68.

[18] Robert Michels, *Storia del marxismo in Italia*, Rome, 1910, pp. 148 onwards

[19] Ivanoe Bonomi and Carlo Vezzani, *Il movimento proletario nel Mantovano*, Milano, 1901, p. 52.

[20] 25 October 1923, no. 270, published in the *Basler Nachrichten* on 15 December 1923, no. 586.

[21] George Sand noted with great subtlety: "I have worked all my life to be modest. I declare that I would not want to live a fortnight surrounded by fifteen people convinced that I cannot make a mistake. I might be able to persuade myself of it." (G. Sand, *Journal d'un voyageur pendant la guerre*, Paris, 1871, pp. 216-217).

Julien Benda

Politics as the organization of hatred (1927)

A powerful reminder that, as in the past, politics is still now, in our age, the intellectual organization of hatred, managed by politicians in view of becoming the masters of other people lives.

Source: Passages from, Julien Benda, *La Trahison des clercs* [The Betrayal of the Intellectuals], 1927.

Let us examine those so-called political passions, by which men rise up against other men, the main ones being racial passions, class passions, national passions. Those persons most determined to believe in the inevitable progress of the human species, more specifically in its necessary progression towards more peace and love, cannot deny that, for a century now and increasingly so with each passing day, those passions have reached, in several and most important senses, a degree of perfection never before seen in history.

In the first place they affect a number of people that they have never affected before. When studying for example the civil wars that shook

France in the 16th century and even at the end of the 18th century, we are struck by the small number of people whose souls were truly disturbed by these events. While history, up until the 19th century, is full of long European wars that left the vast majority of the population completely indifferent, apart from the material damage they caused, it can be said that today there is hardly a soul in Europe who is not touched, or does not believe they are touched, by a passion of race or class or nation and most often by all three.

It seems that the same progress is being made in the New World, while in the Far East huge bodies of men, who seemed exempt from these feelings, are awakening to social hatreds, to the regime of parties, to the national spirit as a desire to humiliate other men. Political passions have today reached a *universality* they have never known before.

They have also attained a certain degree of *compactness*. It is clear that, thanks to the progress of communication between people, and still more, to the spirit of group formation, the holders of the same political hatred, who, a century ago, felt bad about each other and hated, if I may say so, in a scattered order, today form a compact passionate mass, in which each element feels connected with the infinite number of others.

[...]

I also believe I can still see a great increase of political passions in the relation they present today to other passions in the same person.

While it seems that, for a bourgeois of old France, political passions - although they took up much more space than is usually thought - nevertheless took a back seat to the passion for gain, the appetite for enjoyment, family feelings and the calls of vanity, the least that can be said of his modern counterpart is that, when political passions enter his heart, they do so to the same extent as the other passions.

Compare, for example, the tiny place occupied by political passions in the French bourgeois as he appears in the *fabliaux* [tales], in medieval comedy, in the novels of Scarron, Furetière and Charles Sorel, with the place they occupy in the same bourgeois as portrayed by Balzac, Stendhal, Anatole France, Abel Hermant and Paul Bourget (of course, I am not talking about times of crisis, such as the League or the Fronde, when political passions, as soon as they take hold of the individual, take hold of him completely).

The truth is that today political passions invade most of the other passions of this bourgeoisie and alter them to their advantage. We know that nowadays family rivalries, commercial hostilities, career ambitions and competitions for honours are imbued with political passion. An apostle of the modern mind clamours for *Politique d'abord* [Politics first]. He might have noticed that nowadays it is Politics everywhere, Politics always, and nothing but Politics.

We have only to open our eyes to see how much more powerful political passion becomes when combined with other passions, so numerous, so constant and so strong in themselves. As for the man in the street, to measure how much the relationship of his political passions to his other passions has increased in the modern age, one only has to consider how long all his passion, according to Stendhal, was reduced to wishing 1) not to be killed, 2) to have a good, warm coat. And then we may recollect that, when a little less misery allowed him some general ideas, it took long before his vague desires for social change were transformed into passion, that is, to show the two essential characteristics of a passion: the fixed idea and the need to take action.

I think I can say that, in all classes, political passions today have reached a degree of *preponderance over other passions* that they have never known.

The reader has already named a major factor in the feelings that we are discussing here: political passions made universal, compact,

homogeneous, permanent and preponderant. Everyone recognises that this is largely the work of the cheap daily political newspaper.

One cannot help but daydream and wonder if it might not be the case that inter-human wars are only just beginning when one thinks of this instrument of cultivation of their own passions that men have just invented, or at least to take it to a level of power never seen before, and to which they offer themselves, with all the fulfilment of their hearts, every day as soon as they wake up.

[...]

Finally, I will mention one last considerable development that is present today in all political passions, whether they be of race, class, party or nation. When I look at these passions in the past, I see them as pure outbursts of passion, as naive explosions of instinct, devoid, at least for the most part, of any extension of themselves into ideas, into systems. The revolts of the workers of the fifteenth century against the propertied classes were not accompanied, it seems, by any doctrine about the genesis of property or the nature of capital. Those who committed massacres in the ghettos do not seem to have had any insight into the philosophical value of their action. And it does not appear that the assault of Charles V's bands against the defenders of Mézières was fuelled by a theory about the predestination of the Germanic race and the moral baseness of the Latin world.

Today, I see every political passion equipped with a whole network of strongly constituted doctrines, whose sole function is to represent to it, from every point of view, the supreme value of its action, and in which it projects itself its passionate power, naturally increasing tenfold.

It is enough to look at the ideological system of German nationalism known as Pan-Germanism and at that of French monarchism to realize to what point of perfection our time has brought these

systems, with what application, what tenacity each passion has been able to build, in all directions, theories apt to satisfy it, with what precision these theories have been adjusted to this satisfaction, with what luxury of research, what work, with what profound investigations they have been pushed in every direction.

Our age is indeed the age of the *intellectual organisation of political hatred*. It will be one of its chief claims in the moral history of humanity.

Since their inception, these systems have consisted in establishing the fact that each passion is the agent of good in the world, and that its enemy is the genius of evil. However, today it intends to establish it not only in the political order, but also in the moral, intellectual and aesthetic order: anti-Semitism, Pan-Germanism, French monarchism and socialism are not only political manifestations; they defend a particular mode of morality, intelligence, sensitivity, literature, philosophy and artistic conception.

Let us add that our era has introduced two new features into the theorisation of political passions that singularly intensify them. The first is that today everyone claims that their movement is in line with the 'direction of evolution,' with the 'profound development of history.' We know that all the current passions, whether they belong to Marx, Maurras [1] or H. S. Chamberlain [2], have discovered a 'historical law' according to which their movement merely follows the spirit of history and must necessarily triumph, while their adversary contravenes this spirit and can only know a deceptive victory.

This is nothing more than the age-old desire to have Fate on one's side, but it is put forth in a scientific form. And this brings us to the second new development: the claim that all political ideologies today are based on science, that they are the result of the 'strict observation of facts.' We know what assurance, what rigidity, what inhumanity, quite new in the history of political passions, and of which French

monarchism is a good example, this claim gives to these passions today.

In short, political passions today present a degree of universality, compactness, homogeneity, precision, continuity and preponderance in relation to other passions that has been unknown until now. They are becoming conscious of themselves in a way that we had not seen before. Some of them, poorly acknowledged until now, are awakening to this awareness and have joined the old passions. Others have become more purely passionate than ever, possess the heart of man in moral regions they did not reach before, and have acquired a mystic character that has not been seen in them for centuries. All finally equip themselves with ideological apparatuses by which they proclaim to themselves, in the name of science, the supreme value of their action and its historical necessity.

In terms of both surface area and depth, spatial values and internal strength, political passions have now reached a level of perfection that history has never seen before.

The present age is truly the age of politics.

Notes

[1] Charles Maurras (1868-1952) was a French monarchist and a leading nationalist political theorist. He was one of the main organizers and propagandists of the political movement *Action Française*.

[2] Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927) was a British thinker and essayist who promoted racism, white suprematism and a hatred for the Jews. During World War I, Chamberlain sided with Germany against his country of birth. He took German citizenship in 1916.

Carl Schmitt

The concept of the political (1932)

There are two important aspects that emerge from this extract. First the identification of the State with political activity. For this reason, to go beyond the State means to go beyond politics. The second important point is that the criterion that qualifies political activity is the distinction between friends and enemies. To function, politics needs the existence of opposing polarities (in place of accepting autonomous pluralities) and invents them if they do not exist or are not opportunistically characterized.

In the past von Clausewitz wrote that “war is politics by other means” and, in more recent years Charles Tilly has clearly pointed out that “the State makes War and War makes the State”.

Therefore, it follows that the triad State-Politics-War is something indispensable and indivisible, as long as we accept the existence of a territorial invasive power that controls and rules our lives.

Source: Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, 1932.

State and political

The concept of the State presupposes the concept of the political. According to current usage, the State is the political status of a people organised in a territorial unity.

This is only an initial description, not a definition of the State. Nor is such a definition necessary here, where we are dealing with the nature of the political. We can leave it open as to what the State is in essence, a machine or an organism, a person or an institution, a society or a community, a company or a beehive, or perhaps even a basic procedural order.

All these definitions and images anticipate too much in terms of interpretation, meaning, illustration and construction and therefore cannot form a suitable starting point for a simple and elementary explanation.

According to its literal sense and its historical appearance, the State is a special kind of condition of a people, the decisive condition in the decisive case and therefore, in contrast to the many conceivable individual and collective statuses, the status par excellence. Nothing more can be said at first. All characteristics of this idea — status and people — receive their meaning through the further characteristic of the political and become incomprehensible if the nature of the political is misunderstood.

You will rarely find a clear definition of the political. In most cases, the word is only used negatively as a contrast to various other terms, in antitheses such as politics and economics, politics and morality, politics and law, and within law, politics and civil law, and so forth. Depending on the context and the specific situation, such negative and usually polemical juxtapositions can be used to describe something sufficiently clear, but this is not yet a specific definition.

In general, 'political' is equated in some way with 'State' or at least related to the State. The State then appears as something political,

the political as something pertaining to the State — obviously an unsatisfactory circle.

There are many such descriptions of the political in juridic literature, but unless they have a polemical-political meaning, they can only be understood from the practical-technical interest of legal or administrative decision-making in individual cases.

They then acquire their significance by the fact that they unproblematically presuppose an existing State within whose framework they operate.

For example, there exists a jurisprudence and literature on the concept of 'political association' or 'political assembly' in the law of association. Furthermore, the practice of French administrative law has attempted to establish a concept of political motive (*mobile politique*), with the help of which 'political' acts of government (*actes de gouvernement*) are to be distinguished from 'non-political' administrative acts and removed from administrative court control.

Such provisions, which meet the needs of legal practice, basically only seek a practical means of delimiting the various facts that occur within a State in its legal practice. They do not aim to provide a general definition of the political in general. Therefore, they suffice with their reference to the State or to State entities, as long as the State and the State institutions can be taken for granted.

The general definitions of the political, which contain nothing more than a further or backward reference to the 'State,' are also understandable and in this respect also scientifically justified to the extent that the State really is a clear, unambiguously defined entity and stands opposite the non-State, and therefore 'non-political' groups and matters. In other words, for as long as the State has the monopoly of the political.

This was the case where the State either (as in the 18th century) did not recognise 'society' as an opponent or at least (as in Germany

during the 19th century and into the 20th century) stood above 'society' as a stable and distinguishable power.

In contrast, the equation State = Political becomes incorrect and misleading when State and society interpenetrate each other, when all previously State affairs become social and, conversely, all previously 'only' social affairs become State matters, as necessarily occurs in a democratically organised community.

Then the previously 'neutral' areas — religion, culture, education, economy — cease to be 'neutral' in the sense of non-State and non-political. The total State appears as a polemical counter-concept to such neutralizations and depoliticalizations of important subject areas. A State which potentially embraces every domain.

As a result, everything is political, at least in terms of possibility, and with reference to the State it is no longer possible to establish a specific distinguishing feature of the 'political.'

The friend-enemy distinction as a criterion of the political

A definition of the political can only be obtained by uncovering and identifying the specifically political categories. The political has its own criteria, which become effective in a peculiar way in relation to the various, relatively independent areas of human thought and action, in particular the moral, aesthetic and economic.

The political must therefore lie in its own ultimate distinctions, to which all political action in the specific sense can be traced back.

Let us suppose that in the moral sphere the ultimate distinctions are good and evil; in the aesthetic, beautiful and ugly; in the economic, useful and harmful, or, for example, profitable and non-profitable. The question then is whether there is also a special distinction, not similar and analogous to those other distinctions, but independent of

them and as such readily intelligible, that can be used as a simple criterion of the political, and what it consists in.

The specifically political distinction to which the political actions and motives can be traced back is the distinction between friend and enemy. It provides a definition in the sense of a criterion, and not as an exhaustive definition or as a statement of content. Insofar as it cannot be derived from changing criteria, it corresponds to the relatively independent criteria of other antitheses: good and evil in the moral sphere; beautiful and ugly in the aesthetic sphere, and so on. In any case, it is independent, not in the sense of a new subject area of its own, but in the sense that it can neither be based on one or more of those other opposites, nor can it be traced back to them.

If the opposition of good and evil is not readily and simply identical with that of beautiful and ugly or useful and harmful, and must not be directly reduced to it, still less must the opposition of friend and enemy be confounded or mixed up with any of those other oppositions. The distinction between friend and enemy has the meaning of signifying the extreme degree of intensity of a connection or separation, of an association or dissociation. It can exist theoretically and practically without all those moral, aesthetic, economic or other distinctions having to be applied at the same time.

The political enemy need not be morally evil, or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor, and it may even seem advantageous to do business with him.

He is simply the other, the stranger, and it is sufficient to his nature that he is existentially something different and strange in a particularly intense sense, so that in extreme cases conflicts with him are possible. These can neither be decided by a general standardisation made in advance, nor by the judgement of an 'uninvolved' and therefore 'impartial' third party.

The possibility of correct cognisance and understanding and thus also the authority to speak and judge is only given here through existential participation and involvement.

The extreme case of conflict can only be decided by the participants themselves; in particular, each of them can only decide for themselves whether the otherness of the stranger in the concrete case of conflict at hand means the negation of their own kind of existence and is therefore fended off or fought against in order to preserve their own way of life.

In psychological reality, the enemy is easily treated as evil and ugly, because each distinction, most obviously the political one as the strongest and most intense distinction and grouping, draws on all other distinctions for support.

This does not change the autonomy of such distinctions. Consequently, the reverse is also true: what is morally evil, aesthetically ugly or economically damaging need not yet be an enemy; what is morally good, aesthetically beautiful and economically useful does not yet become a friend in the specific, i.e. political, sense of the word.

The inherently objective nature and autonomy of the political is therefore evident in this possibility of separating such a specific opposition as friend-enemy from other distinctions and understand it as something independent.

Ignazio Silone

The superstitions of power (1938)

With admirable acumen, Ignazio Silone ridicules the symbols and customs of power and the narrow ethnocentric vision that animates even educated people, especially those educated in the State schools. The ideology of statism that is promoted in those schools assigns to the State form of social organisation and to Western civilisation a superiority that the events of the 20th century and the first quarter of the 21st century do not certify in the least.

Source: Ignazio Silone, *La scuola dei dittatori*, 1938.

Prof. Pickup. Do you really believe that fiction plays such an important role in the fascist ideology of European countries?

Tommaso the Cynic. In every ideology and in every type of State, but particularly in the ideologies of totalitarian States. The English anthropologist Frazer has stated that the maintenance of public order and State authority has always been based, to a large extent, on the superstitious images that the masses hold of it.

Without this, in fact, much of human history would be incomprehensible. Wars are incomprehensible, as is the existence of parasitic social classes, army barracks, prisons, the relationship between the metropolis and the colonies, and so on.

No, fascism really didn't fall from the sky and it didn't subjugate free human beings, but crowds already predisposed to serve by their daily way of life and already educated to obey by all forms of democratic life (school education, military service, religious practices, and also by the training received in trade unions and opposition parties, centralised and bureaucratised like the rest).

The psychologist Hippolyte Bernheim claimed to have proven that the disposition to suggestion is "inherent to the human mind" and that the normal cerebral heritage is prevalently constituted by "successive suggestions." The existence in the human being of an atavistic disposition to submission does not exclude the possibility that it can be overcome to make way for a free and responsible conscience; but this is an unpleasant fact for the majority of politicians, who like to use human beings as docile tools. And it can be a painful fact for the common man too, although, if the fate of domestic animals is not always enviable, it is often the only way to live an undisturbed existence.

Prof. Pickup. Would you do violence to human nature, Mr. Cynic? Please don't forget that freedom of conscience has always been the prerogative of a restricted elite and presupposes a richness of thought that the masses will never possess. The masses can only receive their mental nourishment in the form of pills to be swallowed with their eyes shut.

Tommaso the Cynic. If anything, history proves the opposite. It proves that there has been no political and social progress of any importance that is not due to the struggles of the so-called lower classes. But in order not to stray too far from the topic, I now want to insist particularly on the fact that education, even higher education,

is not at all incompatible with credulity and superstition. I know a famous professor of mathematics who trembles if he comes across a black cat on his way to the university. The most dangerous superstitions are the habitual ones, which we don't even realise are superstitions. I wouldn't even have noticed many of them if a Papuan friend of mine hadn't pointed them out to me. Allow me to tell you his story.

This Papuan young man had had the good fortune to be picked up by a missionary from one of the most backward tribes of Dutch New Guinea and taken to Rome to a college of the *Propaganda Fide* to be freed from native superstitions and given a Christian education. Although he was of lively intelligence, he had never raised any objections whatsoever to the truths of the Gospel, and he seemed ready to be sent back as an indigenous missionary to his ancient tribe; till the moment when, by chance or Providence, he met a magnificent old kangaroo during a visit to the zoo in the Eternal City of Rome. The kangaroo was and is the totemic animal of the young man's clan of origin, and you can't imagine how excited he was to find his sacred ancestor in a foreign city.

He was absolutely sure that a supernatural entity was responsible for this and that the kangaroo was there to warn him not to forget his origins and to remain faithful to his ancestors. The Catholic teachers tried in vain to dissuade the young convert from this posthumous bout of superstition, using all the resources of Christian apologetics. Finally they threw the unrepentant pagan out of the college where he had become a cause of scandal. He wandered sadly and disconsolately through various cities and, some time later, he came to Switzerland. I had the opportunity to meet him by chance and get to know him in the Zurich zoo, where he was excitedly wandering around the kangaroo enclosure. I showed him that I had some knowledge of the studies that have appeared in recent years on the mythical world of the Australian and Papuan tribes. This made him flare up.

“Those scientists of yours that I too have read — he protested — are idiots. In their pretentious writings they are completely incapable of feeling the extraordinary and super-natural power of our totems, the black snake, the scarab, and the kangaroo.” In the height of his agitation he took a notebook out of his pocket and forced me to read it. “Here is my revenge,” he said. The title on the cover of the notebook read:

The incredible superstitions of the European tribes.

I must confess that I read the notebook in one go. The young Papuan had managed to discover, with his virgin eyes, an unimaginable quantity of fetishes, idols, totems and taboos that govern the most important acts of our civil life, I would almost say, without us realising it.

The notebook was written in anecdotal form, recording discoveries in the order in which they occurred. As you can imagine, the whole Catholic liturgy, with its incense, candles, lamps, oils, ashes and relics, took the place of honour. But there was no shortage of bizarre observations about our private life.

I particularly remember a discussion between the Papuan and a Roman woman who was wearing a gold ring on her finger, her wedding ring. From questions about the function of the golden wedding ring [*faith* in Italian], the young man had moved on to the relationship between the ring and conjugal *fidelity*, the *Propaganda Fide* [*Faith*] institute and the offering by all Italian couples of a wedding ring [*faith*] to the Fascist fatherland [to provide the State with gold]. At a certain point the woman no longer knew how to reply.

One day the young Papuan was taken, together with the altar boys from his college, to Piazza Venezia, to pay homage at the tomb of the unknown soldier, located at the foot of the “altar of the fatherland.”

Is the fatherland also a Madonna? he asked one of his superiors. No, he replied.

So, why is there an altar of the fatherland?

You can't understand.

Why?

Two carabinieri arrived and imposed silence. If I have to keep quiet, it must be because the fatherland is a Madonna, the Papuan went on muttering.

Another day he had noted in his notebook: I read in a newspaper that in Abyssinia the Roman she-wolf has driven out the lion of Judah. It seems that the British lion has betrayed Judah's lion. So, as in our country, every great European tribe venerates its totemic ancestor: France has the cock, Germany the eagle, Italy also has the eagle, Rome a she-wolf with two children, Holland, Belgium, Sweden and other countries have the lion, which seems to be the most common animal in Europe.

Another time, in Genoa (Italy), he witnessed the launching of a ship. A lady broke a bottle against the hull. They explained to him that it was a bottle of champagne.

Too bad, he said, it would have been better to drink the champagne and break a bottle of water.

The baptism would not be valid, he was told.

Jesus, he replied, was he not baptised with water?

You're stupid, they replied.

The discussion continued.

Does the ship have a soul? he asked.

No, he was told. So what was baptised?

You're stupid, he was told again.

Another day he had witnessed a parade of many men, all dressed in the same way; at the front walked a man with a pole to which a coloured cloth was attached. As the pole passed, everyone saluted respectfully. An old man who did not take off his hat was immediately attacked and beaten.

Why? asked the Papuan.

He did not salute the flag, he was told.

But it's just a pole with a piece of cloth on it, he observed.

The flag, an enraged man shouted at him, showing his fists, is the sacred image of the fatherland. It's the fatherland itself, another shouted at him, it's the blood, the soul of the fatherland.

The fatherland has a soul? the Papuan asked.

They wanted to take him to prison.

Numerous other episodes reported in the notebook concerned the magical power of badges, uniforms and insignia. These are things that we are all familiar with, but because of habit, we end up no longer paying attention to them.

Gaetano Mosca

Political and financial power (1939)

This short extract from the major work of Gaetano Mosca highlights the connection between political power and financial power. And the financial power, taking control of the situation in association with political power, reduces all the other social forces to a condition of utter manipulation and subordination.

Source: Gaetano Mosca, *Elementi di Scienza Politica*, 1939.

It is indisputable that as civilisation grows, so does the number of moral and material influences that are likely to become political forces. Alongside real estate wealth, for example, there is also movable wealth, the fruit of industry and commerce. Education progresses, occupations based on scientific culture gain importance, and a new social class is formed, which can, to a certain extent, counterbalances the material prestige of the rich and the moral prestige of the clergy.

Furthermore, mutual tolerance, which can be the result of an advanced culture, allows for the coexistence of different religious and political currents, which naturally balance and control each other, and at the same time makes public discussion of the actions of those in power possible, at least in theory [Note: the reference is to the freedom of the press]. The very specialisation of public functions means that different influences can express themselves and participate in the governance of the State.

However, it should be noted that for any political force to assert itself in proportion to its real importance, it must be organised, and for it to be well organised, various factors are essential, chief among which are time and tradition. This is why we often see a real imbalance occurring, in different times and in different countries, between the importance that a class has acquired in society and its direct influence in the government of the country.

Beyond this, there is almost always some political force that has an unstoppable tendency to dominate and absorb others, thereby destroying the legally established balance. This is true both for political forces of a material nature, such as wealth and military preponderance, and for those of a moral nature, such as major religious and doctrinal movements. Each of these currents claims to have a monopoly on truth and justice, and all forms of exclusivism and bigotry, whether Christian or Muslim, whether sacred or rationalist in nature, whether inspired by the infallibility of the Pope or that of democracy, are equally pernicious in this respect.

Every country, every epoch, can have its own particular current of ideas and beliefs which, being the strongest, exert pressure on the political mechanism and tend to disrupt it. Indeed, it generally happens that the damage caused by currents that are already weakened and out of fashion is clearly recognised, and the serious damage they have done to the sense of justice is condemned with horror; at the same time, similar damage caused or threatened by the

current in rising vogue is either overlooked, excused or weakly condemned.

People shout and proclaim that freedom has been achieved, that the storm has passed, when in truth it has only changed direction and, if one may use the metaphor, merely changed shape or colour. Nowadays, the force that aspires more than any other to break the legal balance is social democracy. Among the material forces, the one that can most easily impose itself on all the powers of the State and most easily violate, not to say the rules of justice and equity, but sometimes even the precise text of the law, is movable wealth; or at least that part of it that is powerfully organised.

The great development of credit and of the banking system, the growth of large joint-stock companies, which often control the means of communication in vast regions and entire States, and the enormous increase in public debt have, over the last hundred years, created new structures and new elements of political importance, whose intrusive and overbearing action several of the major States of the new and old world have already had occasion to experience. The relative ease with which money, or mobile wealth, can be organized and the possibility of concentrating the management of a considerable part of it in the hands of a few individuals, help to explain its growing preponderance in power.

Here we have one of many examples of organised minorities prevailing over disorganised majorities. A very small number of individuals can control all the major banks in a country, or all the companies involved in the large-scale rail or maritime transport industry, or even act as arbitrators for large joint-stock companies that operate industries essential to the defence of the country, such as metallurgy. They can carry out public works for which even the finances of the richest governments would not be sufficient.

With hundreds of millions at their disposal, these individuals possess a wide variety of means for threatening or cajoling very broad inter-

ests, for intimidating or corrupting public officials, ministers, members of parliament and journalists. This can happen without that part of the national capital, which is undoubtedly the largest part, engaged in many small or medium-size industries, or dispersed in a multitude of hands, in the form of savings of varying sizes, being able to react against them in any way. It should also be noted that the main part of the capital of banks and industrial joint-stock companies usually belongs to small and medium-sized shareholders, who not only remain completely passive, but are often the first victims of their leaders who manage to build their own fortune and influence on the losses they inflict on others.

Finally, it should be noted that any simplistic political system based on an absolute principle, which causes the entire political class to be organised according to a single model, makes it difficult for all social influences to participate in public life and even more difficult for anyone force to counterbalance another.

That is as true when power is in the hands of elected officials who are said to be chosen by the people as it is when power is entrusted exclusively to employees who are assumed to be appointed by a prince. The checks which bureaucracy and democracy can enforce upon themselves and which are applied through the agency of other bureaucrats or elected officials are always inadequate and in practice never fully achieve their purpose.

Bertrand Russell

Intellectual political rubbish

(1943)

The unconventional critical mind of Bertrand Russell appears once again in these passages on intellectual political rubbish. Besides making very pleasant reading, they might also stimulate original ideas, away from the quagmire of unsubstantiated statements, inconsistent arguments and obsolete beliefs that characterize, largely, the past and present political scene. In fact, as remarked by the author: “There is no nonsense so arrant that it cannot be made the creed of the vast majority by adequate governmental action.”

Source: Bertrand Russell, *An Outline of Intellectual Rubbish*, 1943.

Politics is largely governed by sententious platitudes which are devoid of truth.

One of the most widespread popular maxims is, “human nature cannot be changed.” No one can say whether this is true or not without first defining “human nature.” But as used it is certainly false. When Mr. A utters the maxim, with an air of portentous and

conclusive wisdom, what he means is that all men everywhere will always continue to behave as they do in his own home town. A little anthropology will dispel this belief.

Among the Tibetans, one wife has many husbands, because men are too poor to support a whole wife; yet family life, according to travellers, is no more unhappy than elsewhere. The practice of lending one's wife to a guest is very common among uncivilized tribes. The Australian aborigines, at puberty, undergo a very painful operation which, throughout the rest of their lives, greatly diminishes sexual potency. Infanticide, which might seem contrary to human nature, was almost universal before the rise of Christianity, and is recommended by Plato to prevent over-population. Private property is not recognized among some savage tribes. Even among highly civilized people, economic considerations will override what is called "human nature." In Moscow, where there is an acute housing shortage, when an unmarried woman is pregnant, it often happens that a number of men contend for the legal right to be considered the father of the prospective child, because whoever is judged to be the father acquires the right to share the woman's room, and half a room is better than no room.

In fact, adult "human nature" is extremely variable, according to the circumstances of education. Food and sex are very general requirements, but the hermits of the Thebaid eschewed sex altogether and reduced food to the lowest point compatible with survival. By diet and training, people can be made ferocious or meek, masterful or slavish, as may suit the educator. There is no nonsense so arrant that it cannot be made the creed of the vast majority by adequate governmental action. Plato intended his Republic to be founded on a myth which he admitted to be absurd, but he was rightly confident that the populace could be induced to believe it. Hobbes, who thought it important that people should reverence the government however unworthy it might be, meets the argument that it might be difficult to obtain general assent to anything so irrational by pointing out that

people have been brought to believe in the Christian religion, and, in particular, in the dogma of transubstantiation. If he had been alive now, he would have found ample confirmation in the devotion of German youth to the Nazis.

The power of governments over men's beliefs has been very great ever since the rise of large States. The great majority of Romans became Christian after the Roman emperors had been converted. In the parts of the Roman Empire that were conquered by the Arabs, most people abandoned Christianity for Islam. The division of Western Europe into Protestant and Catholic regions was determined by the attitude of governments in the sixteenth century. But the power of governments over belief in the present day is vastly greater than at any earlier time. A belief, however untrue, is important when it dominates the actions of large masses of men. In this sense, the beliefs inculcated by the Japanese, Russian, and German governments are important. Since they are completely divergent, they cannot all be true, though they may well all be false. Unfortunately they are such as to inspire men with an ardent desire to kill one another, even to the point of almost completely inhibiting the impulse of self-preservation. No one can deny, in face of the evidence, that it is easy, given military power, to produce a population of fanatical lunatics. It would be equally easy to produce a population of sane and reasonable people, but many governments do not wish to do so, since such people would fail to admire the politicians who are at the head of these governments.

There is one peculiarly pernicious application of the doctrine that human nature cannot be changed. This is the dogmatic assertion that there will always be wars, because we are so constituted that we feel a need of them. What is true is that a man who has had the kind of diet and education that most men have will wish to fight when provoked. But he will not actually fight unless he has a chance of victory. It is very annoying to be stopped by a speed cop, but we do not fight him because we know that he has the overwhelming forces

of the State at his back. People who have no occasion for war do not make any impression of being psychologically thwarted. Sweden has had no war since 1814, but the Swedes were, a few years ago, one of the happiest and most contented nations in the world. I doubt whether they are so still, but that is because, though neutral, they are unable to escape many of the evils of war. If political organization were such as to make war obviously unprofitable, there is nothing in human nature that would compel its occurrence, or make average people unhappy because of its not occurring. Exactly the same arguments that are now used about the impossibility of preventing war were formerly used in defense of duelling, yet few of us feel thwarted because we are not allowed to fight duels.

I am persuaded that there is absolutely no limit to the absurdities that can, by government action, come to be generally believed. Give me an adequate army, with power to provide it with more pay and better food than falls to the lot of the average man, and I will undertake, within thirty years, to make the majority of the population believe that two and two are three, that water freezes when it gets hot and boils when it gets cold, or any other nonsense that might seem to serve the interest of the State. Of course, even when these beliefs had been generated, people would not put the kettle in the ice-box when they wanted it to boil. That cold makes water boil would be a Sunday truth, sacred and mystical, to be professed in awed tones, but not to be acted on in daily life. What would happen would be that any verbal denial of the mystic doctrine would be made illegal, and obstinate heretics would be “frozen” at the stake. No person who did not enthusiastically accept the official doctrine would be allowed to teach or to have any position of power. Only the very highest officials, in their cups, would whisper to each other what rubbish it all is; then they would laugh and drink again. This is hardly a caricature of what happens under some modern governments.

The discovery that man can be scientifically manipulated, and that governments can turn large masses this way or that as they choose, is

one of the causes of our misfortunes. There is as much difference between a collection of mentally free citizens and a community molded by modern methods of propaganda as there is between a heap of raw materials and a battleship. Education, which was at first made universal in order that all might be able to read and write, has been found capable of serving quite other purposes. By instilling nonsense it unifies populations and generates collective enthusiasm. If all governments taught the same nonsense, the harm would not be so great. Unfortunately each has its own brand, and the diversity serves to produce hostility between the devotees of different creeds. If there is ever to be peace in the world, governments will have to agree either to inculcate no dogmas, or all to inculcate the same. The former, I fear, is a Utopian ideal, but perhaps they could agree to teach collectively that all public men, everywhere, are completely virtuous and perfectly wise. Perhaps, when the war is over, the surviving politicians may find it prudent to combine on some such programme.

[...]

Generalizations about national characteristics are just as common and just as unwarranted as generalizations about women. Until 1870, the Germans were thought of as a nation of spectacled professors, evolving everything out of their inner consciousness, and scarcely aware of the outer world, but since 1870 this conception has had to be very sharply revised. Frenchmen seem to be thought of by most Americans as perpetually engaged in amorous intrigue; Walt Whitman, in one of his catalogues, speaks of "the adulterous French couple on the sly settee." Americans who go to live in France are astonished, and perhaps disappointed, by the intensity of family life. Before the Russian Revolution, the Russians were credited with a mystical Slav soul, which, while it incapacitated them for ordinary sensible behavior, gave them a kind of deep wisdom to which more practical nations could not hope to attain. Suddenly everything was

changed: mysticism was taboo, and only the most earthly ideals were tolerated. The truth is that what appears to one nation as the national character of another depends upon a few prominent individuals, or upon the class that happens to have power. For this reason, all generalizations on this subject are liable to be completely upset by any important political change.

To avoid the various foolish opinions to which mankind are prone, no superhuman genius is required. A few simple rules will keep you, not from all error, but from silly error.

If the matter is one that can be settled by observation, make the observation yourself. Aristotle could have avoided the mistake of thinking that women have fewer teeth than men, by the simple device of asking Mrs. Aristotle to keep her mouth open while he counted. He did not do so because he thought he knew. Thinking that you know when in fact you don't is a fatal mistake, to which we are all prone. I believe myself that hedgehogs eat black beetles, because I have been told that they do; but if I were writing a book on the habits of hedgehogs, I should not commit myself until I had seen one enjoying this unappetizing diet. Aristotle, however, was less cautious. Ancient and medieval authors knew all about unicorns and salamanders; not one of them thought it necessary to avoid dogmatic statements about them because he had never seen one of them.

Many matters, however, are less easily brought to the test of experience. If, like most of mankind, you have passionate convictions on many such matters, there are ways in which you can make yourself aware of your own bias. If an opinion contrary to your own makes you angry, that is a sign that you are subconsciously aware of having no good reason for thinking as you do. If some one maintains that two and two are five, or that Iceland is on the equator, you feel pity rather than anger, unless you know so little of arithmetic or geography that his opinion shakes your own contrary conviction. The most savage controversies are those about matters as to which there is no good

evidence either way. Persecution is used in theology, not in arithmetic, because in arithmetic there is knowledge, but in theology there is only opinion. So whenever you find yourself getting angry about a difference of opinion, be on your guard; you will probably find, on examination, that your belief is going beyond what the evidence warrants.

A good way of ridding yourself of certain kinds of dogmatism is to become aware of opinions held in social circles different from your own. When I was young, I lived much outside my own country in France, Germany, Italy, and the United States. I found this very profitable in diminishing the intensity of insular prejudice. If you cannot travel, seek out people with whom you disagree, and read a newspaper belonging to a party that is not yours. If the people and the newspaper seem mad, perverse, and wicked, remind yourself that you seem so to them. In this opinion both parties may be right, but they cannot both be wrong. This reflection should generate a certain caution.

Becoming aware of foreign customs, however, does not always have a beneficial effect. In the seventeenth century, when the Manchus conquered China, it was the custom among the Chinese for the women to have small feet, and among the Manchus for the men to wear-pigtails. Instead of each dropping their own foolish custom, they each adopted the foolish custom of the other, and the Chinese continued to wear pigtails until they shook off the dominion of the Manchus in the revolution of 1911.

For those who have enough psychological imagination, it is a good plan to imagine an argument with a person having a different bias. This has one advantage, and only one, as compared with actual conversation with opponents; this one advantage is that the method is not subject to the same limitations of time or space. Mahatma Gandhi deplores railways and steamboats and machinery; he would like to undo the whole of the industrial revolution. You may never

have an opportunity of actually meeting any one who holds this opinion, because in Western countries most people take the advantage of modern technique for granted. But if you want to make sure that you are right in agreeing with the prevailing opinion, you will find it a good plan to test the arguments that occur to you by considering what Gandhi might say in refutation of them. I have sometimes been led actually to change my mind as a result of this kind of imaginary dialogue, and, short of this, I have frequently found myself growing less dogmatic and cocksure through realizing the possible reasonableness of a hypothetical opponent.

Be very wary of opinions that flatter your self-esteem. Both men and women, nine times out of ten, are firmly convinced of the superior excellence of their own sex. There is abundant evidence on both sides. If you are a man, you can point out that most poets and men of science are male; if you are a woman, you can retort that so are most criminals. The question is inherently insoluble, but self esteem conceals this from most people. We are all, whatever part of the world we come from, persuaded that our own nation is superior to all others. Seeing that each nation has its characteristic merits and demerits, we adjust our standard of values so as to make out that the merits possessed by our nation are the really important ones, while its demerits are comparatively trivial. Here, again, the rational man will admit that the question is one to which there is no demonstrably right answer. It is more difficult to deal with the self esteem of man as man, because we cannot argue out the matter with some non-human mind. The only way I know of dealing with this general human conceit is to remind ourselves that man is a brief episode in the life of a small planet in a little corner of the universe, and that, for aught we know, other parts of the cosmos may contain beings as superior to ourselves as we are to jellyfish.

Other passions besides self-esteem are common sources of error; of these perhaps the most important is fear. Fear sometimes operates directly, by inventing rumors of disaster in war-time, or by imagining

objects of terror, such as ghosts; sometimes it operates indirectly, by creating belief in something comforting, such as the elixir of life, or heaven for ourselves and hell for our enemies. Fear has many forms - fear of death, fear of the dark, fear of the unknown, fear of the herd, and that vague generalized fear that comes to those who conceal from themselves their more specific terrors. Until you have admitted your own fears to yourself, and have guarded yourself by a difficult effort of will against their mythmaking power, you cannot hope to think truly about many matters of great importance, especially those with which religious beliefs are concerned. Fear is the main source of superstition and one of the main sources of cruelty. To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom, in the pursuit of truth as in the endeavor after a worthy manner of life.

[...]

Under the influence of great fear, almost everybody becomes superstitious. The sailors who threw Jonah overboard imagined his presence to be the cause of the storm which threatened to wreck their ship. In a similar spirit the Japanese, at the time of the Tokyo earthquake took to massacring Koreans and Liberals. When the Romans won victories in the Punic wars, the Carthaginians became persuaded that their misfortunes were due to a certain laxity which had crept into the worship of Moloch. Moloch liked having children sacrificed to him, and preferred them aristocratic; but the noble families of Carthage had adopted the practice of surreptitiously substituting plebeian children for their own offspring. This, it was thought, had displeased the god, and at the worst moments even the most aristocratic children were duly consumed in the fire. Strange to say, the Romans were victorious in spite of this democratic reform on the part of their enemies.

Collective fear stimulates herd instinct, and tends to produce ferocity toward those who are not regarded as members of the herd.

So it was in the French Revolution, when dread of foreign armies produced the reign of terror. And it is to be feared that the Nazis, as defeat draws nearer, will increase the intensity of their campaign for exterminating Jews. Fear generates impulses of cruelty, and therefore promotes such superstitious beliefs as seem to justify cruelty. Neither a man nor a crowd nor a nation can be trusted to act humanely or to think sanely under the influence of a great fear. And for this reason poltroons are more prone to cruelty than brave men, and are also more prone to superstition. When I say this, I am thinking of men who are brave in all respects, not only in facing death. Many a man will have the courage to die gallantly, but will not have the courage to say, or even to think, that the cause for which he is asked to die is an unworthy one. Obloquy is, to most men, more painful than death; that is one reason why, in times of collective excitement, so few men venture to dissent from the prevailing opinion. No Carthaginian denied Moloch, because to do so would have required more courage than was required to face death in battle.

[...]

Perhaps the world would lose some of its interest and variety if such beliefs were wholly replaced by cold science. Perhaps we may allow ourselves to be glad of the Abecedarians, who were so-called because, having rejected all profane learning, they thought it wicked to learn the ABC. And we may enjoy the perplexity of the South American Jesuit who wondered how the sloth could have traveled, since the Flood, all the way from Mount Ararat to Peru — a journey which its extreme tardiness of locomotion rendered almost incredible. A wise man will enjoy the goods of which there is a plentiful supply, and of intellectual rubbish he will find an abundant diet, in our own age as in every other.

Isabel Paterson

“Benefactory Politics” as a Way to Hell (1943)

This text is one of the best elaborations on the (sadly) counter-intuitive historical reality that “the road to hell is paved with good intentions.” Frédéric Bastiat called this unhealthy attitude “philanthropic despotism” (*The Law*, 1850) while Henry David Thoreau, who was a simple person but certainly not a simpleton, was aware of the same disease when he wrote: “If I knew for a certainty that a man was coming to my house with the conscious design of doing me good, I should run for my life ... for fear that I should get some of his good done to me.” (*Walden*, 1854)

C.S. Lewis argued a similar thesis in his essay *The humanitarian theory of punishment* (1954): “Of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It may be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron’s cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their own conscience. They may be more likely to go to Heaven yet at the same time likelier to make a Hell of earth.”

Source: Isabel Paterson, *The Humanitarian with the Guillotine*, 1943.

Most of the harm in the world is done by good people, and not by accident, lapse, or omission. It is the result of their deliberate actions, long persevered in, which they hold to be motivated by high ideals toward virtuous ends.

This is demonstrably true; nor could it occur otherwise. The percentage of positively malignant, vicious, or depraved persons is necessarily small, for no species could survive if its members were habitually and consciously bent upon injuring one another. Destruction is so easy that even a minority of persistently evil intent could shortly exterminate the unsuspecting majority of well-disposed persons. Murder, theft, rapine, and destruction are easily within the power of every individual at any time. If it is presumed that they are restrained only by fear or force, what is it they fear, or who would turn the force against them if all men were of like mind?

Certainly if the harm done by willful criminals were to be computed, the number of murders, the extent of damage and loss, would be found negligible in the sum total of death and devastation wrought upon human beings by their kind. Therefore it is obvious that in periods when millions are slaughtered, when torture is practiced, starvation enforced, oppression made a policy, as at present over a large part of the world, and as it has often been in the past, it must be at the behest of very many good people, and even by their direct action, for what they consider a worthy object. When they are not the immediate executants, they are on record as giving approval, elaborating justifications, or else cloaking facts with silence, and discountenancing discussion.

Obviously this could not occur without cause or reason. And it must be understood, in the above passage, that by good people we mean good people, persons who would not of their own conscious intent act to hurt their fellow men, nor procure such acts, either wantonly or for a personal benefit to themselves. Good people wish well to their fellow men, and wish to guide their own actions accordingly. Further, we do not here imply any “transvaluation of values,” confusing good and evil, or suggesting that good produces evil, or that there is no difference between good and evil, or between good and ill-disposed persons; nor is it suggested that the virtues of good people are not really virtues.

Then there must be a very grave error in the means by which they seek to attain their ends. There must even be an error in their primary axioms, to permit them to continue using such means. Something is terribly wrong in the procedure, somewhere. What is it?

Certainly the slaughter committed from time to time by barbarians invading settled regions, or the capricious cruelties of avowed tyrants, would not add up to one-tenth the horrors perpetrated by rulers with good intentions.

As the story has come down to us, the ancient Egyptians were enslaved by Pharaoh through a benevolent scheme of “ever normal granaries.” Provision was made against famine; and then the people were forced to barter property and liberty for such reserves which had previously been taken from their own production. The inhuman hardness of the ancient Spartans was practiced for a civic ideal of virtue.

The early Christians were persecuted for reasons of state, the collective welfare; and they resisted for the right of personality, each because he had a soul of his own. Those killed by Nero for sport were few compared to those put to death by later emperors for strictly “moral” reasons. Gilles de Retz, who murdered children to gratify a beastly perversion, killed no more than fifty or sixty in all.

Cromwell ordered the massacre of thirty thousand people at once, including infants in arms, in the name of righteousness. Even the brutalities of Peter the Great had the pretext of a design to benefit his subjects.

The present war, begun with a perjured treaty made by two powerful nations (Russia and Germany), that they might crush their smaller neighbors with impunity, the treaty being broken by a surprise attack on the fellow conspirator, would have been impossible without the internal political power which in both cases was seized on the excuse of doing good to the nation.

The lies, the violence, the wholesale killings, were practiced first on the people of both nations by their own respective governments.

It may be said, and it may be true, that in both cases the wielders of power are vicious hypocrites; that their conscious objective was evil from the beginning; none the less, they could not have come by the power at all except with the consent and assistance of good people.

The Communist regime in Russia gained control by promising the peasants land, in terms the promisers knew to be a lie as understood. Having gained power, the Communists took from the peasants the land they already owned; and exterminated those who resisted. This was done by plan and intention; and the lie was praised as "social engineering," by socialist admirers in America. If that is engineering, then the sale of fake mining stock is engineering.

The whole population of Russia was put under duress and terror; thousands were murdered without trial; millions were worked to death and starved to death in captivity. Likewise the whole population of Germany was put under duress and terror, by the same means. With the war, Russians in German prison camps, Germans in Russian prison camps, are enduring no worse and no other fate than that their compatriots in as great numbers have endured and are

enduring from their own governments in their own countries. If there is any slight difference, they suffer rather less from the vengeance of avowed enemies than from the proclaimed benevolence of their compatriots. The conquered nations of Europe, under the Russian or German heel, are merely experiencing what Russians and Germans have been through for years, under their own national regimes.

Further, the principal political figures now wielding power in Europe, including those who have sold their countries to the invader, are socialists, ex-socialists, or communists; men whose creed was the collective good.

With all this demonstrated to the hilt, we have the peculiar spectacle of the man [1] who condemned millions of his own people to starvation, admired by philanthropists whose declared aim is to see to it that everyone in the world has a quart of milk. A graduate professional charity worker has flown half around the world to seek an interview with this master of his trade, and to write rhapsodies on being granted such a privilege. To keep themselves in office, for the professed purpose of doing good, similar idealists welcome the political support of grafters, convicted pimps, and professional thugs. This affinity of these types invariably reveals itself, when the occasion arises. But what is the occasion?

Why did the humanitarian philosophy of eighteenth century Europe usher in the Reign of Terror? It did not happen by chance; it followed from the original premise, objective and means proposed. The objective is to do good to others as a primary justification of existence; the means is the power of the collective; and the premise is that "good" is collective.

The root of the matter is ethical, philosophical, and religious, involving the relation of man to the universe, of man's creative faculty to his Creator. The fatal divergence occurs in failing to recognize the norm of human life.

Obviously there is a great deal of pain and distress incidental to existence. Poverty, illness, and accident are possibilities which may be reduced to a minimum, but cannot be altogether eliminated from the hazards mankind must encounter. But these are not desirable conditions, to be brought about or perpetuated.

Naturally children have parents, while most adults are in fair health most of their lives, and are engaged in useful activity which brings them a livelihood. That is the norm and the natural order. Ills are marginal. They can be alleviated from the marginal surplus of production; otherwise nothing at all could be done. Therefore it cannot be supposed that the producer exists only for the sake of the non-producer, the well for the sake of the ill, the competent for the sake of the incompetent; nor any person merely for the sake of another. (The logical procedure, if it is held that any person exists only for the sake of another, was carried out in semi-barbarous societies, when the widow or followers of a dead man were buried alive in his grave).

The great religions, which are also great intellectual systems, have always recognized the conditions of the natural order. They enjoin charity, benevolence, as a moral obligation, to be met out of the producer's surplus. That is, they make it secondary to production, for the inescapable reason that without production there could be nothing to give. Consequently they prescribe the most severe rule, to be embraced only voluntarily, for those who wish to devote their lives wholly to works of charity, from contributions. Always this is regarded as a special vocation, because it could not be a general way of life. Since the almoner must obtain the funds or goods he distributes from the producers, he has no authority to command; he must ask. When he subtracts his own livelihood from such alms, he must take no more than bare subsistence. In proof of his vocation, he must even forego the happiness of family life, if he were to receive the formal religious sanction. Never was he to derive comfort for himself from the misery of others.

The religious orders maintained hospitals, reared orphans, distributed food. Part of such alms was given unconditionally, that there might be no compulsion under the cloak of charity. It is not decent to make a man strip his soul in return for bread. This is the real difference when charity is enjoined in the name of God, and not on humanitarian or philanthropic principles. If the sick were cured, the hungry fed, orphans cared for until they grew up, it was certainly good, and the good cannot be computed in merely physical terms; but such actions were intended to tide the beneficiaries over a period of distress and restore them to the norm if possible. If the distressed could partly help themselves, so much the better. If they could not, that fact was recognized. But most of the religious orders made a concurrent effort to be productive, that they might give of their own surplus, as well as distributing donations. When they performed productive work, such as building, teaching for a reasonable fee, farming, or incidental industries and arts, the results were lasting, not only in the particular products, but in enlargement of knowledge and advanced methods, so that in the long run they raised the norm of welfare. And it should be noted that these enduring results derived from self-improvement.

What can one human being actually do for another? He can give from his own funds and his own time whatever he can spare. But he cannot bestow faculties which nature has denied; nor give away his own subsistence without becoming dependent himself. If he earns what he gives away, he must earn it first. Surely he has a right to domestic life if he can support a wife and children. He must therefore reserve enough for himself and his family to continue production. No one person, though his income be ten million dollars a year, can take care of every case of need in the world.

But supposing he has no means of his own, and still imagines that he can make "helping others" at once his primary purpose and the normal way of life, which is the central doctrine of the humanitarian creed, how is he to go about it? Lists have been published of the

Neediest Cases, certified by secular charitable foundations which pay their own officers handsomely. The needy have been investigated, but not relieved. Out of donations received, the officials pay themselves first. This is embarrassing even to the rhinoceros hide of the professional philanthropist. But how is the confession to be evaded? If the philanthropist could command the means of the producer, instead of asking for a portion, he could claim credit for production, being in a position to give orders to the producer. Then he can blame the producer for not carrying out orders to produce more.

If the primary objective of the philanthropist, his justification for living, is to help others, his ultimate good *requires that others shall be in want*. His happiness is the obverse of their misery. If he wishes to help "humanity," the whole of humanity must be in need. The humanitarian wishes to be a prime mover in the lives of others. He cannot admit either the divine or the natural order, by which men have the power to help themselves. The humanitarian puts himself in the place of God.

But he is confronted by two awkward facts; first, that the competent do not need his assistance; and second, that the majority of people, if unperverted, positively do not want to be "done good" by the humanitarian. When it is said that everyone should live primarily for others, what is the specific course to be pursued? Is each person to do exactly what any other person wants him to do, without limits or reservations? and only what others want him to do? What if various persons make conflicting demands? The scheme is impracticable.

Perhaps then he is to do only what is actually "good" for others. But will those others know what is good for them? No, that is ruled out by the same difficulty. Then shall A do what he thinks is good for B, and B do what he thinks is good for A? Or shall A accept only what he thinks is good for B, and vice versa? But that is absurd. Of course what the humanitarian actually proposes is that he shall do what he

thinks is good for everybody. It is at this point that the humanitarian sets up the guillotine.

What kind of world does the humanitarian contemplate as affording him full scope? It could only be a world filled with bread-lines and hospitals, in which nobody retained the natural power of a human being to help himself or to resist having things done to him. And that is precisely the world that the humanitarian arranges when he gets his way.

When a humanitarian wishes to see to it that everyone has a quart of milk, it is evident that he hasn't got the milk, and cannot produce it himself, or why should he be merely wishing? Further, if he did have a sufficient quantity of milk to bestow a quart on everyone, as long as his proposed beneficiaries can and do produce milk for themselves, they would say no, thank you. Then how is the humanitarian to contrive that he shall have all the milk to distribute, and that everyone else shall be in want of milk?

There is only one way, and that is by the use of the political power in its fullest extension. Hence the humanitarian feels the utmost gratification when he visits or hears of a country in which everyone is restricted to ration cards. Where subsistence is doled out, the desideratum has been achieved, of general want and a superior power to "relieve" it. The humanitarian in theory is the terrorist in action.

The good people give him the power he demands because they have accepted his false premise. The advance of science lent it a specious plausibility, with the increase in production. Since there is enough for everybody, why cannot the "needy" be provided for first, and the question thus disposed of permanently?

At this point it is asked, how are you to define the "needy," and from what source and by what power is provision to be made for them. Kind-hearted persons may exclaim indignantly: "This is quibbling;

narrow the definition to the very limit, but at the irreducible minimum you cannot deny that a man who is hungry, ill-clad, and without shelter is needy. The source of relief can only be the means of those who are not in such need. The power already exists; if there can be a right to tax people for armies, navies, local police, road-making, or any other imaginable purpose, surely there must be a prior right to tax people for the preservation of life itself."

[...]

When Robert Owen tried to run a factory for efficient production, the process incidentally improved some very unpromising characters among his employees, who had been on relief, and were therefore sadly degraded; Owen made money for himself; and while so engaged, it occurred to him that if better wages were paid, production could be increased, having made its own market. That was sensible and true. But then Owen became inspired with a humanitarian ambition, to do good to everybody. He collected a lot of humanitarians, in an experimental colony; they were all so intent upon doing good to others that nobody did a lick of work; the colony dissolved acrimoniously; Owen went broke and died mildly crazy. So the important principle he had glimpsed had to wait a century to be rediscovered.

The philanthropist, the politician, and the pimp are inevitably found in alliance because they have the same motives, they seek the same ends, to exist for, through, and by others. And the good people cannot be exonerated for supporting them. Neither can it be believed that the good people are wholly unaware of what actually happens. But when the good people do know, as they certainly do, that three million persons (at the least estimate) were starved to death in one year [2] by the methods they approve, why do they still fraternize with the murderers and support the measures? Because they have been told that the lingering death of the three millions might ulti-

mately benefit a greater number. *The argument applies equally well to cannibalism.*

Notes

[1] The reference is probably to Joseph Stalin.

[2] Isabel Paterson is perhaps referring to the famine that broke out in the region of Bengal (India) in 1943, causing 3 million deaths. The causes of the famine seem to be attributable to the policy of the British government led by Winston Churchill, which favoured by all means possible, including the manipulation of currency and prices, the transfer of agricultural production from the countryside to the cities, to the advantage of government officials, the bureaucracy, the army and the industrial workers necessary for military production.

Carlo Levi

The State worshippers

(1944)

These reflections by Carlo Levi, who was sent into confine in the south of Italy by the Fascist regime because of his critical stance towards the government, admirably describe the profound distrust of the peasants towards politics and the State, two realities totally distant and harmful to them.

On the opposite side, there are the political intellectuals and activists of all parties for whom the State and politics are wonderful realities to be used and practised for the supposedly good of the Nation. A contrast that the author outlines in an extremely clear and incisive way.

Source: Carlo Levi, *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* [Christ Stopped at Eboli] 1944.

The gentry were all members of the Party [the Fascist Party], even those few, like Dr. Milillo, who thought differently, simply because the Party

was the Government, it was the State, it was the Power, and they naturally felt they were part of this power. For exactly the opposite reason, none of the peasants were party members, just as they would not have been members of any other political party that might have existed. They were not Fascists, just as they would not have been Liberals or Socialists or whatever, because they belonged to another world and these matters did not concern them, they made no sense to them.

What did the peasants have to do with the Government, with Power, with the State? The State, whatever form it might take, meant "those in Rome," and those in Rome, as we know, don't want us to live as Christians, that is as human beings. There are hailstorms, landslides, droughts, malaria, and there is the State. These are inevitable evils, they have always been there and always will be. They make us kill our goats, they take away our furniture, and now they're going to send us to war. Such is life!

To the peasants, the State is further away than the sky, and more malevolent, because it is always on the other side. It doesn't matter what its political formulas, its structure, its programmes are. The peasants don't understand them, the politicians, because they use a different language from theirs, and there is really no reason why the peasants should ever care to understand them. Their only possible defence, against the State and against State propaganda, is resignation, the same gloomy resignation, without hope of paradise, that bends their backs under the evils of nature.

Therefore, they quite rightly do not realise what the political struggle is about. They think of it as a personal quarrel among those in Rome. It does not matter to them to know what are the opinions of the political prisoners who are in compulsory residence among them, and why they came here; but they look kindly on them, and consider them as their brothers, because they too are, for mysterious reasons, victims of their own destiny.

When, in the early days, I happened to meet some old peasant on the path outside the village who didn't know me yet, he would stop his donkey to greet me and ask me in dialect:

Who are you? Where are you going?

I'm out for a walk, was my reply. I'm a confined person.

An exiled? (The local peasants don't say confined, but exiled). An exiled? What a shame! Someone in Rome must have wished you ill.

And he would say no more, but set off again on his donkey, looking at me with a smile of brotherly compassion.

This passive fraternity, this suffering together, this resigned, supportive, age-old patience is the deep common feeling of the peasants, a non-religious bond, but a natural one. They do not have, nor can they have, what is commonly called political consciousness, because they are, in every sense of the word, pagans, not citizens: the gods of the State and the city cannot be worshipped in these lands, where the wolf and the ancient black boar reign, nor is there any wall separating the world of men from that of animals and spirits, nor the foliage of visible trees from the dark underground roots. Nor can they have a true awareness of themselves as individuals, here where all things are linked by reciprocal influences, where everything is a power that acts imperceptibly, where no limits exist that are not broken by a magical influence.

They live immersed in a world that goes on independent of their will, where the human being is in no way separate from his sun, his beast, his malaria; where there can be no happiness, as literary devotees of the land would like, nor hope, because these two are after all individual feelings, but only the gloomy passivity of a sorrowful nature. But in them is alive the human sense of a common destiny, and of a common acceptance. It is a feeling, not an act of conscience; it is not expressed in speeches or in words, but it is carried with

oneself in every moment, in every gesture of their life, through the days, all similar, that stretch out over these deserts.

[...]

Already the train was taking me back, beyond Rome, towards the South. It was night, and I couldn't sleep. Sitting on the hard bench, I was thinking back to the past days, to that feeling of foreignness, and to the total lack of understanding of the politicians for the life of those regions to which now I was hurrying back. Everyone had asked me for news of the *Mezzogiorno*, the name given to Southern Italy. To all I had told what I had seen: and if everyone had listened to me with interest, very few seemed to have really wanted to understand what I was saying.

They were men of various opinions and temperaments: from the most ardent radicals to the most rigid conservatives. Many were men of great intelligence, and they all claimed to have pondered upon the "problem of southern Italy" and had their formulas and schemes for its solution. But just as these formulas and schemes of theirs, and even the language and words used to express them would have been incomprehensible to the peasants, so the life and needs of the peasants were for them a closed world, which they did not even care to penetrate. Fundamentally, they were all, (I now seemed to see this clearly) more or less unconscious Worshippers of the State; idol-worshippers who ignored themselves.

It did not matter whether their State was the current Fascist one, or the one they envisioned in the future: in either case it was the State, understood as something that transcended both the people and their lives. Whether tyrannical or paternally providential, dictatorial or democratic, it was always a unitary, centralised and distant State. Hence the impossibility, between politicians and peasants, of understanding one another and being understood.

Hence the simplism, often cloaked in philosophical expressions, of politicians, and the abstractness of their solutions, never adherent to a living reality, but schematic, partial, and so soon outdated. Fifteen years of Fascism had made everyone forget the problem of the South; and, if now they had to think about it, they could only see it as a function of something else, through the fictitious generalities of party or class, or perhaps of race.

Some saw in it a purely economic and technical problem, spoke of public works, land reclamation, necessary industrialisation, internal colonisation, or referred to the old socialist "remake Italy" programmes. Others saw in it nothing more than a sad historical legacy, a tradition of Bourbon servitude, which a liberal democracy would have eliminated step by step. Others felt that the southern problem was nothing more than a special case of capitalist oppression, which the dictatorship of the proletariat would certainly resolve. Still others thought of a true inferiority of race, and spoke of the south as a dead weight for northern Italy, and studied provisions to remedy, from above, this painful situation.

For all of them, the State could do something about it, something very useful, beneficial, and providential: and they had looked at me with amazement when I had said that the State, as they understood it, was the fundamental obstacle to anything being done.

It cannot be the State, I said, to solve the southern question, for the simple reason that what we call the southern problem is none other than the problem of the State. Between Fascist Statism, Liberal Statism, Socialist Statism, and all those other future forms of Statism that in a petty-bourgeois country like ours will try to arise, and the anti-statism of the peasants, there is, and always will be, an abyss; and we can only try to bridge it when we succeed in creating a form of state of which the peasants also feel to be part.

Public works, land reclamation, are good things, but they do not solve the problem. State intervention, a sort of colonisation of southern

Italy, may bring some discrete material fruits, but the whole of Italy, not just the south, would become a colony. Plans laid by a central government can produce great practical results, but still leave two hostile Italys. The problem we are talking about is much more complex than most people think. It has three different aspects, which are the three faces of a single reality, and which cannot be understood or resolved separately.

We are, first of all, faced with the co-existence of two very different civilisations, neither of which is able to assimilate the other. Country and city, pre-Christian civilisation and non-Christian civilisation, stand opposite each other; and as long as the latter continues to impose its State Theocracy on the former, the disagreement will continue. The present war, and those to come, are to a great extent the result of this age-old disagreement, which has now reached its most intense acuteness, and not only in Italy. The peasant civilisation will always be defeated, but it will never allow itself to be completely crushed; it will persevere under a cover of patience, interrupted by sporadic explosions; and the deadly crisis will perpetuate itself. Brigandage, peasant warfare, is proof of this: and the clashes of the last century will not be the last. As long as Rome governs Matera, Matera will be chaotic and desperate, and Rome desperate and tyrannical.

The second aspect of the problem is economic: it is the problem of misery. Those lands have become progressively impoverished; the forests have been cut down, the rivers have become torrents, the animals have been reduced in number. Instead of trees, meadows and forests, people have stubbornly cultivated wheat on unsuitable land. There is no fixed capital, no industry, no savings, no schools, emigration has become impossible, taxes are unbearable and disproportionate, and everywhere malaria reigns. All this is, to a large extent, the result of the "good" intentions and efforts of the State, of a State that will never be the State of the peasants, and that has only created for them misery and barrenness.

Finally, there is the social side of the problem. It is customary to say that the great enemy is the latifundium, the large landowner; and certainly, where the latifundium exists, it is anything but a beneficial institution. But if the large landowner, who lives in Naples, Rome, or Palermo, is an enemy of the peasants, he is nevertheless not the greatest nor the most burdensome. He, at least, is far away, and does not weigh daily on everyone's life. The real enemy, the one that prevents any freedom and any possibility of civilised existence is the petty bourgeoisie of the villages. It is a degenerate class, physically and morally: incapable of fulfilling its function, and which only lives by petty robbery and the bastardised tradition of feudal rights. Until this class is suppressed and replaced, one cannot think of solving the southern problem.

This problem, in its threefold aspect, pre-existed fascism; but fascism, even though it no longer spoke of it, and denied it, brought it to its utmost acuteness, because with it petty-bourgeois statism reached its most complete affirmation.

We cannot predict today what political forms will emerge in the future: but in a petty-bourgeois country such as Italy, and in which petty-bourgeois ideologies have become infected even among the urban working classes, it is unfortunately probable that the new institutions arising after Fascism, either by slow evolution or by violence, no matter how extreme and revolutionary they may be in appearance, will maintain the same ideology under different forms. And recreate a State equally far removed, and perhaps even more distant, from real life, equally idolatrous and abstract, a perpetuation under new slogans and new flags of the worst features of the eternal tendency toward Italian Fascism.

Unless there is a peasant revolution, we shall never have a real Italian revolution, and vice versa. The two are the same. The southern problem cannot be solved within the current Fascist State, nor within those that, without radically contradicting it, will follow it. It

will only be resolved outside them, if we know how to create a new political conception and a new kind of state, which is also the state of the peasants; which frees them from their imposed chaos and their necessary indifference. Nor can the South solve its difficulties with its own efforts alone. For then we would have a civil war, a new atrocious brigandage, which would end, as usual, in peasant defeat, and general disaster; but only with the work of the whole of Italy, and its radical renewal.

We must make ourselves capable of thinking and creating a new state, which can no longer be either the Fascist State, or the Liberal State, or the Communist State, all different and essentially identical forms of the same State religion. We must rebuild the foundations of our concept of the state with the concept of the individual, which is its basis. We must replace the traditional juridical and abstract concept of the individual, with a new concept, one that expresses living reality, one that will do away with the now unbridgeable gulf between the individual and the state.

The individual is not a closed entity, but a relationship, the locus of all relationships. This concept of relationship, outside of which the individual does not exist, is the same that defines the state. Individual and state coincide in their essence, and must come to coincide in everyday practice, in order for both to exist. This reversal of politics, which is unconsciously maturing, is implicit in the peasant civilisation, and is the only way that will allow us to get out of the vicious circle of Fascism and Anti-Fascism.

This path is called autonomy. The state can only be the sum of infinite autonomies, an organic federation. For the peasantry, the cell of the state, the only one whereby they can participate in the manifold collective life, can only be the autonomous or self-governing rural commune. This is the only state form that can bring about a simultaneous solution to the three interdependent aspects of the southern problem; which can allow the coexistence of two different civilisa-

tions, without one oppressing the other, or weighing the other down; which can grant, as far as possible, the best conditions for people to free themselves from misery; and that finally, through the abolition of all power and functions of both the large landowners and the local petty bourgeoisie, allows the peasantry to live, for themselves and for the benefit of all. But the autonomy of the rural commune cannot exist without the autonomy of factories, schools, cities. Of all forms of social life. This is what I have learnt in a year of living apart from the rest

This is what I had told my friends, and this is what I was now meditating again in my mind as the train entered, at night, the lands of Lucania. They were the first hints of those ideas that I was to develop in the following years, through the experiences of exile and war. And, accompanied by these thoughts, I fell asleep.

Theodore Roszak

The Disease called Politics

(1962)

One of the most passionate critiques of the madness that is politics and why we have to find a way out of this insane game.

Source: Paul Goodman ed., *Seeds of Liberation*, 1964.

Behind the façade of words and policies and white papers and manifestoes lurks the dark truth. A suicidal pathology is at the root of our politics. How else are we to explain what men are doing all about us? We experience war-scare upon war-scare. But the feverish investors of our society, those supposed epitomes of rational self-interest, are not sent scurrying to the hills by these crises. Instead they stick fast to ground-zero, glued to their telephones, instructing their brokers, “Buy Martin!” “Buy Boeing! The boom is coming!”

William Burroughs has put it well in the *Journal for the Protection of All Beings*:

To concern yourself with surface political conflicts is to make the mistake of the bull in the ring, you are charging the cloth. That is what politics is for, to teach you the cloth.

And Gregory Corso asks, "Who manipulates the cloth?"

And the answer: "Death."

But what does it mean to say that death manipulates politics? It means that politics is not the art of life. Politics does not sustain life or serve it. Rather politics is the organization of power, and power is the enemy of life. For the measure of power is its ability to make life what it would not be; to break, bend, control, crush, direct and destroy life. The end of power is the inhibition of growth, which is life. And whatever interferes with the growth of things and of men participates in death; whatever its credentials, it is in alliance with death. This is what power is, and nothing else.

All of which is another way of saying that politics is everything love is not. It is love that brings forth and nourishes life, that sustains it in its sufferings and mourns for its defeat. Love thrives in spontaneity, accepting this moment and the next for what they are now, not for what they can be used for later. Love resides in the immediacy of our experience; it is, like a child at play, the gentle enemy of order, of efficiency of organization.

So it is not love, after all, that makes the world go around. Love lets grow; but it is power that makes go. Love may be part of each man's history, but in the world at large, love has no history. The world belongs to politics, which is to say, the world belongs to death.

This is what we must come to understand. Our society's obsession with power is an obsession with death. It is ultimately a search for self-destruction. And that is why we continue again and again, in the name of this or that political principle, to aggravate the international situation, and to insist that the way of sanity is impossible. That is

why, with the capacity at hand to make the life of mankind secure, clean, comfortable, and enjoyable for the first time in human history, we persist in saddling ourselves with tension, fear, discontent and hardship. And this in the name of empty, unexamined issues. As if we were ashamed to give our minds and bodies peace! There are even those who pretend that unhappiness is good: it creates culture. That may be so. But if it is, it means that culture is a disease and nothing better.

There is no other explanation: we edge toward the brink of war, not out of cunning, but out of a morbid fascination with the abyss. What after all is the ultimate display of power, but the extermination of the race? Those who control the means of power — or perhaps I should say, those who are most immediately controlled by them — is it not obvious that there is a certain relish and deep satisfaction they derive from their position? Does it not show through their words and gestures? What else are we to make of Khrushchev threatening the world with 100-megaton bombs, or of the square-jawed, steel-eyed generals who have made the word “destroy” one of the basic terms of our national vocabulary?: “We can destroy the enemy totally,” “We can destroy the enemy ten times over. . .” and not a tinge of regret or guilt in their voices. What was the slogan John Kennedy confessed was closest to his heart? “Power all the way.” These men are ecstatically wallowing in a Faustian dream of omnipotence, which can only end as a nightmare of self-annihilation.

To be sure, politics has always been a neurotic business. The senseless shenanigans of kings and conquerors have always had the character of madness about them. We recognize that clearly enough when we see them at a distance. We can look back at the bloody intrigues of Louis XIV and Richard III, the violent empire-building of Cecil Rhodes and Bismarck and see the crazy brutality of their compulsive masculinity. Obsessed and driven men, all.

We forget that our own political squabbles will be seen by the future — if we permit there to be a human future — with all the estrangement and cynicism with which we look back upon the quarrels of Hapsburg and Valois, of the Red and the White Rose.

“If we permit there to be a human future.” This is the great difference! This is what makes the politics of our time not neurotic, but psychotic. In the past, the mad game of the politicians took place as a *part* of life; they did not, they could not claim to be the *whole* of life. There was always the chance to escape to the sidelines, leaving the mad fellows to butcher one another. Spinoza ground his lenses and his philosophy to a delicate focus, while the political world was convulsed with agony. Beethoven could be deaf to Napoleon and all his nonsense while he brought forth his hymns to life.

But now the game of politics has expanded to the point of embracing the whole of life. It claims to be the only game. It wants us all, and it wants all of each of us; no out-of-bounds and no spectators. The extent of political control and destructiveness is becoming total, and therefore politics is becoming totally insane.

All of which, in the words of Gregory Corso, “sounds real doomy.”

Is there a way out?

Clearly there will be no way out until the pathological becomes a category of our political understanding. Otherwise we will, like the psychotic, try helplessly to save ourselves in ways that only aggravate the illness. The policy of deterrence is such an attempt, a crippled, pathological attempt to work within the very political conventions that endanger our survival. That is why deterrence is bound to fail. There is no cure for madness within the context of madness.

No, we must find our way to health by first acknowledging our sickness. We must call madness madness wherever we see it. We must refuse to drain off our constructive energies, energies of mind and heart and will and conscience, in dignifying the insanity of our polit-

ical existence; in making it an object of allegiance and sacrifice to the point of bloodshed. Those who strain to rationalize the irrationality of the political world — the experts and analysts, the propagandists, the political scientists and historians, sunk in their state-papers and documents and official correspondence — they do us the worst disservice. They are stuck so deep in the ruts of political convention that they cannot see over the edge. And so they take pride in their very lack of vision, in what they call their “hard-headed, pragmatic” approach. No naive idealists, they!

Rather, they are Lewis Mumford’s “undimensioned fragmented minds.” They do not think to the roots. Their souls have been corrupted by intellectual caution and professional prudishness. The so-called sick comedians do more good than they, for through the throats of Lenny Bruce and Edward Albee the morbid fascinations of our civilization are being vomited into view.

Camus speaks of the virtues of *engagement*, of being “engaged in the density of history, where man’s very flesh stifles.” But his advice here is wrong. History is the insanity of the race. Rather than involving ourselves ever more in that madness, we must first find detachment. We must fight our way out of the moiling, suffocating arena of politics so that we can with distance recognize the essential sickness of the games that are played there.

Jacques Ellul

The political illusion

(1965)

These passages are a masterful representation and analysis of what Politics is in the world and what the State has become in societies. Once we have read and reflected on these passages it should be very difficult to remain under the illusion that Politics is the solution to human problems and under the fascination that the State is the entity that would solve all social problems. Unless we opt for completely abdicating our autonomy as free and rational human beings.

Source: Jacques Ellul, *L'illusion politique*, 1965.

Politicisation

Thinking everything in terms of politics, covering everything with this word (with intellectuals taking inspiration from Plato and a few others), putting everything in the hands of the State, appealing to it in all circumstances, deferring the problems of the individual to the mass, believing that politics is for everyone, that everyone is capable

of it: this is the politicisation of modern man. This politicisation has therefore a mainly mythological aspect. It is expressed in beliefs and, as a result, easily elicits a passionate fervour.

We cannot conceive of society except as being directed by a centralised, omnipresent and all-powerful State. What was once the realm of utopia, with an organicist view of society in which the State plays the role of the brain, has now not only been accepted ideologically but has been deeply integrated into the depths of our consciousness. To think and act in a contrary way risk of bringing us into radical disagreement with the entire movement of our society, a painful condition that we cannot accept. We can no longer even conceive of a society in which the political function (that of governmental authority) would be limited by an external obstacle: we have arrived at the monist idea of power that stops power. We can no longer conceive of a society with autonomous intermediate groups or divergent activities. This pre-eminence of politics is one of the sociological presuppositions common to everyone today, and which is gradually spreading to all countries.

It seems obvious to us, without reservation, that everything should be subject to the power of the State; it would seem extraordinary to us if any activity should escape it. The *de facto* situation of the expansion of the State's areas of intervention corresponds exactly to the conviction, deep within us, *that this is how it should be*. The claim of a company, a university or a charity to remain independent seems anachronistic to us. The State directly embodies the common good. It is the great ordainer, the great organiser, the one towards which all the voices of the people converge, and from which emanate all reasonable, balanced solutions, independent of private interests and therefore *just*. Whenever by chance we find that this is not the case, we are deeply scandalised, so much does this image of the perfection of the State inhabit us. In our eyes, there can be no other decision-making centre in a social body. Once again, it is not just the fact of the State being at the centre of our lives that counts, but our sponta-

neous adherence, our internal justification of the fact: for the world to be in order, the State must have assumed all powers.

Conversely, we can observe a very curious attitude on the part of certain sociologists or social psychologists, for whom any phenomenon of authority, at whatever level it is found, in whatever group or in whatever way it is expressed, is nothing else than an accident whose paradigm is the State. Whether a leader emerges in a group, a father exercises authority in the family, or a technician imposes himself in a corporation, the phenomenon of authority is immediately removed from its context and reduced to that of the State, to the form it can adopt in politics. We need so much this pyramidal vision that we consider each micro authority as only a reduced form of the Macro Authority.

And the place we give in our hearts to the State and to political life leads us to a whole interpretation of History which we regard, first and foremost, as political history.

For a long time, only the events concerning kingdoms and nations, only wars and conquests, only political revolutions were taken into account. This conception of history is undoubtedly outdated; however it has been replaced by the importance attributed to political and administrative structures. A society has no reality for us except through its political institutions, and those institutions take precedence over any other view (despite the importance assumed by economic and social history). And above all, we cannot escape this strange view of a History that is ultimately a function of the State. Only where there is a State, there is a History worthy of the name. The Merovingian period is only so dark because the State was so derisory. The 'Middle Ages' are an intermediate age, a nameless period, only because it lies between two periods of greatness of the State: the Roman, the Monarchical. Between the two there was this regrettable interlude, where one is obliged to consider society shapeless because it was not directed from the top, because it was not

animated by a single will, because it was not concretely organised. Fortunately, the kings restored the State with an iron fist. France once again became a safe place, and the superiority of this movement was compared to the disorderly dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire. Of course, as democrats, we were against the monarchical authoritarianism of Louis XIV. But he has retained our secret affection because he was The State.

Politics everywhere

Participating in non-political activities, that are nevertheless definitively related to our society, is considered worthless. The poet who confines himself to being a poet without signing petitions and manifestos will immediately be accused of locking himself away in his ivory tower. We prefer the political plays of Aristophanes to any of Aeschylus. And as a renowned, highly politicised French actress, once said: 'We want to bring a message to the world' (Simone Signoret).

And now, in this general trend, values too are politicised. All values have, in our eyes, as Maurice Barrès [1] said, a connotation, and even more, a political content. Freedom? We leap with both feet from the most hazy metaphysical dispute into the conception of political regimes, into the political definition of freedom, which, if it is not enshrined in a regime, if it is not the fruit of a constitution, if it is not the participation of the citizen in power, is ultimately negligible in our eyes. To say that freedom consists quite simply in the fact that the individual can escape the power of the State and decide for himself about the meaning of his life and his actions, seems nowadays simplistic, ridiculous and the reaction by an adolescent! Similarly, justice no longer exists as a personal virtue, nor as the result, more or less well attained, of the law. But if we want to give it some seriousness, this unfortunate value of justice must include some adjective, and particularly the adjective 'social', which means that, in

the end, it is regarded as political. It is the State that must ensure that justice is done; there is only collective justice, and the difficult approaches of legal philosophers of past centuries no longer make sense, nor does the Christian assertion that justice is the miraculous transformation of the individual made just by the Grace of God. In our days, values that cannot be given a political content or be used for political purposes are ultimately no longer taken seriously.

In reality, it is no longer values that serve as our criterion of judgement for estimating good and evil; it is politics that today becomes the supreme value in relation to which others are ordered. It is politics, with its epigones (nationalism, for example), that have become the cornerstone of what is good and represent progress. Politics is thought to be, by its very nature, excellent. Human progress in today's society consists of participating in politics. How many articles and statements have we read on this subject: women are finally becoming human beings because they are being granted 'political rights'. To say that women, as mothers, who provide their children with a deep sense of values, are the true creators in the long term, the true initiators of all political actions, is considered reactionary talk. If you don't have the (magical, indeed) right to put a paper in the ballot box, you are nothing, not even a person. Progress means receiving this extreme power, this mythical part of a theoretical sovereignty that consists of dispossessing yourself of your decisions in favour of someone who will make them for you. Progress means reading the newspaper. One scientist (Rivet) could seriously write: "A man who cannot (this was about Africa) read a newspaper to be informed is not a man." What a strange conception of manhood! The political Trinity: 'Information-Participation-Execution,' is in today's world the supreme watchword for progress.

[...]

In any case, it is this participation in politics that becomes the aspiration of those who do not have it, the criterion of dignity, personality and freedom. Colonised peoples finally become civilised because they join the United Nations. Africans finally have dignity because they participate in political power. And some thinkers solemnly declare to us: "They enter history." For those thinkers there is no history where there is no politics. Who would not be struck by such a depth of politicisation? So, the complex social organization of the Bantu or the transformation of a continent by the Manchu, are not part of history? This is a bad joke. Yet, it is the most profound conviction of our time that these peoples are making history only because they are beginning to adopt Western-style State structures and political life. However, what really counts is the reference to politics. Now, at last, they are going to "make their voices heard."

This positive judgement about politics, only mildly exaggerated, has its counterpart: the severe condemnation of 'apolitical people'. In our society, the person who keeps to himself, does not vote, considers political debates and constitutional changes to be superficial and without any real impact on the real problems of mankind, the person who knows full well that the Algerian war affects him and his children, but does not believe that declarations, motions and votes will change anything, will be judged very severely by everyone. He is the true heretic of our times. And society excommunicates him as the medieval Church excommunicated the sorcerer. He is regarded as a pessimist, a fool (for he fails to see the very deep and secret relationships of the political game), a defeatist who bows to fate, a bad citizen: surely if everything is going wrong, it's because of him, because if he showed some civic spirit, voting would make a difference (it's not enough for 80% of voters to vote, no, it needs to be 100%!) and democracy would be effective! He is the subject of endless judgements, both in terms of his efficiency and his morality, and even his psychic health is questioned (because an apolitical person is neces-

sarily a little paranoid or schizophrenic). Finally, the ultimate condemnation in our time: he can only be a reactionary.

We sense that the human being, in his entirety, is today judged in terms of politics, which is invested with ultimate value. In our judgement, everything has become political and, in addition, politics is the ultimate guidepost. To politics a global content is given, and beyond that, there is nothing. Politics can only be judged by politics. One can certainly say that politics should be at the service of the human being or of the economy, but the fact remains that the greatness of the State, its power to organise, and man's participation in the collectivity *through politics* are the ultimate symbols of our time, replacing religious symbols.

Politics as a presumed universal solution

Another aspect of the political illusion lies in the conviction, deeply rooted in the heart of modern Western man, that ultimately all problems are political, and that they can be solved through politics which, moreover, offers the only practicable way. Without repeating what we have already said about this conviction of modern man, or about the influence of Leninist thought, let us note, for example, that for all of us, when a man is 'bad', it is 'society's fault'. All the studies on criminals or other antisocial elements are intended to demonstrate that it is not *their fault*... The culprit, the one responsible, is the environment, society, the parents, the housing, the cinema, the circumstances. All of us. We are all murderers. On the other hand, we are convinced that if society were what it should be, there would be no criminals or thugs. And who, according to the average modern man, should reorganise this society so that it is what it should be? The State, always the State. So the whole problem of morality is thrown back, even by non-Marxists, on the State. It is a political matter. A political matter too is that of Values, Justice, Liberty, and even Truth (through science and information) must be achieved by way of poli-

tics. But what is the attitude of the average human being in this respect? In his mind there is no doubt that the State can and must accomplish all this. It is the State that must ensure social justice, it is the State that must guarantee truth in information, it is the State that must protect freedom (which leads to Tito's admirable shortcut: the more powerful the State, the more freedom there is). The State as creator and protector of values: that is the business of politics.

However, we claim that in all these areas we are faced with the most tragic illusion of our time. That politics can be used to solve some administrative problems, problems of the material management of the city, problems of economic organisation: that can be accepted, and would be already something not bad. But politics absolutely cannot deal with the personal problems of the human being, such as good and evil, truth and justice, the meaning of his life, and personal responsibility in the face of freedom. Of course, we also know that none of this is considered important by some people. So be it. But, if that is the case, then let's not talk about it, let's stop bothering us with these stories of torture, seizures of newspapers, democracy, because all this is only worthwhile if good and evil, truth and justice, the meaning of life and responsibility have a personal meaning. Otherwise, the torturer and the tortured are impersonal beings, and there is no the slightest sense in protesting, condemning, or glorifying anything. Those who discuss torture presuppose that it all has a personal and not a collective meaning. But it is not through politics, political action and the transformation of the State that we will find an answer and a solution. In fact, if we avoid mythological explanations in the post-Marxist or unconscious Marxist style, the enthusiasm with which everyone has seized on this convenient explanation, whether they are intellectuals trained in existentialism, reactionary shopkeepers or radical petty bourgeois, betrays a common preoccupation: that of escaping personal responsibility in such matter. The conviction that the inner conflicts of the individual and the external realisation of values are collective, social matters,

and will find their solution in political organisation, is only the mystifying face of the personal surrender of each individual with respect to his own life. It is because I am incapable of achieving good in my life that I project it onto the State, which must achieve it by proxy in my place. It is because I am incapable of discerning the truth that I demand that the administration discern it for me, relieve me of this painful quest, and hand it over to me fully formed. It is because I cannot dispense justice myself that I expect a just organisation to exist, in which justice would be granted and in which I would only have the task of fitting in.

Feuerbach's [2] perfectly convincing demonstration with regard to God must today be transposed exactly to the subject of what has taken the place of God in the consciousness of modern man, namely the State. The same motives, the same process, the same mystification that led man into religion and to expect from God the fulfilment of what he did not know how to do, are today leading him into politics and to expect these same things from the State. 'But' — one might say — 'in politics, man is prompted to act for himself, he commits himself, he sacrifices himself, he takes charge of his own destiny...' We tend to forget that in religion too, man was by no means passive; he acted a lot, sacrificed himself even more, and committed himself fully. And if we consider current politics, we have already seen how little man really attains influence over his own destiny through it. In reality, it is not from him that fulfilment is expected, nor from any man, but from a mysterious and superior Power, invested with indefinable qualities such as Sovereignty, a Power which, by a kind of magic, transforms the citizen's poor efforts into something Efficient, Good and Absolute.

Just as the prayer will unleashes transcendent forces, the ballot box will move the sovereign Will. But the latter assumption is no more reasonable than the former. For we all agree that the sovereign Will is not a simple sum of individual Wills... This is truly a religious phenomenon. Political commitment is then comparable to religion.

Moreover, both terms have the same tone of 'binding the individual' (*in wadium* = legal contract in Medieval Latin; *re-ligare* = to link in Ancient Latin). And it is then a real escape from oneself, from one's own destiny, from one's own responsibilities. On the one hand, we assume political, collective and social responsibilities, but they are never more than vicarious and secondary, they are never more than external, even if the individual completely submerges himself in them. They are never more than a diversion that can be taken absolutely seriously only by those concerned with behaviourism, but not otherwise. On the other hand, when it comes to confronting oneself, we reject, hide and flee our immediate responsibility towards our neighbour. We are faced with a mystification that is identical but opposite in meaning to the one that Marxism rightly criticised when it said that personal virtue made it possible to forget one's collective responsibility, or that charity made it possible to avoid justice. This condemnation was justified in the 19th century. Today, it is no longer a problem: the same operation is taking place before our eyes, but in reverse. Blaming the organisation of society for the solution of all personal problems, the realisation of values, is to carry out a very convenient operation of human absenteeism.

This operation has two aspects: first of all, it means that no one is ultimately responsible for the matter, no one is in charge of justice, truth or freedom which are the affair of the organisation, a collective matter. It is the problem of "somebody one." If these values are not realised, if things go wrong, it means that the organisation is bad, or that there is a saboteur, a devil who prevents me from being just, in accord with society's objective justice. This Enemy will therefore be accused, and of course Power too, since it is Power that must ensure the just organisation and elimination of the corrupting Enemy. This strenuous escape from personal responsibility for having to accomplish oneself what is good and just is often accompanied among intellectuals and Christians by a corollary vice, that of universal responsibility. Persuading oneself that I am responsible for the

torture in Algeria while I am giving a course in Bordeaux, that I am responsible for world hunger, or for racist outbursts in various parts of the world, is exactly the same thing as rejecting all responsibility. Because, what characterises this attitude is the fact of impotence: I can't really do anything about it, except sign manifestos and make declarations, or pretend to act through political channels and establish a just order with the aid of some abstraction. To say that we are all murderers means, translated into plain language, that no one is individually a murderer, therefore I am not a murderer. To admit that I am responsible for all the evil that happens in the world is to use a fictitious guilty conscience to assuage my own by not doing what is within my power. Recognising that I am a bastard because I live in the Western world that exploits the Third World means avoiding the slightest effort to personally stop being a bastard. And I do so at the lowest possible price, joining a political party, shouting in the street. I am also assured of being on the right side of those who work to ensure that 'the French' stop being bastards. The demands of religion were obviously more severe! And these proclamations of scruples, bad conscience and shared responsibility are quickly resolved by accusing the villain on the other side, the communist or the fascist. And these are the same people who, without seeing the contradiction, proclaim both things. This contradiction reveals the mystification.

The second mystification of the politicisation of problems and values is the ease with which we allow ourselves to put off taking the whole affair seriously until tomorrow or the day after. Because justice is a political matter, because it will finally be achieved in a new organisation, so wait until tomorrow. People would say: "Wait for this organisation. We are currently at the preparation stage, at the resource stage, we are following tortuous paths, but rest assured that we are heading in the right direction. We are accumulating injustices, but it is with a view to greater justice. We are destroying liberties, but we are preparing for the supreme Liberty. We ask you, today, right now,

you militant, to lie, to kill, to imprison... but you are absolved of your guilt by the grandiose realisation that you will not see, because we need one, or two, or three generations sacrificed, but rest assured, your sacrifice will not have been in vain, your injustice is covered by the great Justice to come." We are here in the presence of the individual, moral and psychological aspect of the ethical and general problem of ends and means. And we can see how easy it is for everyone to avoid the personal question of their own behaviour by politicising it. Since the solution is yet to come, everything is permissible today.

Mr. Bertrand de Jouvenel (*De la politique pure*, 1963) rightly reminds us that the 'myth of the solution obscures our understanding of Politics; on the contrary, things can be facilitated by the recognition that in these matters one can only arrive at precarious settlements'. A problem involves specific, concordant and known data, and can therefore be solved: there is bound to be a solution to an arithmetical problem. But a political situation is not of this order: what makes it political is 'precisely that the terms in which it is posed do not allow any solution in the strict sense of the word'. 'A real political problem arises when the data is contradictory, that is to say when it is insoluble'. A political problem permit only an accommodation, but not a solution. There can then be compromise, decay, evolution, conciliation, authoritarian methods, etc. These are not solutions. But more and more, modern man demands solutions. Increasingly, technicians claim to be able to formulate society's problems as exact problems and in terms that allow for a solution. The growing myth of the solution gradually removes from our consciousness the sense of relativity, that is to say the humility of true politics.

Finally, let us consider one last aspect: the politicisation of a real, existing problem makes it possible to escape from its reality, its depth, its human aspect. The process of politicising an issue involves generalisation and abstraction. At the political level, what is said and done can be right while completely disregarding the human aspect and

values. But wanting to consider this human aspect and these values destroys the possibility of thinking about the political problem. There was no doubt in the Third Reich that the Jewish problem had to be 'solved'. In the eyes of the Nazi leaders, this was a political problem. Therefore they could give the abstract order to massacre. But all historians of the Third Reich report that Himmler fainted when he saw a few dozen Jews shot in front of him. The question had suddenly become brutally human. But the ordinary course of the political process consists in hiding this human question. Celebrating the Don canal helped to hide the fact that it cost one hundred thousand human lives to dig it.

Thus the politicisation of an issue goes much further than the question of ends and means, or the attempt at justification. In reality, the political viewpoint today allows us to escape from values, to obliterate the human reality of situations (which, moreover, being always particular, are uninteresting). We hide the real and the true under the political, we close the closet and we talk at ease about plans and revolutions. Political consideration then makes it possible to think that we have the 'general solution' because it makes it possible at one stroke to do away with human Reality and the search for Truth.

Notes

[1] [1] Maurice Barrès (1862-1923) was a French novelist, journalist, philosopher, and politician. He was a strong advocate of French nationalism and militarism.

[2] Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) was a German philosopher. In his book, *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) he portrays God as the outward projection of man's inward nature.

Gian Piero de Bellis

Politics, the opium of the people

(2010)

A short description of what is politics and why we should go beyond it if we want to be/become real human beings.

Source: Gian Piero de Bellis, *La politica, oppio dei popoli* (e i politici imbonitori furfanti), polyarchy.org, 2010.

Past. In the past, the transmission of culture in Western Europe was led by the Catholic Church, which had been able to preserve the classical heritage (Greek and Latin) and spread it during the Middle Ages. This cultural activity also gave rise to the formation of universities and schools that multiplied all over Europe and allowed the Church to exert an almost exclusive hold over the educational processes of the individuals. This cultural monopoly of the Church, like all monopolies, led inexorably, over time, to a growing obscurantism that manifested itself as an inability to accept the scientific method and the freedom of research. The conventional re-proposition of the past and the use of faith as a support for power (ecclesias-

tical and otherwise), generated deep shortcomings to religion as spirituality. Religion became increasingly an ideology that justified human exploitation and suffering on earth in view of a hypothetical otherworldly reward.

It is therefore more than understandable that all those who, in the modern era, argued in favour of a cultural and social renewal (e.g. freethinkers, socialists, anarchists, radicals, etc.) developed a strong anti-clericalism and a fierce anti-religious sentiment. In 1843, Marx clearly expressed this position of rejection of religion as manipulation of the exploited masses, stating in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*:

“Religion is the sobbing of an oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world, the spirit of a spiritless condition. It is the opium of the people.”

Since then, at least in progressive and enlightened circles, religion has been regarded, purely and simply, as ‘the opium of the people’.

Present. The emergence of the Nation State (after the French Revolution), the expropriation of much of the Church's property in all the countries of Europe, the end of the temporal power of the Papacy, the secularisation of modern societies, the establishment of the State school, these and many other historical events undermined the power of the Church and destroyed its cultural monopoly. Certainly, since at least the First World War, the clashes of ideas and groups had little or nothing to do with religion and almost everything to do with a new cultural phenomenon affecting the masses: politics.

In contemporary times, politics has completely replaced religion as a topic of discussion and a trigger for action by the masses. While in the past there was the clash between Catholics and Protestants for the affirmation (and imposition) of their religious beliefs, the 20th

century witnessed the struggle between the right and the left to affirm (and impose) their political views.

These two rival factions, the right and the left, not only supported two apparently different models of social organisation but also presented politics in two apparently different ways.

For those on the left, politics is a sublime thing; everything is or must be political and therefore the personal is also political. In essence, the Left expresses a totalising view of politics, as every human action is a political one.

For exponents of the Right, politics is a dirty thing (according to Mussolini's alleged statement) and as a dirty thing it should be left to other people, that is to him/them. In essence, the Right embraces a totalitarian view of politics, as dictated by a national leader.

Taking historical events into account, between the totalising and totalitarian visions, the differences were and are practically non-existent, with some shouting: death to fascists, and others proclaiming: death to communists. Perhaps not with the same eagerness and the same use of words, but always with the same desire for exclusivity in the occupation of power.

From these phoney contrapositions, from these meaningless diatribes, one can only get out through a factual analysis of what politics has been and still is. Some statements by commentators and sharp critics of Western society help us in this regard.

Ambrose Bierce in *The Devil's Dictionary* offers two definitions of politics:

1. "A means of livelihood affected by the more degraded portion of our criminal class."
2. "A strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles. The conduct of public affairs for private advantage."

As a journalist, he constantly had before his eyes the American system of dividing up the resources (the ‘spoils system’) through which the winning party grabbed jobs and bribes for its followers and supporters.

Another American journalist, H. L. Mencken qualified politicians as:

“Men who, at some time or other, have compromised with their honour, either by swallowing their convictions or by whooping for what they believe to be untrue.”

In Europe, Paul Valéry in his collection of writings *Regards sur le monde actuel*, 1931, rightly remarked that

“La politique fut d’abord l’art d’empêcher les gens de se mêler dans ce qui le regarde.” (Politics was from the beginning the artifice of preventing people from attending what concerns them).

This is very reminiscent of another way of looking at politics that we owe to the sharp tongue of Groucho Marx:

“Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies.”

And one could go on with even more desecrating and devastating quotes in which politics appears as a tool to generate hatred among people and to push them to commit heinous acts (genocides, persecutions, mass expulsions, etc.).

If all this was and is still true, then how do we explain and justify the fact that many, especially among those who claim to be progressive and enlightened, still continue to have a miraculous vision of politics, to want to do politics and encourage everyone to get involved in politics as if it were really an indispensable and useful endeavour and

not a criminal activity and a colossal mockery? Perhaps it is because even sensible people are not clear about what politics really is. If so, then there is a need

(a) to produce a more exact and penetrating definition of 'politics' and

(b) for those who want to engage in a movement of renewal, a more exciting, convincing and, above all, meaningful personal and social commitment must be envisaged that will lead them beyond politics.

Future. In order to invent a future of radical renewal, it is necessary to have a thorough knowledge of the past, and the past makes us discover interesting and at the same time disturbing parallels that show the recurrence of certain undesirable historical phenomena. This repetition of the most negative historical events is only possible because those who ignore history end up making the same mistakes again and again, as aptly remarked by George Santayana when he stated:

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."
(*The Life of Reason*, 1905)

The religious sects that fought for the affirmation of the true faith, have not disappeared, they have only changed their name, they are called political parties. The cultural monopoly that manipulated brains and promoted obscurantism did not end with the Catholic Church, it just changed hands: it is now the prerogative of the Nation State and its Ministry of Destruction (of brains). The so-called religious wars in which people wanted to impose their own vision of faith and life on everyone have not ended, but rather multiplied, as world wars, tribal struggles, national conflicts, in other words, political wars.

In short, we have moved from clericalism to secularism, from the altar in church to the altar of the fatherland, from illusions created by religion to illusions created by politics. Those who have noticed this can only come to the following conclusion that updates an old formulation and, at the same time, offers a lucid definition of politics:

Politics is the opium of the people

Forget football, television, entertainment; these are often just instruments subordinated to politics and manipulated by politics, which, through politicians, the real scoundrels, acts like an invisible, odourless gas that circulates everywhere and clouds the brains of individuals (deluding, corrupting, misleading, obfuscating, and so on).

For this reason, the construction of the future will be the work of individuals and movements that go beyond politics. Those individuals and movements not only should stand against politics and political ideologies that occupy everyone's brains and direct their behaviour but should already prefigure post-political possible scenarios.

A movement for the liberation of individuals must therefore necessarily go against politics (and thus be post-political) because, if it were a political movement and were successful, it would almost inevitably turn into a political party, thus reintroducing all the old filth and the usual shenanigans.

Hence, the fight against State oppression and manipulation, being the State the supreme exponent of politics, should not be a political battle but a struggle for the assertion of one's civil rights, a network of human beings aiming at asserting their civil rights (to liberty, autonomy, self-determination, or whatever terms might be used to characterise a person's freedom of decision).

Instead of invented oppositions, we should go for real variety of lifestyles, voluntarily chosen for oneself and respected in others. In

essence, the goal of the civil rights movement is voluntary parallel societies in open spaces (instead of oppressive territorial states in national chickens fences).

But this is another matter that cannot be addressed here in a few words; and perhaps it is better to let each person discover the new and implement it, day by day, in his/her own life.

Democracy

Majoritarian Representative Democracy is the Super Myth of the last century, when universal suffrage (male-female) was advocated and slowly introduced in many States.

However, the practical experience has given results way below expectations. That is why, currently, in many States less than 50% of the population goes to the poll, making the ballot box an almost empty box.

Critical ideas about democracy, the power of the voting majority, were already expressed by many thinkers and activists in the 19th century, but not many people took notice of them as the experiment was a novelty to be tried and the propaganda of some political parties was overwhelming.

Nowadays, instead of Majoritarian Representative Democracy, there are voices asking for the end of the territorially sovereign State and the birth of voluntary non-territorial communities as they already exist in the virtual world of communication, in the spiritual world of religion and in cultural world of science and knowledge.

Alexis de Tocqueville

Democracy as Tyranny of the Majority (1835)

In this excerpt the author clarifies that democracy is the tyranny of the majority, and that it generates the conditions that transform every human being in a docile subject under the appointed rulers.

Source: Alexis de Tocqueville: *Democracy in America*, 1835, vol I - Part Two: Chapter VII.

I consider this maxim, that in matters of government the majority of a people has the right to do everything, to be impious and detestable, and yet I place all powers in the hands of the majority. Am I contradicting myself?

There is a general law that has been made or at least adopted, not only by the majority of this or that people, but by the majority of mankind. This law is justice.

Justice is therefore the boundary of the law of every people.

A nation is like a jury charged with representing universal society and applying justice, which is its law. Should the jury, which represents society, have more power than society itself, whose laws it applies?

When I refuse to obey an unjust law, I do not deny the right of the majority to command. I simply make appeal from the sovereignty of the people to the sovereignty of mankind. There are some who have not been afraid to say that a people can never outstep the boundaries of justice and reason in matters that only concern itself, and that therefore we should not be afraid to give full power to the majority that represents it. But this is the language of a slave.

What, after all, is a majority taken collectively but a single individual who holds opinions, and, frequently, interests, contrary to another individual, known as the minority? Now, if you admit that a man invested with absolute power can abuse it against his opponents, why should not a majority be liable to the same reproach? Have men changed in character by coming together? Have they become more patient in the face of obstacles by becoming stronger?

For myself, I would not believe it. And the power to do everything, which I refuse to any one of my fellow men, I will never grant to any number of them.

I do not believe that, in order to preserve liberty, it is possible to combine several principles in the same government, in such a way as to set them in real opposition to each other.

The so-called mixed government has always seemed to me like a pipe dream. There is no such thing as a mixed government (in the sense usually given to that word), because, in every society, we end up discovering a principle of action that dominates all the others.

England in the last century, which has been particularly cited as an example of this type of government, was essentially an aristocratic State, although there were significant democratic elements within it.

This was because the laws and customs were such that the aristocracy would always, in the long run, predominate and direct public affairs according to its will.

The error came from the fact that, constantly seeing the interests of the powerful at odds with those of the people, they thought only of the struggle, instead of paying attention to the result of that struggle, which was the important point. When a society comes to have a truly mixed government, that is to say equally divided between opposing principles, it either goes through a revolution or dissolves.

I therefore think that it is always necessary to place somewhere a social power superior to all the others, but I believe that freedom is in jeopardy when this power finds no obstacle to restrain its course and give it time to moderate itself.

Unlimited power seems to me in itself an evil and dangerous thing. Its exercise seems to me to go beyond the competences of any human being, and I see only God as being safely omnipotent, because His wisdom and justice are always equal to His power.

There is therefore no authority on earth, no matter how respectable in itself or invested with such sacred right, that I would want to let act without control and dominate without obstacles. Therefore, whenever I see the power to do everything granted to any authority, whether called people or king, democracy or aristocracy, whether exercised in a monarchy or a republic, I say: there lies the seed of tyranny, and I seek to go and live elsewhere under other laws.

What I most object to in the democratic government as it is organised in the United States is not, as many people in Europe claim, its weakness, but on the contrary its irresistible force. And what I find most repugnant in America is not the extreme freedom that reigns there, but the scant guarantees against tyranny.

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

Democracy (1848)

A masterful analysis of democracy, a scathing critique that has lost none of its relevance or vigour. It contains the famous phrase, made famous by Benjamin Tucker, who used it as the epigraph for his periodical *Liberty*: “Liberty not daughter of order, but the MOTHER of order.”

Source: Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *La solution du problème social*, 1848, extract from Chapter II.

I believe in the existence of the People as I believe in the existence of God. I bow down before its holy will. I submit to any order emanating from it; the word of the People is my law, my strength and my hope. But, according to the precept of Saint Paul, my obedience, to be meritorious, must be reasonable, and what misfortune for me, what ignominy, if, when I believe that I am submitting only to the authority of the People, I were the plaything of a vile charlatan! How then, I beg you, among so many rival apostles, contradictory opin-

ions, obstinate parties, will I recognise the voice, the true voice of the People?

The problem of the sovereignty of the People is the fundamental problem of liberty, equality and fraternity, the principle of social organisation.

Governments and peoples have had no other aim, through the storms of revolutions and the detours of politics, than to establish this sovereignty. Every time they have strayed from this goal, they have fallen into servitude and shame.

It was with this in mind that the Provisional Government convened a National Assembly appointed by all citizens, regardless of wealth and capacity: universal suffrage seemed to it to be the closest expression of the sovereignty of the People. Thus it is assumed, first, that the People can be consulted; second, that it can respond; third, that its will can be authentically ascertained; and, finally, that the government founded on the expressed will of the People is the only legitimate government.

Such is, in particular, the claim of DEMOCRACY, which presents itself as the form of government that best reflects the sovereignty of the People. Now, if I prove that democracy, like monarchy, is only a symbol of sovereignty; that it does not answer any of the questions raised by this idea; that it can, for example, neither establish the authenticity of the acts it attributes to the People, nor say what the aim and purpose of society is. If I prove that democracy, far from being the most perfect of governments, is the negation of the sovereignty of the People, and the principle of its ruin, it will be demonstrated, in fact and in law, that democracy is nothing more than a constitutional arbitrariness succeeding another constitutional arbitrariness; that it has no scientific value, and that it must be seen only as a preparation for the REPUBLIC [*], one and indivisible.

It is important to enlighten public opinion on this point as soon as possible and to dispel any illusions.

I.

The People, a collective being, I almost said a being of reason, does not speak in the material sense of the word.

The People, like God, has no eyes to see, no ears to hear, no mouth to speak. Who knows if it is endowed with a kind of soul, a divinity immanent in the masses, as some philosophers suppose a soul of the world, and which, at certain moments, moves and drives them; or if the reason of the People is nothing other than pure idea, the most abstract, the most comprehensive, the most free of all individual form, as other philosophers claim that God is nothing but the order in the universe, an abstraction? I do not enter into these investigations of high psychology: I ask as a practical man in what way this soul, reason or will of the People, such as it is, arises, so to speak, outside itself, and manifests itself?

Who can serve as its organ? Who has the right to say to others: It is through me that the People speaks? How can I believe that someone who, from the height of a stool, harangues five hundred applauding individuals, is the organ of the People? How does the election of citizens, even their unanimous suffrage, have the virtue of conferring this kind of privilege, of serving as an intermediary for the People? And when you show me, as if in a secret circle, nine hundred people thus chosen by their fellow citizens, why should I believe that these nine hundred delegates, who do not agree among themselves, are inspired by the will of the People? And to be honest, how can the law that they are going to make be binding on me?.....

Here is a president or a board of directors; personification, symbol or fiction of national sovereignty: the first power of the State.

Here is a chamber; two chambers, organs, one of the interest of conservation, the other of the instinct for development: the second power of the State.

Here is a press, eloquent, seasoned, indefatigable, which, every morning, pours out the millions of ideas that swarm in the millions of citizens' brains: the third power of the State.

The executive power is action; the chambers are deliberation; the press is opinion.

Which of these powers represents the People? Or, if you say that it is all of them together that represent the People, how is it that they do not agree with one another?

Put royalty in the place of the presidency, and it will be the same thing: my criticism falls equally on monarchy and democracy.

[...]

Does the People, which is sometimes said to have risen as one, also think as one? Does it reflect? Does it reason? Does it conclude? Does it have a memory, an imagination, ideas? If the People are indeed sovereign, it is because they think; if they think, they undoubtedly have their own way of thinking and of formulating their thoughts. How, then, does the People think? What are the forms of popular reason? Does it proceed by categories? Does it use syllogism, induction, analysis, antinomy or analogy? Is it for Aristotle or for Hegel? You must explain all this; otherwise, your respect for the sovereignty of the People is nothing but an absurd fetishism. You might as well worship a stone.

In its meditations, does the People draw on experience? Does it take account of its memories, or is its progress one of constantly producing

new ideas? How does it reconcile respect for its traditions with the needs of its development? How does it move from one hypothesis to the testing of another? What is the law of its transitions and its enjambments? What drives it, determines it on the path of progress? Why this mobility, this inconstancy? I need to know, otherwise the law that you impose on me in the name of the People ceases to be authentic: it is no longer law, it is violence.

Does the People always think? And if it does not always think, how do you account for the intermittences of its thought? Supposing the People could be represented, what would its representatives do during these intermittences? ... Does the People sometimes slumber, like Jupiter in the arms of Juno? When does it dream? When is it awake? You must enlighten me on all these matters; otherwise, the power that you exercise by delegation of the People is only interim, and the duration of the interim being unknown, this power is usurped: you are inclined towards tyranny. If the People think, if they reflect, if they reason, sometimes *a priori*, according to the rules of pure reason, sometimes *a posteriori* on the basis of experience, they run the risk of making mistakes. It is no longer enough, then, for me to accept the will of the People as law, that its authenticity be demonstrated to me; this will must be legitimate. Who will sort through the ideas and fantasies of the People? To whom shall we appeal to correct its possibly erroneous, and therefore despotic, will?

On this basis I pose this dilemma:

If the People can err, one of two things is true. Either error is as respectable in it like truth, and it has the right to be obeyed in whatever it wants, even if it is wrong. In that case, the People is a supremely immoral being, since it can at the same time think evil, will it and do it.

On the contrary, should the People be reprimanded for its mistakes? There would therefore be, in some cases, a duty for a government to

resist the People! Who will dare to tell it: You are wrong? Who will be able to set it straight and make it toe the line?

But what am I saying? If the People are liable to fail, what becomes of their sovereignty? Is it not obvious that the will of the People should be taken into consideration all the less the more formidable its consequences, and that the true principle of all politics, the guarantee of the security of nations, is to consult the People only to distrust it: any inspiration from it being capable of concealing an immense peril as well as an immense success; and its will being nothing more than suicidal thinking?

[...]

Does the People think of the abolition of octrois, of progressive taxation, of national workshops, of agricultural banks, of paper money? Or does it not rather think that to impose extraordinary taxes on wealth is to kill wealth; that instead of extending the powers of the State, they should be restricted; that the organisation of labour is none other than the organisation of competition, and that the greatest service that can be rendered to agriculture, instead of creating a special bank for it, is to sever all its relations with the bank?

Does the People favour direct elections or two-stage elections? A representation of 900 or 450?

Is the People communist, phalansterian, neo-Christian, utilitarian or not? Because, after all, there is a bit of all of these in the People. Is it for Pythagoras, Morelly, Campanella or good old Icarus? For the Trinity or the Triad? Is it not the People who speaks, in these harangues that say nothing, in these posters that contradict each other, and in these acts of the Government conceived in the opposite direction to that of February 24? Does the People ask for bread and circuses, or for freedom? Did the People make the revolution only in order to deny it immediately, or does he intend to pursue it?

Now if the People, at all times in history, have thought, expressed, wanted and done a multitude of opposing things; if, even today, among so many opinions which divide it, it is impossible for it to choose one without repudiating another and consequently without contradicting itself, what can you expect me to think of its reason, its morality, the justice of his actions? What can I expect from its representatives? And what proof of authenticity will you give me in favour of an opinion, which I cannot at the same moment claim for the contrary opinion?

What I admire in the midst of the confusion of ideas is that faith in the sovereignty of the People, far from failing, seems, through this very confusion, to be reaching its climax. In this obstinacy of the multitude to believe in the intelligence that lives in it, I already see a kind of manifestation of the People affirming itself, like Jehovah, and saying: I AM.

I cannot therefore deny, I am forced to confess, on the contrary, the existence of the sovereignty of the People. But beyond this first affirmation, when it comes to moving from the subject of the thought to its object, when it is a question, in other words, of applying the criterion to the acts of the Government, let me be told where the People is.

In principle, therefore, I recognise that the people exist, that they are sovereign, that they affirm themselves in the consciousness of the masses. But, so far, nothing proves to me that they can perform an act of external sovereignty, that an external revelation of the People is possible. For, in the presence of the domination of prejudices, the contradiction of ideas and interests, the variability of opinion, the enthusiasms of the multitude, I will always ask what establishes the authenticity and legitimacy of such a revelation. And this is what democracy cannot answer.

[...]

Conclusion

[But] democracy is the idea of the State extended to infinity; it is the merging of all farms into a single farm; of all industrial enterprises into a single industrial enterprise; of all trading houses into a single trading house; of all partnerships into a single partnership. It is therefore not the infinite decrease of overheads, as it should be under the Republic; but the infinite increase of overheads...

Thirty days of dictatorship have exposed the impotence and inanity of democracy. Everything it had of old memories, philanthropic prejudices, communist instincts, discordant passions, sentimental phrases, anti-liberal tendencies, in one month, has been spent. It borrowed from utopia and routine; it consulted empirics and charlatans; it reached out to experienced stockjobbers; it listened to the preaching of the learned; it received holy water from His Lordship. Now, in everything that democracy has proposed, decreed, delivered and fulminated over the past month, who would dare to say that the People has ever recognised itself?

I conclude by repeating my question: The sovereignty of the People is the starting point of social science: how, then, is this sovereignty established, how is it expressed? We cannot take a step forward until we have solved the problem.

Of course, I repeat, so that there can be no misunderstanding. I am far from denying the workers, the proletarians, or even the bourgeois, the enjoyment of their political rights. I only maintain that the way in which it is claimed that they can enjoy them is a mystification. Universal suffrage is the symbol of the Republic, it is not its reality.

Also see with what indifference the working masses welcome this universality of suffrage! You cannot get them to go and register. While philosophers praise universal suffrage, popular common sense laughs at universal suffrage!

The Republic is the organisation by which all opinions and all activities remain free, the People, through the very divergence of opinions and wills, think and act as one. In the Republic, every citizen, by doing what he wants and only what he wants, participates directly in legislation and government, just as he participates in the production and circulation of wealth. There every citizen is king; for he has the fullness of power, he reigns and governs.

The Republic is a positive anarchy. It is neither liberty subjected TO order as in the constitutional monarchy, nor liberty imprisoned BY order, as the Provisional Government understands it. It is freedom delivered from all its shackles, from superstition, prejudice, sophistry, profiteering and imposed authority.

It is reciprocal liberty, not limited liberty; liberty not the daughter of order, but the MOTHER of order.

That is the programme of modern societies. Let democracy be absolved for having, in a way, formulated it through the spectacle of its contradictions.

Note

[*] For Proudhon the term Republic means that each individual decides autonomously about his/her life and participates directly in the collective decision-making process regarding the life of the community to which he/she voluntarily belongs, without any kind of imposition.

Lysander Spooner

Majorities and Minorities

(1867)

A radical critique of majoritarian democracy that, almost always, is nothing else than the dominion of a cunning minority over the large mass of the population. Besides that, as rightly pointed out by the author: "Majorities and minorities cannot rightfully be taken at all into account in deciding questions of justice."

Source: Lysander Spooner, *No Treason*, 1867.

What, then, is implied in a government's resting on consent? If it be said that the consent of the strongest party, in a nation, is all that is necessary to justify the establishment of a government that shall have authority over the weaker party, it may be answered that the most despotic governments in the world rest upon that very principle, viz.: the consent of the strongest party. These governments are formed simply by the consent or agreement of the strongest party, that they will act in concert in subjecting the weaker party to their dominion. And the despotism, and tyranny, and injustice of these governments

consist in that very fact. Or at least that is the first step in their tyranny; a necessary preliminary to all the oppressions that are to follow. If it be said that the consent of the most numerous party, in a nation, is sufficient to justify the establishment of their power over the less numerous party, it may be answered:

First. That two men have no more natural right to exercise any kind of authority over one, than one has to exercise the same authority over two. A man's natural rights are his own, against the whole world; and any infringement of them is equally a crime, whether committed by one man, or by millions; whether committed by one man, calling himself a robber, (or by any other name indicating his true character), or by millions, calling themselves a government.

Second. It would be absurd for the most numerous party to talk of establishing a government over the less numerous party, unless the former were also the strongest, as well as the most numerous; for it is not to be supposed that the strongest party would ever submit to the rule of the weaker party, merely because the latter were the most numerous. And as a matter of fact, it is perhaps never that governments are established by the most numerous party. They are usually, if not always, established by the less numerous party; their superior strength consisting of their superior wealth, intelligence, and ability to act in concert.

Third. Our Constitution does not profess to have been established simply by the majority; but by "the people;" the minority, as much as the majority.

Fourth. If our fathers, in 1776, had acknowledged the principle that a majority had the right to rule the minority, we should never have become a nation; for they were in a small minority, as compared with those who claimed the right to rule over them.

Fifth. Majorities, as such, afford no guarantees for justice. They are men of the same nature as minorities. They have the same passions

for fame, power, and money, as minorities; and are liable and likely to be equally — perhaps more than equally, because more boldly — rapacious, tyrannical and unprincipled, if intrusted with power. There is no more reason, then, why a man should either sustain, or submit to, the rule of the majority, than of a minority. Majorities and minorities cannot rightfully be taken at all into account in deciding questions of justice. And all talk about them, in matters of government, is mere absurdity. Men are dunces for uniting to sustain any government, or any laws, except those in which they are all agreed. And nothing but force and fraud compel men to sustain any other. To say that majorities, as such, have a right to rule minorities, is equivalent to saying that minorities have, and ought to have, no rights, except such as majorities please to allow them.

Sixth. It is not improbable that many or most of the worst of governments — although established by force, and by a few, in the first place — come, in time, to be supported by a majority. But if they do, this majority is composed, in large part, of the most ignorant, superstitious, timid, dependent, servile, and corrupt portions of the people; of those who have been over-awed by the power, intelligence, wealth, and arrogance; of those who have been deceived by the frauds; and of those who have been corrupted by the inducements, of the few who really constitute the government. Such majorities, very likely, could be found in half, perhaps nine-tenths, of all the countries on the globe. What do they prove? Nothing but the tyranny and corruption of the very governments that have reduced so large portions of the people to their present ignorance, servility, degradation, and corruption; an ignorance, servility, degradation, and corruption that are best illustrated in the simple fact that they do sustain governments that have so oppressed, degraded, and corrupted them. They do nothing towards proving that the governments themselves are legitimate; or that they ought to be sustained, or even endured, by those who understand their true character. The mere fact, therefore, that a government chances to be sustained by a majority, of itself

proves nothing that is necessary to be proved, in order to know whether such government should be sustained, or not.

Seventh. The principle that the majority have a right to rule the minority, practically resolves all government into a mere contest between two bodies of men, as to which of them shall be masters, and which of them slaves; a contest, that — however bloody — can, in the nature of things, never be finally closed, so long as man refuses to be a slave.

Pyotr Kropotkin

About elections (1880)

A devastating analysis of the electoral farce and the absurdity of representative democracy.

Source: Pyotr Kropotkin, *Le Gouvernement représentatif*, *Le Révolté*, 6 Mars 1880.

The vices of the Representative Assemblies will not surprise us, in fact, if we reflect, even for a moment, on how they recruit their members and how they operate.

Do I have to draw here the picture, so sickening, so profoundly repugnant, and one we are all familiar with — the picture of what happens at elections? In bourgeois England and democratic Switzerland, in France as in the United States, in Germany as in the Argentine Republic, is not this sad comedy the same everywhere?

Should we tell you how the agents and electoral committees ‘forge,’ ‘abduct’ and *canvass* for an election (the same slang used by the

pickpockets!), sowing promises left and right, political promises in meetings and personal promises to individuals. How they penetrate into families, flattering the mother, the child, caressing, if necessary, the asthmatic dog or cat of 'the voter.' How they spread out into the cafés, converting voters and entrapping the most silent by engaging them in discussions, like those crooked chums who draw you into the game of 'three cards.' How does the candidate, after playing hard about his availability, finally appears among his 'dear constituents,' with a benevolent smile, a modest look, a cajoling voice — just like the old shrew who rents rooms in London, trying to win over a tenant with her sweet smile and angelic gaze? Should we list the mendacious programmes — all mendacious, whether they are merely opportunist or socialist-revolutionary — in which the candidate himself, even the one of modest intelligence and with some knowledge of the House of Parliament, has no more faith than in the predictions of the *Old Moore's Almanach*? [1] And yet he defends that programme with a verve, a sonorous voice, a sentiment, worthy of a madman or a fair-ground actor. It is no wonder that popular comedy is no longer content to make Bertrand and Robert Macaire [2] simple crooks, Tartuffes [3], or bank robbers, and adds to these excellent qualities that of 'representatives of the people,' in search of votes and pockets to pick.

Should we finally talk about the election expenses here? But all the newspapers give us enough information in this respect. Or reproduce the list of expenses of an electoral agent, which includes roasts of lamb, flannel waistcoats and sedative water, sent by the sympathetic candidate 'to these dear children' of his voters. Need we also mention the cost of boiled potatoes and rotten eggs — 'to confuse the opposing party' — which is listed in the United States in some electoral budgets, or the cost of slanderous posters and 'last-minute tricks,' which already play such an honourable role in our European elections?

And when the government intervenes, with its ‘positions,’ its hundred thousand ‘positions’ offered to the highest bidder, its rags that are called ‘spits,’ its tobacco shops, its promised high protection for places of vice and gambling, its shameless press, its informers, its crooks, its judges and its agents...

No, enough! Let’s leave this mud alone, let’s not stir it up! Let’s simply ask this question: Is there a single human passion, the vilest, most abject of all, that is not brought into play on election day? Fraud, slander, platitudes, hypocrisy, lies, all the filth that lies at the bottom of the human beast — that is the wonderful spectacle that a country offers us as soon as the election period begins.

It is like that, and it cannot be otherwise, as long as there are elections to choose masters. Imagine a group of workers who convene in the same room, individuals equal among themselves, who one fine day get it into their heads the idea of choosing their own rulers — and it will be just the same thing as ever. They will no longer be distributing roast lamb; they will be distributing adulation and lies — and there will be no shortage of boiled potatoes. What better harvest can we expect when we auction off our most sacred rights?

What, in fact, is asked of voters? To find a person to whom they can entrust the right to legislate on everything that is most sacred to them: their rights, their children, their work! So why be surprised if two or three thousand Robert Macaire turn up to compete for these royal rights? We are looking for a person to whom we can entrust — along with a few others drawn from the same lottery — the right to lose our children at twenty-one or nineteen, if he sees it more convenient; to lock them up for three years, or even for ten if he prefers, in the putrid atmosphere of the barracks; to have them slaughtered, whenever and wherever he wants, by starting a war that the people of the country will be forced to join once it has begun. That person, in association with others, will be able to close the universities or open them as he pleases; force parents to send their children there or

refuse them entry. Like a new Louis XIV, he will be able to favour an industry or kill it if he prefers; sacrifice the North for the South or the South for the North; annex a province or give it away. He will dispose of something like three billion a year, which he will snatch from the mouths of the workers. He will still have the royal prerogative of appointing the executive power, that is to say a power which, as long as it agrees with the Parliament, may be more despotic and tyrannical than the former monarchy. For, if Louis XVI commanded only a few tens of thousands of officials, the elected power would command hundreds; and if the king could steal a few paltry bags of money from the State coffers, the constitutional minister of our day can 'honestly' pocket millions with a single stock market move.

And would we be surprised to see all the passions involved, when looking for a master who will be invested with such power! When Spain put its vacant throne up for auction, were we surprised to see freebooters flocking from all over? As long as this sale of royal powers remains, nothing can be reformed: the election will be a vanity fair and a trade of consciences.

[...]

But what is being asked of the voters nowadays? Ten, twenty or even a hundred thousand men, who do not know each other at all, who have never seen each other, never met to discuss any common issue, are expected to agree on the choice of one man. And this man will not be sent to present a specific case or to defend a resolution concerning a particular issue. No, he must be good at everything, at legislating on anything, and his decision will be law. The original nature of delegation has been completely distorted; it has become absurd.

This omniscient being that we are looking for today does not exist. But suppose there is an honest citizen who combines certain conditions of probity and common sense with a little education. Will he be

elected? Obviously not. There are barely twenty people in his constituency who are aware of his excellent qualities. He has never sought the limelight, he despises the usual methods by which attention might be drawn to his name. He will never receive more than 200 votes. He will not even be nominated as a candidate, but the choice will fall on a lawyer or a journalist, a smooth talker or a hack writer who will carry into parliament the ways of the courts and of the newspapers and will add himself as one of the herds that vote for the government or for the opposition. Or it will be a businessman, anxious of getting the title of Member of Parliament, who will stop at nothing to acquire notoriety, even if it costs him 10,000 francs. And where the customs are eminently democratic, as in the United States, where committees are easily formed and counterbalance the influence of wealth, the worst type of all will be appointed: the professional politician, the abject being who has become the scourge of the great Republic, the man who makes a business out of politics and who practises it according to the methods of big business — lobbying, drumbeating, corruption.

Change the electoral system as you like, introduce the secret ballot, hold two-stage elections like in Switzerland (I'm talking about the preparatory meetings), change as much as you can, apply the system with the greatest possible equality, cut and recut the colleges — the intrinsic faults of the institution will remain. Whoever manages to win more than half the votes (with very few exceptions) among the victimized parties will always be a nonentity, a man without convictions but anxious to please everyone.

This is why, as Herbert Spencer [4] has already pointed out, parliaments are generally so poorly composed. The House, he says in his *Introduction*, is always inferior to the average person of the country, not only in terms of morality but also in terms of intelligence. A smart country diminishes itself in its representation. Nevertheless, the people would always swear that those are the best possible representatives. As for the integrity of MPs, we know what it is worth. Just

read what former ministers who knew and appreciated them have to say about it.

What a shame there are no special trains so that voters can see their 'Chamber' at work. They would soon become disgusted. The ancients would make their slaves drunk so that their children would learn to abhor drunkenness. Parisians, go to the Chamber to see your representatives and be disgusted by representative government.

To this rabble of nonentities the people cedes all its rights, excepting the right, from time to time, to remove them and to install others in their places. But as the new assembly, appointed by the same system and charged with the same mission, will be as bad as the previous one, the great mass ends up losing interest in the comedy and confines itself to a bit of patching, accepting a few new candidates who manage to impose themselves.

But if the electoral process is already marred by an irreformable constitutional flaw, what can be said about the way in which the assembly fulfils its mandate? Just think about it for a minute, and you will immediately see the futility of the task you are imposing on it.

Your representative will have to express an opinion, cast a vote, on the whole infinitely varied series of questions that arise in this formidable machine — the centralised State.

He will have to vote on the tax on dogs and the reform of university education, without ever having set foot in the University or knowing what a country dog is. He will have to decide on the advantages of the Gras rifle and on the location to be chosen for the State stud farms. He will vote on phylloxera, guano, tobacco, primary education and urban sanitation; on Cochin China and Guyana, on chimney pipes and the Paris Observatory. He, who had only ever seen soldiers on parade, would distribute army corps, and without ever having seen an Arab, he would make and unmake the Muslim Land Code in Algeria. He would vote for the shako or the kepi according to his

wife's tastes. He would protect sugar and sacrifice wheat. He will kill the vines believing he is protecting them; and he will vote for reforestation over pasture and protect the pasture from the forest. He will be well versed in banking. He will kill a canal for a railway, without knowing too much about which part of France they are in. He will add new articles to the Penal Code without ever having consulted it. An all-knowing and all-powerful Proteus, today a soldier, tomorrow a pig farmer, by turns banker, academician, sewer cleaner, doctor, astronomer, drug manufacturer, broker or trader, according to the agenda of the House, he will never hesitate. Accustomed in his role as lawyer, journalist or speaker at public meetings to talking about what he doesn't know, he will vote on all these issues, with the sole difference that in his newspaper he amused the concierge with his nonsense, that in court he kept the sleepy judges and jurors awake with his voice, while in the House of Parliament his opinion will become law for thirty or forty million inhabitants.

And since it is materially impossible for him to have an opinion on the thousand subjects on which his vote will make the law, he will gossip with his neighbour, he will spend his time in the refreshment bar, he will write letters to warm up the enthusiasm of his 'dear voters,' while a minister reads a report full of figures lined up for the occasion by his administrative functionary; and when it comes the moment of voting, he will vote for or against the report, depending on the signal from his party leader.

Thus, a question of food for the pigs or equipment for the soldier will be, in both the government and opposition benches, merely a question of parliamentary skirmishing. They will not be wondering whether the pigs need more food, or whether the soldiers are not already overloaded like camels in the desert — the only question that will interest them will be whether an affirmative vote will profit their party. The parliamentary battle will be fought on the back of the soldier, the farmer, the industrial worker, in the interest of the government or of the opposition.

Notes

[1] *Old Moore's Almanach*, an almanac published for the first time in 1764 and still available every year in November.

[2] Robert Macaire is a fictional character, an unscrupulous swindler created by the playwright Benjamin Antier in the 1830s. It was brought to success by Frédérick Lemaître who transformed a semi-tragic character in a comic figure.

[3] *Tartuffe*, or *The Impostor*, or *The Hypocrite*, is a theatrical comedy by Molière, first performed in 1664.

[4] Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) was an English philosopher, sociologist and anthropologist who expressed critical ideas about the State in his essays *The Man versus the State* (1884).

Émile Gautier

Parliamentarism

(1885)

A fierce and accurate critique of the parliamentary system as deception and illusion.

Source: Émile Gautier, *Propos Anarchistes*, Paris, 1885.

In France and elsewhere, there is a prejudice that is unfortunately still widespread today. It is the belief that the parliamentary system is the guardian of freedoms and popular rights.

[...]

Parliamentarianism consists precisely in the fact that the supposedly sovereign people are called upon from time to time, at intervals they have no right to determine themselves, and under certain conditions imposed on them, to designate, by mass voting, the people who will be charged with exercising their own sovereignty, that is, thinking, willing, speaking and acting in the place of the people themselves.

Once their names have been drawn from ballot boxes, these representatives of the people are supposed to represent all voters, even those who did not vote for them. They have the right and the power to make laws that are binding on everyone, to organise society as they see fit, to distribute positions and offices, to levy taxes, to declare war on a neighbouring nation or to make peace, in short, to call the shots throughout the country. They could even, if they so desired, proclaim themselves irremovable and abolish universal suffrage, from which this extraordinary power derives, without their constituents having any say in the matter, since they represent them, that is, replace them.

[...]

Under such conditions, in the face of such inconsistencies and such monstrous illogicalities ... we believe that the time has come for the perpetually deceived and betrayed voters to desert the ballot box and go on strike.

It is not that we want, as we have been accused with an insistence bordering on bad faith, to advise the people to throw in the towel, retreat into their homes and do nothing at all. We are in favour of abstention, that is true: but this abstention is limited exclusively to voting and in no way implies an obligation not to participate in the electoral campaign. On the contrary, we believe that this will be an excellent opportunity to present our ideas, develop our programme, point out the abuses we suffer and combat the prejudices that delay their elimination. We will not abstain from revolutionary propaganda, but, consistent with ourselves, with our criticisms and our aspirations, we will refrain from placing in the ballot box a ballot paper which our masters are free to ignore and which, therefore, seems to us to amount to abdication.

Is it impossible to organise the proletariat into a formidable party? Is it possible to carry out fruitful socialist agitation only within the

vicious circle of electoral propaganda? One would really think so, listening to our opponents. But then we would have to despair of the emancipation of the people if their intelligence, energy and will were to be confined within such narrow limits, if their intermittent sovereignty could be thus, without recourse, sparingly doled out at the whim of the caste that has improvised itself as the irresponsible manager of their affairs!

We have a higher opinion of His Majesty the People. We believe that it is possible, without pushing them further into the lottery of suffrage, to enlighten the people about their true interests, to make them aware of their misery, their servitude, their rights and their strength. We believe that it is possible to organise the dispossessed masses with a view to their emancipation, without subjecting them to new leaders, to whom they would entrust their salvation without guarantee or assent. Let us begin by educating them, let us make them touch their bleeding wounds with their own fingers, and show them the remedies: then, and only then, better than the deputies and the party leaders, they will do what needs to be done. If, on the contrary, they defer to those who have sought and obtained their trust with their votes, they will fall asleep in blind tranquillity, naively relying on their representatives, who will have become their masters. The advent of the true Republic, that is to say, of the social Revolution, will be further delayed, nothing will change in France, there will only be a few more privileged people.

[...]

And what, after all, is an assembly but a crowd of nobodies and mediocrities, in which the undecided, those who have neither enough knowledge, nor enough energy, nor enough conviction to form their own opinions, dominate by numbers and impose on their colleagues and on the country their fears or their capricious obsessions, turned into decrees and laws? Let us not be mistaken: it is indeed these

selfish cowards, these colourless sceptics, who were once reviled as 'swamp toads,' who, in all circumstances, whether they abstain or vote, carry the majority, to such an extent that all the efforts of the convinced and the cunning are devoted solely to winning their temporary but decisive support. It is in reality this herd that governs!

It really seems as if election is equivalent to supernatural consecration, a licence for omniscience and infallibility, as if the majority, or even the unanimity, of votes could turn an ignorant person into a scholar, a fool into an intelligent man, or a rogue into an honest man! Quite the contrary is true. What does it matter if someone is a fool or ambitious, as long as they remain ordinary citizens, confined to the narrow horizon of private life? They can hardly harm anyone but themselves. And although, thanks to the countless laws made or upheld against citizens by the members of parliament who represent them, the equality enshrined in our constitutions and on our monuments is nothing but an illusion, if anyone dares to encroach too much on the rights of his neighbours, the latter will, in most cases, know how to defend himself. But once the fool or the ambitious are appointed deputies, things take a different turn and a different consequence. From being insignificant, the elected representatives become dangerous, for now stupidity, ignorance, greed and ambition become, if not a public calamity, at least a permanent threat to everyone. And this because they are served by one-eight hundredth of sovereignty, by parliamentary inviolability and the prestige of power, by the fetishism all too familiar to crowds long enslaved, and by the respectful partiality of the established authorities.

Thus, the circle of legislators is nothing more than a closed arena where personal greed and vanity run rampant, where energy ready for action is fragmented, crushed and drained away for the benefit of narrow interests and petty passions. Where national needs are transformed into Byzantine chatter and endless, fruitless discussions, where the intoxication of grandeur and what has so aptly been called the corruption of the assembly soon turn the most insignificant char-

acters into formidable enemies, devoted to the first leader who is somewhat skilled in the art of sophistry and malicious intrigue.

[...]

Parliamentary government is as intolerable and irrational a form of despotism as monarchical government. It matters little to us whether we have one master or five hundred: will we be less legislated, less decreed, less taxed, less enslaved, less exploited? Did being owned by several co-owners lighten the burden of servitude for the ancient slave?....

Suppose elective monarchy, as in the time of the Barbarian invasions. Would it cease to be monarchy? Would it lose its odious character? Suppose this elective monarchy represented, not by a single man, but by two potentates, as in the Roman Empire under the Caesars of decadence. Would this division of authority amount to the emancipation of the people? Instead of two heads of State, put three, five, ten, a hundred, two hundred, three hundred and sixty-three or seven hundred and fifty-seven — the number is apparently irrelevant — and you will have a Triumvirate, a Directory, a Supreme Council, a Senate, a Parliament, a Congress, a ‘Statistical Committee,’ whatever you want, but always dictatorship, always royalty, always tyranny! The division of society into two unequal and hierarchical castes will remain: on one side, the rulers, the legislators, the sovereigns, the bosses; on the other, the ruled, the subjects, the customers... Different interests, antagonistic interests! Those who command cannot think or act like those who obey. It is inevitable! No flag or label can change that. In this respect, monarchy and republic are two sides of the same coin. Unfortunately, with an assembly as with a king, force is always on the side of those who command...

According to an old proverb, which, like all proverbs, is untrue, ‘the most embarrassed person is always the one holding the tail of the frying pan.’ And what about the one being fried? Shall we not

mention him at all? It is not a question of putting the tail of the frying pan into new hands for a people who have been roasting for centuries: it is a question of turning the frying pan over and putting out the fire. It is not a question of choosing tyrants carefully, or increasing their number, it is a question of abolishing tyranny!

[...]

Let us go further. Not only is parliamentarianism no better than monarchy: it is worse, because it is anonymous, and therefore irresponsible, inaccessible to the blows of justice as well as those of vengeance, implacable, deaf to arguments and prayers. A man is only a man, after all. He can be moved to pity, frightened, at least, and, in desperation, punished. Charles I, Louis XVI, and the Duke of Berry know something about this; and, having escaped Soloviev's revolver and the explosion in the Winter Palace, the Tsar of all Russia can also serve as an example and testimony. Try softening or punishing an Assembly! We have sometimes seen them panic, but then they became ferocious...

Furthermore, an Assembly is necessarily foreign and hostile to the country it is supposed to represent. 'Ah, if only the king knew...' was the lament once uttered by poor devils crushed by arbitrary rule and gnawed by abuse, in their humble and submissive naivety. But the king did not know, he could not know... Why? Because he was king. The same is true today: parliamentarians do not know, they cannot know, because they are kings, because they are parliamentarians. "One must, — said Proudhon, — have lived in that isolation called an Assembly to understand how men who are most completely ignorant of the conditions and wishes of a country are almost always those who represent and govern it." It may happen, by chance, that we come across an intelligent king, even honest, who is open to considerations of humanity, logic, general utility, and respect for the opinion that influences individuals. (*)

(*) Let no one dare to infer from our words that we are disguised monarchists or shameful Caesarists! The way in which we have posed the question would undoubtedly dispense us from providing further explanations in this regard, but we are dealing with adversaries whose perfidy knows no bounds, and it is perhaps not superfluous to warn our readers against certain slanderous insinuations that have been levelled with little restraint in recent times against socialists who have the misfortune not to accept obediently all orders and all forms of discipline.

We no longer wish to be governed at all, neither by a king nor an emperor nor by a parliament. Even if we were to assume that those in power were honest people, incapable of abusing their power and motivated by the best of intentions, the mere fact that this sword of Damocles remained suspended, threatening, above our heads would be enough to give us the right to protest and to raise the banner of revolt once again. It is not enough that no one is oppressed or exploited; no one must be able to be oppressed or exploited. Our enemy is always our master: whether an individual or a collective, we hold the same hatred for them and we want the same war against them, without truce or mercy!

But we may well say that it is easier to find one honest and intelligent man than to find three or four hundred. There is even reason to suppose that if these three or four hundred phoenixes were to come together, all their fine qualities would go up in smoke...

Moreover, as the delegate of the Alliance of Revolutionary Socialist Groups so aptly put it, "misery for misery, better still is that which, relying solely on brute force, at least leaves intact the right to protest, rather than giving this misery a legal character, thanks to the hypocrisy of which oppression can only be perpetuated."

A parliament that combines these qualities and meets these conditions will never exist! Here, power is no longer in the hands of one

man, that is to say, of a being who is most often evil, vicious, corrupt, selfish, but who can also sometimes be wise, skilful, honest and charitable. It is in the hands of a collective being, that is inevitably without reason, without character and without heart. It is in the hands of an average, that is to say, of a power that is fluctuating, idiotic and false, like all averages, so that the destiny of a great nation such as France, delivered, without counterweight, to what is perhaps the least vigorous and least sensible element of that nation, depends, in the final analysis, on the shift of a vote, on the good or bad digestion of one person, on domestic satisfactions or the marital misadventures of some other! And this is not a paradox, it is objective history, it is the true reality!

[...]

Parliamentarianism means despotism, with the inexpiable aggravation that despotism is complicated here by all the vagaries of a lottery and all the threats of irresponsibility!

[...]

Let us then break with a harmful tradition, with a foolish illusion.

No! The ballot paper, that illusory satisfaction with which the credulity of the masses is deceived — no, the ballot paper is not a civic right; it is not a weapon of liberation, nor a guarantee of emancipation and progress. For too long we have trailed behind countless naive people, whose faith and hope are so strong that even the most repeated and bitter disappointments do not discourage them, who still believe in ‘good MPs,’ just as the slaves of yesteryear longed for a ‘good master,’ and who console themselves for yesterday’s disappointments and today’s sufferings by saying, “We shall succeed tomorrow!”

The truth is this: tomorrow will be a repeat of today, just as today is a repeat of yesterday.

[...]

We are only well represented and served by ourselves. This is true of peoples as well as individuals. The people must therefore take charge of their own affairs and no longer blindly entrust their salvation to representatives who, even if they do not betray them, are at least always in a position to betray them with impunity!

Octave Mirbeau

The Voters Strike (1888)

The French writer Octave Mirbeau (1848-1917) provides us with an amazingly clear portrait of that chicanery known under the name of “national elections.” Unfortunately, this ignoble imposture still finds many practitioners in our own days.

Source: Octave Mirbeau, *La Grève des Électeurs*, Le Figaro, 28 Novembre 1888.

One thing astonishes me, I would almost say stupefies me, namely, that in this scientific age, after so many daily scandals and revelations, there can still exist in our beloved France one voter, one single voter, that irrational, inorganic, dreadful animal who allows his life to be disturbed, all his dreams and pleasures to be interrupted, merely to vote for someone or something.

When one reflects for a moment on this surprising phenomenon, does it not lead astray the most subtle philosophies, and even

confound Reason itself? Where is a good writer capable to give us the physiology of the modern voter? Where a neurologist to explain the anatomy and mentality of this incurable lunatic? We await them.

Oh, I understand that a swindler always finds buyers; that censorship finds it's defenders, and musicals his fans. I understand that even daily papers that write rubbish find their subscribers, and the politicians find journalists that exalt their capabilities. I understand all that. But that a member of parliament, or a senator, or a president of the Republic, or any one of the strange jesters who seek elective office, whatever it may be, should find a voter, that is to say, the unimaginable being, the improbable martyr, who feeds you with his bread, clothes you with his wool, fattens you with his flesh, enrich you with his money, with the sole prospect of receiving, in return for such prodigious generosity a smack on the head, a kick in the ass, or maybe a shot in the chest, in truth, this exceeds the already rather pessimistic notions I had formed until now of human stupidity in general, and French stupidity in particular, our own dear and immortal stupidity.

I speak of course of the believing voter, the convinced voter, the theoretical voter who imagines, poor thing, that he is acting as a free citizen, exercising his sovereignty, expressing his opinions, imposing political programs and — admirable disconcerting lunacy — righting social wrongs. I'm not talking about the voter who "knows the tune," who takes the Mickey out of everything, who sees in the results of his "political sovereignty" nothing but a conservative joke or a liberal nonsense. For him the electoral sovereignty of the individual consists in filling his pockets by way of this charade known as Universal Suffrage. He's looking after himself and doesn't give a damn about anyone else. He knows what he's doing. But the others?

Yes, the others ! The serious ones, the austere ones, the sovereign people, those who feel a great inebriation seizing them as they

contemplate themselves in the mirror and say: "I am the voter! Nothing can be done without me! I am the foundation of modern society. By my will the President and the Congress make laws which bind over 36 million people, the richest and the poorest alike."

How can it be that there are still people like these? How is it that, however stubborn, proud, and paradoxical they might be, they are not yet discouraged and ashamed of their work? How can one still find, somewhere in this world (in the remotest corners of the moors of Brittany, even in the inaccessible caves of the Cévennes and the Pyrenees) a person so stupid, so irrational, so blind to what he sees and deaf to what he hears every day, as to vote Blue, White, or Red without being forced, without being paid, without even a free drink to make him drunk?

What baroque sentiment, what mysterious suggestion does he obey, this thinking biped endowed with free will (at least this is what people say), proud of his "rights," absolutely confident that he has done his duty by dropping some piece of paper inscribed with some name, it doesn't matter which, into some ballot box?... What can he possibly say to himself to justify or even explain such an extravagant act? What does he hope for? Because, finally, in order that he agree to surrender himself to these greedy bosses who will sponge off him and bludgeon him to a pulp, he must be telling himself something and hoping for something so extraordinary we can scarcely imagine. Somehow, by some potent cerebral lucubration, to him the idea of Member of Parliament has come to stand for the idea of Science, of Justice, of Devotion, of Hard Work and Probity. In the very names of current politicians and of those who preceded them, he must have discovered some special magic and seen, as if through a mirage, flowering and blooming in a garden some promise of future happiness and instant gratification.

And that's what's really dreadful.

It seems that nothing teaches him a lesson, neither the most burlesque of comedies nor the most sinister of tragedies.

Yet for centuries the world has endured, societies have developed and succeeded one another, each similar to the next, and one fact has dominated all of history: the protection of the powerful and the oppression of the weak. The weak don't understand that they have only one historical *raison d'être*, and that's to pay for a bunch of things they'll never enjoy and to die for political schemes that have nothing to do with them.

Why should it matter, whether it's Peter or John who demands, "Your money or your life!" since he is obliged to lose in any case? Well! No. In the presence of different thieves and torturers he wants to express his preferences, to cast his vote for the most rapacious and ferocious of the lot.

He did vote yesterday, he will vote tomorrow; he will vote always. Sheep go to the slaughterhouse, silent and hopeless, but at least sheep never vote for the butcher who kills them or the humans who devour them. More stupid than animals, more sheep-like than sheep, the voter appoints his butcher and chooses his own devourer. He fought revolutions in order to get this "right."

O good voter, unspeakable imbecile, poor dupe, if instead of reading the same old crap that the morning papers serve you every day (big papers, small papers, right wing or left wing papers, conservative or progressive papers) in order to manipulate you the way they want. If, instead of swallowing that fanciful flattery that caresses your vanity with which they surround your pitiful rag-clad sovereignty; if instead of gawking, as an eternal idiot, at the heavy bullshit of politics, you were, for once, sitting in your armchair, reading the work of Schopenhauer and Max Nordau [for instance *The Conventional Lies of Our Civilization*, 1883], two authors who have meditated deeply about

you as a voter and about your leaders, perhaps you might learn something amazing and useful. May be, after reading their works, you'll feel less eager to put on your air of gravity, wear your fine frock coat and rush to those murderous ballot boxes where, no matter whose name you choose, you are sure of picking up the name of your worst enemy. Those authors, those two connoisseurs of humanity, would tell you that politics is an abominable lie, opposed to all common sense, justice and right, and that, by meddling in it, you will gain no credit, you, whose fate is already written in the grand account of human destiny.

After that, dream if you will of paradises of light and perfumes, of impossible brotherhood, of unreal happiness. It's good to dream; it eases pains. But keep politics out of your dream, for wherever politicians are found, there too are sadness, hatred, and misdeeds. Above all, remember that he who solicits your vote is, by that very fact, revealed as a scoundrel, since, in exchange for your advantage and fortune, he promises a cornucopia of miracles he'll never deliver because he is not in a position to deliver them. The man you elect represents neither your problems, nor your aspirations, nor anything of yours, but rather his own passions and interests, which are all opposed to yours.

In order to warn you about cultivating hopes that will soon fade away, do not imagine that the sorry spectacle at which you assist today is peculiar to one regime, and that it will pass away. All regimes are the same, that is, they are all equally worthless. So go home, my good friend, and go on strike against general elections. You have nothing to lose, and, at least, this should keep you amused for a while. From behind your windows, in your home shut firmly against all beggars of political alms, you'll watch the obscene trafficking in votes and electoral favours.

And even if there exist in some unknown corner of this land, some honest man capable of governing you and respect you, don't regret

your decision. He would be too jealous of his dignity to involve himself in the dirty game of politics, too proud to accept from you a mandate that you never grant to anything but cynical audacity, insults and lies.

Dear good friend, I repeat my invitation to you:

GO HOME and **GO ON STRIKE !**

Lev Tolstoy

Democracy as superstition

(1888)

Tolstoy's message in this excerpt is that we should concentrate our efforts on improving ourselves rather than imposing on everyone, through the democratic system, ideas and behaviours that we presume to be valid and indispensable for all to follow. This is why democracy is considered by Tolstoy to be a superstition that must be superseded and erased from our mind. Moreover, the fact of willing to organise and homogenize, by way of the so-called majoritarian democracy, the lives of everyone, produces usually the effect that individual improvement and personal responsibility are greatly neglected.

Source: Lev Tolstoy, *The law of love and the law of violence*, 1908.

“We are living in an age of discipline, culture and civilisation, but we are still a long way from the age of moralisation. In the present state of mankind, it may be said that the prosperity of the States grows at the same time as the misery of the people. And it is still a

question whether we would not be happier in a crude condition, where all the culture of the present time would not exist, than in our present one. For how can the human being be made happy, unless he is first made moral and wise? And until this is achieved the amount of evil will not be lessened.” (Immanuel Kant, *On Education*, 1803)

“We are very accustomed to arguing about how we might organize the lives of others, of humanity as a whole. And we find nothing strange in such deliberations. Whereas this sort of arguments could never exist between religious, and thereby free people. These arguments are the very results of despotism or the domination of one, or a few, over many.

This is how both despots and those perverted by them reason.

This mistake is harmful, not only because it torments and perverts those people beneath the despot’s control, but because the awareness of the necessity of reforming oneself diminishes in all human beings, whereas it is the only true method of influencing others.

Not only has one man no right to give orders to a number of men, but neither have a number of men the right to give orders to one.” (Vladimir Chertkov)

“Marvellous. But could you tell us what form society will take when it decides to live without government?”

This ask those who believe that man can always know what social life will be like in the future, and who therefore credit the same knowledge to those who wish to live without a government.

This idea is no more than a vulgar superstition, very ancient and very common indeed. Men do not know, and cannot know, what that

future state will be, whether they submit or refuse to submit to government.

How much less, then, could a minority organise the lives of everyone, because this organisation is possible not according to the will of a few, but as the result of many intervening factors, the main one being the religious development of the majority of human beings.

The superstition which leads us to believe that we can tell in advance how society will be organised in the future has its origins in the desire of the transgressors to justify their conduct, and of the victims to explain and alleviate the burden of constraint.

The former convince themselves and others that they know how to give life the form they consider best; the latter, who are under such constraint that they do not feel strong enough to free themselves, have the same conviction, because it allows them to give some excuse for their situation.

The history of nations ought to destroy this superstition completely.

At the end of the eighteenth century some Frenchmen tried to maintain the old despotic regime, but in spite of all their efforts that regime fell, and was replaced by the republic.

In the same way, despite all the efforts of the republican leaders, despite all their acts of violence, the republic was replaced by the empire, and this is how they succeeded one another: empire, coalition, Charles X, a new republic, a new revolution, a new republic, Louis-Philippe, and then other governments right up to the present day.

The same facts have been repeated wherever violence is the basis of action.

For example, all the efforts of the Papacy which, far from suppressing Protestantism, have only helped to develop it. The progress of socialism is due to the actions of capitalists.

In short, it is only because the form of social organisation continues not to respond or no longer responds to the moral condition of the people, that the government that is established by violence is maintained for a certain time or is modified by the use of force. And not because external factors ensure or modify its existence.

It follows that the axiom according to which a minority can organise the life of the majority, an axiom in the name of which the greatest crimes are committed, is nothing but a superstition. In the same way, and similarly, the resulting activity that is considered most important and honourable by State officials and revolutionaries alike is in reality nothing more than a useless and harmful pastime that prevents humanity from being happy in the first place.

This superstition has caused much bloodshed and appalling suffering, and it continues to do so. The worst thing is that this superstition has always prevented and still prevents the social improvement that would correspond to the degree of development of human consciousness.

This superstition prevents any real progress because human beings spend all their efforts trying to reach agreement with others, and thereby neglect their own moral regeneration, which alone can contribute to the regeneration of the world in general.

In fact, social life progresses, and inevitably does so, towards the eternal idea of perfection, thanks to the evolution of individuals along the endless path of perfection. All this shows the horror of the superstition that makes us neglect our mission of individual improvement, which alone brings personal happiness and general well-being.

These are the only means over which we really have control, unlike the superstition which leads us to concentrate on the happiness of others, which is not in our power. It makes us use means of constraint that are as harmful to ourselves as to others, and leads us further away from social as well as individual perfection.

Emma Goldman

Minorities versus Majorities

(1917)

In this text Emma Goldman praises creative individualism against the obtuse power of the mass. She was aware that her essay would be attacked by those who idealized the masses and so she had this to say: “No doubt I shall be excommunicated as an enemy of the people, because I repudiate the mass as a creative factor. I shall prefer that rather than being guilty of the demagogic platitudes so commonly in vogue as a bait for the people.” “My lack of faith in the majority is dictated by my faith in the potentialities of the individual. Only when the latter becomes free to choose his associates for a common purpose, can we hope for order and harmony out of this world of chaos and inequality.”

Source: Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 1917.

If I were to give a summary of the tendency of our times, I would say, Quantity. The multitude, the mass spirit, dominates everywhere, destroying quality. Our entire life — production, politics, and educa-

tion — rests on quantity, on numbers. The worker who once took pride in the thoroughness and quality of his work, has been replaced by brainless, incompetent automatons, who turn out enormous quantities of things, valueless to themselves, and generally injurious to the rest of mankind. Thus quantity, instead of adding to life's comforts and peace, has merely increased man's burden.

In politics, naught but quantity, counts. In proportion to its increase, however, principles, ideals, justice, and uprightness are completely swamped by the array of numbers. In the struggle for supremacy the various political parties outdo each other in trickery, deceit, cunning, and shady machinations, confident that the one who succeeds is sure to be hailed by the majority as the victor. That is the only god, - Success. As to what expense, what terrible cost to character, is of no moment. We have not far to go in search of proof to verify this sad fact.

Never before did the corruption, the complete rottenness of our government stand so thoroughly exposed; never before were the American people brought face to face with the Judas nature of that political body, which has claimed for years to be absolutely beyond reproach, as the mainstay of our institutions, the true protector of the rights and liberties of the people.

Yet when the crimes of that party became so brazen that even the blind could see them, it needed but to muster up its minions, and its supremacy was assured. Thus the very victims, duped, betrayed, outraged a hundred times, decided, not against, but in favor of the victor. Bewildered, the few asked how could the majority betray the traditions of American liberty? Where was its judgment, its reasoning capacity? That is just it, the majority cannot reason; it has no judgment. Lacking utterly in originality and moral courage, the majority has always placed its destiny in the hands of others. Incapable of standing responsibilities, it has followed its leaders even unto destruction. Dr. Stockman [in Henrik Ibsen, *An Enemy of the*

People, 1882] was right: "The most dangerous enemies of truth and justice in our midst are the compact majorities, the damned compact majority." Without ambition or initiative, the compact mass hates nothing so much as innovation. It has always opposed, condemned, and hounded the innovator, the pioneer of a new truth.

The oft repeated slogan of our time is, among all politicians, the Socialists included, that ours is an era of individualism, of the minority. Only those who do not probe beneath the surface might be led to entertain this view. Have not the few accumulated the wealth of the world? Are they not the masters, the absolute kings of the situation? Their success, however, is due not to individualism, but to the inertia, the cravenness, the utter submission of the mass. The latter wants but to be dominated, to be led, to be coerced. As to individualism, at no time in human history did it have less chance of expression, less opportunity to assert itself in a normal, healthy manner.

The individual educator imbued with honesty of purpose, the artist or writer of original ideas, the independent scientist or explorer, the non-compromising pioneers of social changes are daily pushed to the wall by men whose learning and creative ability have become decrepit with age.

Educators of Ferrer's [1] type are nowhere tolerated, while the dietitians of predigested food, à la Professors Eliot and Butler, are the successful perpetuators of an age of nonentities, of automatons. In the literary and dramatic world, the Humphrey Wards and Clyde Fitches are the idols of the mass, while but few know or appreciate the beauty and genius of an Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman; an Ibsen, a Hauptmann, a Butler Yeats, or a Stephen Phillips. They are like solitary stars, far beyond the horizon of the multitude.

Publishers, theatrical managers, and critics ask not for the quality inherent in creative art, but will it meet with a good sale, will it suit the palate of the people? Alas, this palate is like a dumping ground; it relishes anything that needs no mental mastication. As a result, the

mediocre, the ordinary, the commonplace represents the chief literary output.

Need I say that in art we are confronted with the same sad facts? One has but to inspect our parks and thoroughfares to realize the hideousness and vulgarity of the art manufacture. Certainly, none but a majority taste would tolerate such an outrage on art. False in conception and barbarous in execution, the statuary that infests American cities has as much relation to true art, as a totem to a Michael Angelo. Yet that is the only art that succeeds. The true artistic genius, who will not cater to accepted notions, who exercises originality, and strives to be true to life, leads an obscure and wretched existence. His work may some day become the fad of the mob, but not until his heart's blood had been exhausted; not until the pathfinder has ceased to be, and a throng of an idealless and visionless mob has done to death the heritage of the master.

It is said that the artist of today cannot create because Prometheuslike he is bound to the rock of economic necessity. This, however, is true of art in all ages. Michael Angelo was dependent on his patron saint, no less than the sculptor or painter of today, except that the art connoisseurs of those days were far away from the madding crowd. They felt honored to be permitted to worship at the shrine of the master.

The art protector of our time knows but one criterion, one value, - the dollar. He is not concerned about the quality of any great work, but in the quantity of dollars his purchase implies. Thus the financier in Mirbeau's *Les Affaires sont les Affaires* points to some blurred arrangement in colors, saying: "See how great it is; it cost 50,000 francs." Just like our own parvenus. The fabulous figures paid for their great art discoveries must make up for the poverty of their taste.

The most unpardonable sin in society is independence of thought. That this should be so terribly apparent in a country whose symbol is

democracy, is very significant of the tremendous power of the majority.

Wendell Phillips [2] said fifty years ago: "In our country of absolute democratic equality, public opinion is not only omnipotent, it is omnipresent. There is no refuge from its tyranny, there is no hiding from its reach, and the result is that if you take the old Greek lantern and go about to seek among a hundred, you will not find a single American who has not, or who does not fancy at least he has, something to gain or lose in his ambition, his social life, or business, from the good opinion and the votes of those around him. And the consequence is that instead of being a mass of individuals, each one fearlessly blurting out his own conviction, as a nation compared to other nations we are a mass of cowards. More than any other people we are afraid of each other." Evidently we have not advanced very far from the condition that confronted Wendell Phillips. Today, as then, public opinion is the omnipresent tyrant; today, as then, the majority represents a mass of cowards, willing to accept him who mirrors its own soul and mind poverty. That accounts for the unprecedented rise of a man like Roosevelt [3]. He embodies the very worst element of mob psychology. A politician, he knows that the majority cares little for ideals or integrity. What it craves is display. It matters not whether that be a dog show, a prize fight, the lynching of a "nigger," the rounding up of some petty offender, the marriage exposition of an heiress, or the acrobatic stunts of an ex-president. The more hideous the mental contortions, the greater the delight and bravos of the mass. Thus, poor in ideals and vulgar of soul, Roosevelt continues to be the man of the hour.

On the other hand, men towering high above such political pygmies, men of refinement, of culture, of ability, are jeered into silence as mollycoddles. It is absurd to claim that ours is the era of individualism. Ours is merely a more poignant repetition of the phenomenon of all history: every effort for progress, for enlightenment, for science, for religious, political, and economic liberty, emanates from the

minority, and not from the mass. Today, as ever, the few are misunderstood, hounded, imprisoned, tortured, and killed.

The principle of brotherhood expounded by the agitator of Nazareth preserved the germ of life, of truth and justice, so long as it was the beacon light of the few. The moment the majority seized upon it, that great principle became a shibboleth and harbinger of blood and fire, spreading suffering and disaster. The attack on the omnipotence of Rome, led by the colossal figures of Huss, Calvin, and Luther, was like a sunrise amid the darkness of the night. But so soon as Luther and Calvin turned politicians and began catering to the small potentates, the nobility, and the mob spirit, they jeopardized the great possibilities of the Reformation. They won success and the majority, but that majority proved no less cruel and bloodthirsty in the persecution of thought and reason than was the Catholic monster. Woe to the heretics, to the minority, who would not bow to its dicta. After infinite zeal, endurance, and sacrifice, the human mind is at last free from the religious phantom; the minority has gone on in pursuit of new conquests, and the majority is lagging behind, handicapped by truth grown false with age.

Politically the human race would still be in the most absolute slavery, were it not for the John Balls [4], the Wat Tylers [5], the Tells [6], the innumerable individual giants who fought inch by inch against the power of kings and tyrants. But for individual pioneers the world would have never been shaken to its very roots by that tremendous wave, the French Revolution. Great events are usually preceded by apparently small things. Thus the eloquence and fire of Camille Desmoulins [7] was like the trumpet before Jericho, razing to the ground that emblem of torture, of abuse, of horror, the Bastille.

Always, at every period, the few were the banner bearers of a great idea, of liberating effort. Not so the mass, the leaden weight of which does not let it move. The truth of this is borne out in Russia with greater force than elsewhere. Thousands of lives have already been

consumed by that bloody regime, yet the monster on the throne is not appeased.

How is such a thing possible when ideas, culture, literature, when the deepest and finest emotions groan under the iron yoke? The majority, that compact, immobile, drowsy mass, the Russian peasant, after a century of struggle, of sacrifice, of untold misery, still believes that the rope which strangles "the man with the white hands" [8] brings luck.

In the American struggle for liberty, the majority was no less of a stumbling block. Until this very day the ideas of Jefferson, of Patrick Henry, of Thomas Paine, are denied and sold by their posterity. The mass wants none of them. The greatness and courage worshipped in Lincoln have been forgotten in the men who created the background for the panorama of that time. The true patron saints of the black men were represented in that handful of fighters in Boston, Lloyd Garrison [9], Wendell Phillips, Thoreau, Margaret Fuller [10], and Theodore Parker [11], whose great courage and sturdiness culminated in that somber giant John Brown [12]. Their untiring zeal, their eloquence and perseverance undermined the stronghold of the Southern lords. Lincoln and his minions followed only when abolition had become a practical issue, recognized as such by all.

About fifty years ago, a meteorlike idea made its appearance on the social horizon of the world, an idea so far-reaching, so revolutionary, so all-embracing as to spread terror in the hearts of tyrants everywhere. On the other hand, that idea was a harbinger of joy, of cheer, of hope to the millions. The pioneers knew the difficulties in their way, they knew the opposition, the persecution, the hardships that would meet them, but proud and unafraid they started on their march onward, ever onward. Now that idea has become a popular slogan. Almost everyone is a Socialist today: the rich man, as well as his poor victim; the upholders of law and authority, as well as their unfortunate culprits; the freethinker, as well as the perpetrator of

religious falsehoods; the fashionable lady, as well as the shirtwaist girl. Why not? Now that the truth of fifty years ago has become a lie, now that it has been clipped of all its youthful imagination, and been robbed of its vigor, its strength, its revolutionary ideal — why not? Now that it is no longer a beautiful vision, but a “practical, workable scheme,” resting on the will of the majority, why not? Political cunning ever sings the praise of the mass: the poor majority, the outraged, the abused, the giant majority, if only it would follow us. Who has not heard this litany before? Who does not know this never-varying refrain of all politicians? That the mass bleeds, that it is being robbed and exploited, I know as well as our vote-baiters. But I insist that not the handful of parasites, but the mass itself is responsible for this horrible state of affairs. It clings to its masters, loves the whip, and is the first to cry Crucify! the moment a protesting voice is raised against the sacredness of capitalistic authority or any other decayed institution. Yet how long would authority and private property exist, if not for the willingness of the mass to become soldiers, policemen, jailers, and hangmen. The Socialist demagogues know that as well as I, but they maintain the myth of the virtues of the majority, because their very scheme of life means the perpetuation of power. And how could the latter be acquired without numbers? Yes, authority, coercion, and dependence rest on the mass, but never freedom or the free unfoldment of the individual, never the birth of a free society.

Not because I do not feel with the oppressed, the disinherited of the earth; not because I do not know the shame, the horror, the indignity of the lives the people lead, do I repudiate the majority as a creative force for good. Oh, no, no! But because I know so well that as a compact mass it has never stood for justice or equality. It has suppressed the human voice, subdued the human spirit, chained the human body. As a mass its aim has always been to make life uniform, gray, and monotonous as the desert. As a mass it will always be the annihilator of individuality, of free initiative, of originality. I there-

fore believe with Emerson that “the masses are crude, lame, pernicious in their demands and influence, and need not to be flattered, but to be schooled. I wish not to concede anything to them, but to drill, divide, and break them up, and draw individuals out of them. Masses! The calamity are the masses. I do not wish any mass at all, but honest men only, lovely, sweet, accomplished women only.”

In other words, the living, vital truth of social and economic well-being will become a reality only through the zeal, courage, the non-compromising determination of intelligent minorities, and not through the mass.

Notes

[1] Francisco Ferrer (1859-1909), educationalist who founded a school (La “Escuela Moderna” — the Modern School) in Barcelona. He was sentenced to death by the Spanish government which considered him responsible of anarchist propaganda behind a violent protest against military conscription. Following international outrage for his assassination by the State in the prison of Montjuich, in 1911 the process was reopened and in 1912 Ferrer was posthumously rehabilitated.

[2] Wendell Phillips (1811-1884), abolitionist who spoke vigorously and with eloquence against slavery. He graduated in law at the Harvard Law School and soon joined the anti-slavery movement after opening a law office in Boston. In 1865 he became president of the American Anti-Slavery Society.

[3] Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) the 26th President of the U.S.A. He was elected vice-president under McKinley in 1900 and succeeded him the following year when the president was assassinated. He was reconfirmed president in the 1904 election. Theodore Roosevelt expanded the power of the Federal State over social and

economic life and interfered in the affairs of small Latin-American nations.

[4] John Ball was a priest who became one of the main figures of the Peasant Revolt in England. Excommunicated in 1366, he continued to preach for equality and was frequently put in prison. Liberated by Kentish peasants before the outbreak of the rebellion (June 1381) he went with them to London where he made the popular statement: "When Adam dalf [dug] and Eve span [spun], Wo was thanne a gentilman?" When the rebellion ended he was tried and hang at St. Albans on July, 15, 1381.

[5] Wat Tyler, leader of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 in England protesting against the harsh taxation of the rural workers. Tyler was attacked and fatally wounded during a parley with the forces of King Richard II. He was then beheaded the 15 of June 1381 by order of the Lord mayor of London.

[6] Wilhelm Tell, a figure celebrated in Swiss history as the champion of freedom and independence for his refusal of Austrian rule. There are no documents attesting his existence, however, according to popular legend, he was a peasant from Bürglen in the Uri Canton, living towards the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th century.

[7] Camille Desmoulins (1760-1794) an influential exponent in the French Revolution, famous for his ability to arouse the crowd and for his journalistic articles and pamphlets. He was arrested as part of the Danton's faction by order of Robespierre and guillotined on April the 5th, 1794.

[8] The reference is to the "intellectuals."

[9] Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879) A journalist who run a newspaper, *The Liberator*, campaigning successfully for the abolition of slavery.

[10] Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) a literary critic, teacher and woman of letters.

[11] Theodore Parker (1810-1860) a religious pastor and social reformer, active in the anti-slavery movement.

[12] John Brown (1800-1859) leader of the fight against slavery. For his raids against pro-slavery people he was tried for murder, slave insurrection and treason against the State. He was hanged, on December the 2nd, 1859.

Rose Wilder Lane

Democracy (1943)

A very critical view of democracy, fully justified by the historical events of that time which saw the predomination of so-called totalitarian democracy through such figures as Mussolini and Hitler.

Source: Rose Wilder Lane, *The Discovery of Freedom, Man's Struggle Against Authority*, 1943.

The penalty for signing that Declaration [of Independence] was death.

The men who signed it took a slim chance. Not only for themselves; for their families and their dependents. Their property would be seized, their families dispossessed and disgraced; their sons and their son's sons forever attainted. Thomas Jefferson had written the plain fact: "We pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." That was: what each man pledged to the weak, the losing side, when he signed a declaration of that ten-year-old war, and of its cause and his motive:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

A compelling reason for the long hesitation of these men — Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, John Adams, Madison, Monroe — was their fear of democracy. They were educated men. Excepting Franklin (self-educated), each one had the education of an English gentleman. That is, the philosophy and the history of the whole European past had been pounded into his head before he was twelve years old. Therefore, when he was old enough to think for himself, he had thousands of years of human experience with every form of Government, to think about.

This knowledge was then regarded as necessary to every man whose birth entitled him to take any part in the government of his country. They also knew the meaning of every word they used; they knew its Greek, Latin, or Anglo-Saxon root. Until forty years ago, this knowledge was still considered of first importance in American schools. Every pupil, at thirteen and fourteen, learned etymology as he had learned spelling since the age of six, by dogged repetition until the facts were fixed in his mind.

Today the confusion of the meaning of words in these United States is a danger to the whole world. Few American schools any longer require a pupil to dissect his words to their roots, and to know what he means when he speaks. And for twenty years the disciplined members of the Communist Party in these States have been deliberately following Lenin's instruction, “First confuse the vocabulary.”

Thinking can be done only in words. Accurate thinking requires words of precise meaning. Communication between human beings is impossible without words whose precise meaning is generally understood. Confuse the vocabulary, and people do not know what is

happening; they can not communicate an alarm; they can not achieve any common purpose. Confuse the vocabulary, and millions are helpless against a small, disciplined number who know what they mean when they speak. Lenin had brains.

Today [1943], when you hear the word “democracy,” what does it mean?

These United States, of course; and England, the British Commonwealth, the British Empire, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Belgium, part of France, Finland when Russians attack the Finns but not when Finns attack Russia; Russia when Russians fight Germans but not when Stalin signs a pact with Hitler; the kingdoms and dictatorships of the Balkans; and economic security and compulsory insurance and the check-off system of collecting labor union dues; and friendliness and neighborliness and the unique American sense of human equality, and a vote for everybody, and socialism and communism and the Spanish cause for which republicans, democrats, socialists, syndicalists, anarchists and Russian and American communists fought, and freedom and human rights and human dignity and common decency.

That is, the word has no meaning. Its meaning has been destroyed. It was once a sound word. It is a necessary word, because no other has its real meaning. Demo-cracy means, rule by The People; as precisely as monarchy means, rule by one (person).

Demos, The People, was a fantasy imagined by the ancient Greeks, in their search for The Authority that (they imagined) controlled men. To this fantasy they attached the meaning of God, which always attaches to every form of Authority and there are still persons who believe that “the voice of The People is the voice of God.”

The People does not exist. Individual persons compose any group of persons.

So in practice, any attempt to establish democracy is an attempt to make a majority of persons in a group act as ruler of that group.

Consider this for one moment, not in fantasy, but as applied to your own experience in groups of living persons whom you know, and you will understand why every attempt to establish democracy has failed.

Of course there is no reason to suppose that majority-rule would be desirable, even if it were possible. There is no morality or efficiency in mere numbers. Ninety-nine persons are no more likely to be right than one person is. In the *Federalist Papers*, Madison stated the reason why every attempt to establish a democracy quickly creates a tyrant:

“A pure democracy can admit no cure for the mischiefs of faction. A common passion or interest will be felt by a majority, and there is nothing to check the inducements to sacrifice the weaker party. Hence it is, that democracies have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have, in general, been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths.”

The gentlemen who took responsibility for saving the American Revolution were fearful that democracy would end it. The unknown Americans, the Ebenezer Foxes, for years had been fighting Authority; each was determined “to do what was right in my own eyes.” But they had no Latin or Greek, they knew nothing about all the previous efforts to make democracy work, and they were shouting for democracy.

On the other hand, the large landholders, bankers, rich merchants, and a thick-springing crop of rapacious grafters and land-speculators, led by Alexander Hamilton, the illegitimate adventurer from the West Indies who was also a genius, were demanding an American monarchy.

The real revolutionists, when they signed the Declaration of Independence and of individual freedom, were undertaking not only to win a war against impossible odds, but to create an entirely new kind of Government.

They faced the armed power of the British Empire, with thirteen disorganized, quarreling colonies at their backs, and two dangers threatening them: monarchy, and democracy.

They said nothing about The People. They repeated no nonsense about Science and Natural Law and the Age of Reason. They did not gush about the noble nature of Natural Man. They knew men. They were realists. They had no illusions about men, but they did know that all men are free. They stood against both monarchy and democracy, because they knew that when men set up an imaginary Authority armed with force, they destroy all opportunity to exercise their natural freedom.

Educated men, they had studied the many attempts to establish democracy. The results were known twenty-five hundred years ago in Greece. Democracy does not work. It can not work, because every man is free. He can not transfer his inalienable life and liberty to anyone or anything outside himself. When he tries to do this, he tries to obey an Authority that does not exist.

It makes no difference what he imagines this Authority to be — Ra or Baal or Zeus or Jupiter; Cleopatra or the Mikado; or Economic Necessity or the Will of the Masses or the Voice of The People; the stubborn fact is that there is no Authority, of any kind, that controls individuals. They control themselves.

Anyone in a free group can decide to give up his own idea and go along with the majority. If he does not want to do this, he can get out of the group. This is a use of freedom, an exercise of self-controlling responsibility. But when a large number of individuals falsely believe that the majority is an Authority that has a right to control individu-

als, they must let a majority choose one man (or a few men) to act as Government. They will believe that the majority has transferred to those men the Majority-Right to control all individuals living under that Government. But Government is not a controlling Authority; Government is a use of force, it is the police, the army; it cannot control anyone, it can only hinder, restrict, or stop anyone's use of his energy.

As Madison says, some common passion or interest will sway a majority. And because a majority supports the ruler whom a majority chooses, nothing checks his use of force against the minority. So the ruler of a democracy quickly becomes a tyrant. And that is the swift and violent death of the democracy.

This always occurs, invariably. It is as certain as death and taxes. It occurred in Athens twenty-five centuries ago. It occurred in France in 1804, when an overwhelming majority elected the Emperor Napoleon. It occurred in Germany in 1932, when a majority of Germans — swayed by a common passion for food and social order — elected Hitler.

Madison stated the historic fact: in democracy there is nothing to check the inducements to sacrifice the weaker party. There is no protection for liberty. Hence it is, that democracies always destroy personal security (the Gestapo, the concentration camps) and the rights of property (what rights of property ownership are there in Europe, now?) and are as short in their lives as they are violent in their deaths.

Jacob Leib Talmon

Totalitarian Democracy

(1952)

The remarkable merit of Talmon is to have shown that “democracy” is not the absolutely wondrous political recipe for the solution of all problems. Since the time of the French Revolution, a current of thought has advocated and practiced what the author calls “totalitarian democracy.”

The most evident sign of totalitarian democracy is the fact that “it treats all human thought and action as having social significance, and therefore as falling within the orbit of political action.” So the space for personal decisions is continuously narrowed and politics (i.e. the political man) reigns supreme. Politics becomes the new religion and it could very well be seen as the new “opium of the people.”

Source: J. L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, Introduction, 1952.

This study is an attempt to show that concurrently with the liberal type of democracy there emerged from the same premises in the

eighteenth century a trend towards what we propose to call the totalitarian type of democracy. These two currents have existed side by side ever since the eighteenth century. The tension between them has constituted an important chapter in modern history, and has now become the most vital issue of our time.

It would of course be an exaggeration to suggest that the whole of the period can be summed up in terms of this conflict. Nevertheless it was always present, although usually confused and obscured by other issues, which may have seemed clearer to contemporaries, but viewed from the standpoint of the present day seem incidental and even trivial. Indeed, from the vantage point of the mid-twentieth century the history of the last hundred and fifty years looks like a systematic preparation for the headlong collision between empirical and liberal democracy on the one hand, and totalitarian Messianic democracy on the other, in which the world crisis of to-day consists.

(1) The Two Types of Democracy, Liberal and Totalitarian

The essential difference between the two schools of democratic thought as they have evolved is not, as is often alleged, in the affirmation of the value of liberty by one, and its denial by the other. It is in their different attitude to politics. The liberal approach assumes politics to be a matter of trial and error, and regards political systems as pragmatic contrivances of human ingenuity and spontaneity. It also recognizes a variety of levels of personal and collective endeavour, which are altogether outside the sphere of politics.

The totalitarian democratic school, on the other hand, is based upon the assumption of a sole and exclusive truth in politics. It may be called political Messianism in the sense that it postulates a preordained, harmonious and perfect scheme of things, to which men are irresistibly driven, and at which they are bound to arrive. It recog-

nizes ultimately only one plane of existence, the political. It widens the scope of politics to embrace the whole of human existence. It treats all human thought and action as having social significance, and therefore as falling within the orbit of political action. Its political ideas are not a set of pragmatic precepts or a body of devices applicable to a special branch of human endeavour. They are an integral part of an all-embracing and coherent philosophy. Politics is defined as the art of applying this philosophy to the organization of society, and the final purpose of politics is only achieved when this philosophy reigns supreme over all fields of life.

Both schools affirm the supreme value of liberty. But whereas one finds the essence of freedom in spontaneity and the absence of coercion, the other believes it to be realized only in the pursuit and attainment of an absolute collective purpose. It is outside our scope to decide whether liberal democracy has the faith that totalitarian democracy claims to have in final aims. What is beyond dispute is that the final aims of liberal democracy have not the same concrete character. They are conceived in rather negative terms, and the use of force for their realization is considered as an evil. Liberal democrats believe that in the absence of coercion men and society may one day reach through a process of trial and error a state of ideal harmony. In the case of totalitarian democracy, this state is precisely defined, and is treated as a matter of immediate urgency, a challenge for direct action, an imminent event.

The problem that arises for totalitarian democracy, and which is one of the main subjects of this study, may be called the paradox of freedom. Is human freedom compatible with an exclusive pattern of social existence, even if this pattern aims at the maximum of social justice and security? The paradox of totalitarian democracy is in its insistence that they are compatible. The purpose it proclaims is never presented as an absolute idea, external and prior to man. It is thought to be immanent in man's reason and will, to constitute the fullest satisfaction of his true interest, and to be the guarantee of his

freedom. This is the reason why the extreme forms of popular sovereignty became the essential concomitant of this absolute purpose. From the difficulty of reconciling freedom with the idea of an absolute purpose spring all the particular problems and antinomies of totalitarian democracy. This difficulty could only be resolved by thinking not in terms of men as they are, but as they were meant to be, and would be, given the proper conditions. In so far as they are at variance with the absolute ideal they can be ignored, coerced or intimidated into conforming, without any real violation of the democratic principle being involved. In the proper conditions, it is held, the conflict between spontaneity and duty would disappear, and with it the need for coercion. The practical question is, of course, whether constraint will disappear because all have learned to act in harmony, or because all opponents have been eliminated.

(2) The Eighteenth-century Origins of Political Messianism; the Schism

Enough has been said already to indicate that totalitarian democracy will be treated in these pages as an integral part of the Western tradition. It is vital to add that much of the totalitarian democratic attitude was contained in the original and general eighteenth century pattern of thought. The branching out of the two types of democracy from the common stem took place only after the common beliefs had been tested in the ordeal of the French Revolution.

From the point of view of this study the most important change that occurred in the eighteenth century was the peculiar state of mind which achieved dominance in the second part of the century. Men were gripped by the idea that the conditions, a product of faith, time and custom, in which they and their forefathers had been living, were unnatural and had all to be replaced by deliberately planned uniform patterns, which would be natural and rational.

This was the result of the decline of the traditional order in Europe: religion lost its intellectual as well as its emotional hold; hierarchical feudalism disintegrated under the impact of social and economic factors; and the older conception of society based on status came to be replaced by the idea of the abstract, individual man.

The rationalist idea substituted social utility for tradition as the main criterion of social institutions and values. It also suggested a form of social determinism, to which men are irresistibly driven, and which they are bound to accept one day. It thus postulated a single valid system, which would come into existence when everything not accounted for by reason and utility had been removed. This idea was, of course, bound to clash with the inveterate irrationality of man's ways, his likings and attachments.

The decline of religious authority implied the liberation of man's conscience, but it also implied something else. Religious ethics had to be speedily replaced by secular, social morality. With the rejection of the Church, and of transcendental justice, the State remained the sole source and sanction of morality. This was a matter of great importance, at a time when politics were considered indistinguishable from ethics.

The decline of the idea of status consequent on the rise of individualism spelt the doom of privilege, but also contained totalitarian potentialities. If, as will be argued in this essay, empiricism is the ally of freedom, and the doctrinaire spirit is the friend of totalitarianism, the idea of man as an abstraction, independent of the historic groups, to which he belongs, is likely to become a powerful vehicle of totalitarianism.

These three currents merged into the idea of a homogeneous society, in which men live upon one exclusive plane of existence. There were no longer to be different levels of social life, such as the temporal and the transcendental, or membership of a class and citizenship. The only recognized standard of judgment was to be social utility, as

expressed in the idea of the general good, which was spoken of as if it were a visible and tangible objective.

The whole of virtue was summed up as conformity to the rationalist, natural pattern. In the past it was possible for the State to regard many things as matters for God and the Church alone. The new State could recognize no such limitations. Formerly, men lived in groups. A man had to belong to some group, and could belong to several at the same time. Now there was to be only one framework for all activity: the Nation. The eighteenth century never distinguished clearly between the sphere of personal self-expression and that of social action. The privacy of creative experience and feeling, which is the salt of freedom, was in due course to be swamped by the pressure of the permanently assembled people, vibrating with one collective emotion. The fact that eighteenth-century thinkers were ardent prophets of liberty and the rights of man is so much taken for granted that it scarcely needs to be mentioned. But what must be emphasized is the intense preoccupation of the eighteenth century with the idea of virtue, which was nothing if not conformity to the hoped-for pattern of social harmony. They refused to envisage the conflict between liberty and virtue as inevitable. On the contrary, the inevitable equation of liberty with virtue and reason was the most cherished article of their faith. When the eighteenth-century secular religion came face to face with this conflict, the result was the great schism. Liberal democracy flinched from the spectre of force, and fell back upon the trial-and-error philosophy. Totalitarian Messianism hardened into an exclusive doctrine represented by a vanguard of the enlightened, who justified themselves in the use of coercion against those who refused to be free and virtuous.

The other cause for this fissure, certainly no less important, was the question of property. The original impulse of political Messianism was not economic, but ethical and political. However radical in their theoretical premises, most eighteenth-century thinkers shrunk from applying the principle of total renovation to the sphere of economics

and property. It was however extremely difficult to theorize about a rational harmonious social order, with contradictions resolved, anti-social impulses checked, and man's desire for happiness satisfied, while leaving the field of economic endeavour to be dominated by established facts and interests, man's acquisitive spirit and chance. Eighteenth-century thinkers became thus involved in grave inconsistencies, which they attempted to cover with all kinds of devices. The most remarkable of these certainly was the Physiocratic combination of absolutism in politics with the *laissez-faire* theory in economics, which claimed that the free, unhampered economic pursuits of men would set themselves into a harmonious pattern, in accordance with the laws of demand and supply. But before the eighteenth century had come to an end, the inner logic of political Messianism, precipitated by the Revolutionary upheaval, its hopes, its lessons and its disappointments, converted the secular religion of the eighteenth century from a mainly ethical into a social and economic doctrine, based on ethical premises. The postulate of salvation, implied in the idea of the natural order, came to signify to the masses stirred by the Revolution a message of social salvation before all. And so the objective ideal of social harmony gave place to the yearnings and strivings of a class; the principle of virtuous liberty to the passion for security. The possessing classes, surprised and frightened by the social dynamism of the idea of the natural order, hastened to shake off the philosophy which they had earlier so eagerly embraced as a weapon in their struggle against feudal privilege. The Fourth Estate seized it from their hands, and filled it with new meaning. And so the ideology of the rising bourgeoisie was transformed into that of the proletariat.

The object of this book is to examine the stages through which the social ideals of the eighteenth century were transformed — on one side — into totalitarian democracy. These stages are taken to be three: the eighteenth-century postulate, the Jacobin improvisation, and the Babouvist crystallization; all leading up to the emergence of

economic communism on the one hand, and to the synthesis of popular sovereignty and single-party dictatorship on the other. The three stages constitute the three parts into which this study is divided. The evolution of the liberal type of democracy is outside its scope.

Modern totalitarian democracy is a dictatorship resting on popular enthusiasm, and is thus completely different from absolute power wielded by a divine-right King, or by a usurping tyrant. In so far as it is a dictatorship based on ideology and the enthusiasm of the masses, it is the outcome, as will be shown, of the synthesis between the eighteenth-century idea of the natural order and the Rousseauist idea of popular fulfilment and self-expression. By means of this synthesis rationalism was made into a passionate faith. Rousseau's "general will", an ambiguous concept, sometimes conceived as valid *a priori*, sometimes as immanent in the will of man, exclusive and implying unanimity, became the driving force of totalitarian democracy, and the source of all its contradictions and antinomies. These are to be examined in detail.

(3) Totalitarianism of the Right and Totalitarianism of the Left

The emphasis of this theory is always upon Man. And here is the distinguishing mark between totalitarianism of the Left, with which this study is concerned, and totalitarianism of the Right. While the starting-point of totalitarianism of the Left has been and ultimately still is man, his reason and salvation, that of the Right totalitarian schools has been the collective entity, the State, the nation, or the race. The former trend remains essentially individualist, atomistic and rationalist even when it raises the class or party to the level of absolute ends. These are, after all, only mechanically formed groups. Totalitarians of the Right operate solely with historic, racial and organic enti-

ties, concepts altogether alien to individualism and rationalism. That is why totalitarian ideologies of the Left always are inclined to assume the character of a universal creed, a tendency which totalitarianism of the Right altogether lacks. For reason is a unifying force, presupposing mankind to be the sum total of individual reasoning beings. Totalitarianism of the Right implies the negation of such a unity as well as a denial of the universality of human values. It represents a special form of pragmatism. Without raising the question of the absolute significance of the professed tenets, it aspires to a mode of existence, in which the faculties of man may — in a deliberately limited circumference of space, time and numbers — be stirred, asserted and realized so as to enable him to have what is nowadays called a wholly satisfying experience in a collective *élan*, quickened by mass emotion and the impact of impressive exploits; in brief, the myth.

The second vital difference between the two types of totalitarianism is to be found in their divergent conceptions of human nature. The Left proclaims the essential goodness and perfectibility of human nature. The Right declares man to be weak and corrupt. Both may preach the necessity of coercion. The Right teaches the necessity of force as a permanent way of maintaining order among poor and unruly creatures, and training them to act in a manner alien to their mediocre nature. Totalitarianism of the left, when resorting to force, does so in the conviction that force is used only in order to quicken the pace of man's progress to perfection and social harmony. It is thus legitimate to use the term democracy in reference to totalitarianism of the Left. The term could not be applied to totalitarianism of the Right.

It may be said that there are distinctions that make little difference, especially where results are concerned. It may further be maintained that whatever their original premises were, totalitarian parties and régimes of the Left have invariably tended to degenerate into soulless power machines, whose lip service to the original tenets is mere

hypocrisy. Now, this is a question not only of academic interest, but of much practical importance.

Even if we accept this diagnosis of the nature of Left totalitarianism when triumphant, are we to attribute its degeneration to the inevitable process of corrosion which an idea undergoes when power falls into the hands of its adherents? Or should we seek the reason for it deeper, namely in the very essence of the contradiction between ideological absolutism and individualism, inherent in modern political Messianism? When the deeds of men in power belie their words, are they to be called hypocrites and cynics or are they victims of an intellectual delusion?

Here is one of the questions to be investigated. This essay is not concerned with the problem of power as such, only with that of power in relation to consciousness. The objective forces favouring the concentration of power and the subordination of the individual to a power machine, such as modern methods of production and the *arcana imperii* offered by modern technical developments, are outside the scope of this work. The political tactics of totalitarian parties and systems, or the blueprints of social positivist philosophies for the human hive, will be considered not for their own sake, but in their bearing on man's awareness and beliefs. What is vital for the present investigation is the human element: the thrill of fulfilment experienced by the believers in a modern Messianic movement, which makes them experience submission as deliverance; the process that goes on in the minds of the leaders, whether in soliloquy or in public discussion, when faced with the question of whether their acts are the self-expression of the Cause or their own wilful deeds; the stubborn faith that as a result of proper social arrangements and education, the conflict between spontaneity and the objective pattern will ultimately be resolved by the acceptance of the latter, without any sense of coercion.

(4) Secular and Religious Messianism

The modern secular religion of totalitarian democracy has had unbroken continuity as a sociological force for over a hundred and fifty years. Both aspects, its continuity and its character as a sociological force, need stressing. These two essential features permit us to ignore the isolated literary ventures into Utopia in the earlier centuries, without denying the influence of Plato, Thomas More or Campanella upon men like Rousseau, Diderot, Mably, or Saint-Just and Buonarroti. If one were in search of antecedents, one would also have to turn to the various outbursts of chiliasm in the Middle Ages and in the Reformation, especially to the extreme wing of the Puritan Revolution in seventeenth-century England. The coexistence of liberal democracy and revolutionary Messianism in modern times could legitimately be compared to the relationship between the official Church and the eschatological revolutionary current in Christianity during the ages of faith. Always flowing beneath the surface of official society, the Christian revolutionary current burst forth from time to time in the form of movements of evangelical poverty, heretical sects, and social-religious revolts. Like the two major trends of the modern era, the Church and the rebels against it derived their ideas from the same source. The heterodox groups were, however, too ardent in their literal interpretation of God's word. They refused to come to terms with the flesh and the kingdom of this world, and were unwilling to confine the ideal of a society of saints to the exclusively transcendental plane.

There were, however, vital differences between the chiliastic movements of the earlier centuries and modern political Messianism. The former were only sporadic occurrences, although the tension from which they sprang was always latent. A flame burst forth and was soon totally extinguished or rendered harmless to society at large. The crisis might leave behind a sect. The myth might survive and perhaps rekindle a spark in some remote place and at some later date. Society as a whole went on much as before,

although not quite free from the fear and mental discomfort left by the conflagration, and not wholly immune to the influence of the new sect.

There was however a fundamental principle in pre-eighteenth-century chiliasm that made it impossible for it to play the part of modern political Messianism. It was its religious essence. This explains why the Messianic movements or spasms of the earlier type invariably ended by breaking away from society, and forming sects based upon voluntary adherence and community of experience. Modern Messianism has always aimed at a revolutionary society as a whole.

The driving power of the sects was the word of God, and the hope of achieving salvation by facing God alone and directly, without the aid of intermediary powers or submission to them, whether spiritual or temporal, and yet as part of a society of equal saints

This ideal is not unlike the modern expectation of a society of men absolutely free and equal, and yet acting in spontaneous and perfect accord. In spite of this superficial similarity, the differences between the two attitudes are fundamental. Although the Christian revolutionaries fought for the individual's freedom to interpret God's word, their sovereign was not man but God. They aimed at personal salvation and an egalitarian society based on the Law of Nature, because they had it from God that there lies salvation, and believed that obedience to God is the condition of human freedom. The point of reference of modern Messianism, on the other hand, is man's reason and will, and its aim happiness on earth, achieved by a social transformation. The point of reference is temporal, but the claims are absolute. It is thus a remarkable fact that the Christian revolutionaries, with few exceptions, notably Calvin's Geneva and Anabaptist Münster, shrunk from the use of force to impose their own pattern, in spite of their belief in its divine source and authority, while secular Messianism, starting with a point of reference in time, has developed

a fanatical resolve to make its doctrine rule absolutely and everywhere. The reasons are not far to seek.

Even if the Monistic principle of religious Messianism had succeeded in dominating and reshaping society the result would still have been fundamentally different from the situation created by modern political "absolutism". Society might have been forbidden the compromises which are made possible by the Orthodox distinction between the kingdom of God and the earthly State, and as a consequence social and political arrangements might have lost much of their flexibility. The sweep towards the enforcement of an exclusive pattern would nevertheless have been hampered, if not by the thought of the fallibility of man, at least by the consciousness that life on earth is not a closed circle, but has its continuation and conclusion in eternity. Secular Messianic Monism is subject to no such restraints. It demands that the whole account be settled here and now.

The extreme wing of English Puritanism at the time of the Cromwellian Revolution still bore the full imprint of religious eschatology. It had already acquired modern features however. It combined extreme individualism with social radicalism and a totalitarian temperament. Nevertheless this movement, far from initiating the continuous current of modern political Messianism, remained from the European point of view an isolated episode. It was apparently quite unknown to the early representatives of the movement under discussion. While eighteenth-century French thinkers and revolutionary leaders were alive to the political lessons of the "official" Cromwellian Revolution as a deterrent against military dictatorship, and a writer like Harrington was respected as a master, it is doubtful whether the more radical aspects of the English Revolution were much known or exercised any influence in France before the nineteenth century. The strongest influence on the fathers of totalitarian democracy was that of antiquity, interpreted in their own way. Their myth of antiquity was the image of liberty equated with virtue.

The citizen of Sparta or Rome was proudly free, yet a marvel of ascetic discipline. He was an equal member of the sovereign nation, and at the same time had no life or interests outside the collective tissue.

(5) Questions of Method

Objections may be urged against the view that political Messianism as a postulate preceded the compact set of social and economic ideas with which it has come to be associated. It may be said that it is wrong to treat Messianism as a substance that can be divorced from its attributes; to consider it altogether apart from the events which produced it, the instruments which have been used to promote it, and the concrete aims and policies of the men who represented it at any given moment. Such a procedure, it may be said, presupposes an almost mystical agency active in history. It is important to answer this objection not less for its philosophical significance than for the question of method it raises.

What this study is concerned with is a state of mind, a way of feeling, a disposition, a pattern of mental, emotional and behaviouristic elements, best compared to the set of attitudes engendered by a religion. Whatever may be said about the significance of the economic or other factors in the shaping of beliefs, it can hardly be denied that the all-embracing attitudes of this kind, once crystallized, are the real substance of history. The concrete elements of history, the acts of politicians, the aspirations of people, the ideas, values, preferences and prejudices of an age, are the outward manifestations of its religion in the widest sense.

The problem under discussion could not be dealt with on the plane of systematic, discursive reasoning alone. For as in religion, although the partial theological framework may be a marvel of logic, with syllogism following syllogism, the first premises, the axioms or the

postulates must remain a matter of faith. They can be neither proved nor disproved. And it is they that really matter. They determine the ideas and acts, and resolve contradictions into some higher identity or harmony.

The postulate of some ultimate, logical, exclusively valid social order is a matter of faith, and it is not much use trying to defeat it by argument. But its significance to the believer, and the power it has to move men and mountains, can hardly be exaggerated. Now, in Europe and elsewhere, for the last century and a half, there have always been men and movements animated by such a faith, preparing for the Day, referring all their ideas and acts to some all-embracing system, sure of some pre-ordained and final denouement of the historic drama with all its conflicts into an absolute harmony. Jacobins may have differed from the Babouvists, the Blanquists from many of the secret societies in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Communists from the Socialists, the Anarchists from all others, yet they all belong to one religion. This religion emerged in the second part of the eighteenth century and its rise will be traced in these pages. The most difficult problem of the secular religion was to be the antinomy of freedom and the exclusive Messianic pattern.

Complex, intricate and at times magnificent as the theories evolved by the various Messianic trends in the later days were, the original phase, which is the subject of this study, reveals the first elements and threads in a crude, naive and simple form. This fact should help towards understanding the historic phenomenon as a whole. For some of the basic ideas of the late and highly developed Messianic secular religion, especially, as it will be shown, those relating to human nature, ethics and philosophical principles, have remained the same as they were in the eighteenth century.

It is in the nature of doctrines postulating universal abstract patterns to be schematic and grey. They lack the warmth, limpidity and richness which is to be found in living human and national tissues. They

do not convey the tensions which arise between unique personalities, in conflict with each other and their surroundings. They fail to offer the absorbing interest of the unpredictable situation and the pragmatic approach to it. But all these, absent in the doctrine, emerge in the vicissitudes of the doctrine as a sociological force.

This study is neither purely a treatise on political theory, nor a recital of events. Justice would not be done to the subject by treating it in terms of the individual psychology of a few leaders. Nor would the point be made clear by an analysis in terms of mass psychology. Religion is created and lived by men, yet it is a framework in which men live. The problem analysed here is only partly one of behaviour. The modern secular religion must first be treated as an objective reality. Only when this has been done will it be possible to consider the intellectual and historical patterns created by the interplay between the secular religion and particular men and situations. This interplay becomes particularly interesting, when it results in contradictions between, on the one side, the impersonal pattern and, on the other, the demands of the particular situation and the uniqueness of personality.

Marc Eric Ely-Chaitlin

The Dynamics of Mob Rule (1988)

Marc Eric Ely-Chaitlin (1959-2001) was an activist for homeless people in Orange County (California). In this short essay, he poignantly portrays the propaganda machine coupled with the repression apparatus that are the two legs on which the State stands. The final exhortation, to dissociate one's self from mass institutions based on mob rule, captures the essence of this stimulating paper.

While the people argue over meaningless political issues, which revolve around artificially contrived institutional needs (which constitute an elaborate game), they fail to recognize the dynamics of political power in a mass society. The traditional form of government — the tribal nation — disappeared in the Middle Ages, and was replaced by an armed State; which, in turn, was supplanted by the “revolutionary-nation,” or what is now called the Nation-State.

The Nation-State is a mass society. Individuals rise up to fulfill the different functions which perpetuate the mass State, but if any one

of them opposes the masses, then the weight of that mass is used to crush the individual. The people are treated like a herd, like cattle. The politicians do not serve the people, instead they are the “peer managers,” those people elected to control their own, a conventional tactic in most prisoner-of-war camps. That is why they are elected by secret ballot, because no one wants to be responsible for the things they do to maintain their control, which are both ruthless, and without regard to law.

In the mass society, the first stage of admission is the “public school,” the first place all people are forced to go, “for their own good.” Like dogs, the children are taught to obey unquestioningly; they are penalized, sometimes bodily, for asserting any kind of independence in thought or action; and they are conditioned to passively accept life, without any real ambitions. The will to live is deliberately stamped out of the individual, so as to empower the fiction that all good things come from the institution, the masses.

From there, the “leaders” emerge, the engineers, the doctors, lawyers, and teachers, who enter the “job market,” and perpetuate the massification of society. The State-certified illiterates are drilled with the rules of the mass society. The myth of the Revolution, the “birth” of the revolutionary-nation, the pantheon of fictionalized “heroes,” and the sense of being a part of a “Grand Tradition,” eliminates the ability of the individual to make a rational decision, especially at the impressionable age of 9 or 10. To say the least, this form of child-torture is unprincipled; a form of child abuse unparalleled in time. Fear is employed liberally, and the “society of school” becomes the basis of thinking, as a model, for the rest of life. The way we relate to each other is learned in a pressure cooker, which should never have been implemented, because of the lobotomizing effect it has on the population.

But a lobotomized population is the only kind that would respond to the stimuli of the institutions of mass society. Fear is used to drive

people away from each other, so that people will become reliant on commercial contacts, for which they need the lifeblood of the mass State, money. Money, on its own, is neither good nor bad, but as a fiat scrip of the mass State, it is a powerful tool. By forcing people to need money, they ultimately can grow to love it (in many instances *more* than other people). But an obsessed individual can be manipulated, whereas a healthy person is independent, whole.

Once the patterns of response are drummed into the heads of the children — who become the adults — the population is ready for the mass society. The mass media; the mass employer, the corporation; the mass soul-saver (for those moments when working 9 to 5 feels unsatisfying), the church; and the mass State, with its political games which sanctify the rule of the mob. Only a mob has the kind of intimidating power necessary to run a modern political State; the people are intentionally kept on the edge of their seats, so as to create a vast reserve of anger, ready to be directed at the drop of a hat, at a political opponent, or the ideas of the opposition.

The mass State was born in war. The principles of war became the basic operating premises of the government of the masses. The threat of an enemy has always catalyzed the people, to give them a sense of urgent danger, from which they would sacrifice all to be delivered.

Revolution demands war and violence, to finish things “quickly.” Partisans become embittered, and radicals and extremists are recast as “conservatives.” Those who support the Cause are advanced, as cannon fodder, and those who reject it are purged; uniformity is accelerated, under the yoke of a reign of terror. The people are allowed to live their own lives, but every day their customary rights are narrowed down, in the tradition of the mass State, for the good of the “Fatherland.” Every day, whole new professions become “uniformed,” commissioned officers of the State.

The Revolution, like the Inquisition, has its accusers, who do nothing more than charge people with having committed crimes. The crimes

are designed to satisfy the morals of those with power, who are usually charismatic rabble-rousers; opinionated tin-horns who say “yes” to anyone with enough money to buy an election.

The person charged by the accuser is bodily seized by a would-be bully, whose commission from the revolutionary-nation makes of him a “policeman” instead of a thug, and the “criminal” is held (usually involuntarily) until brought before a “judge.” The judge is anyone who thinks he has a “right” to judge others, embodied in a lawyer with a gavel. Of course, all these people are you and me.

The mass society is a state of consciousness. If we believe in the institutions of the mass State, the mass media, the corporations, the politicians, the “Republic,” then we are willingly turning our back on the nation-as-family, the organic community of humanity, which is not a mob.

**The only way to stop mob rule
is to disassociate one's self
from mass institutions,
and to encourage others to do the same**

The fact that elections confuse, anger, and irritate far more than they resolve, as they consume vast resources elevating mediocre men to offices which inherit the legacy of regicides, is indicative of a deep social division, a bleeding wound. While mobs rage, even if contained and directed by the armed forces, the government, the media, the churches, the destruction is evidence that this form of democracy is only equal in the way that it destroys everything, equally.

Gian Piero de Bellis

Democracy as Statocracy

(2000)

A clarification of the process that has transformed democracy (theoretical self-rule) into statocracy (practical state-rule)

Source: Gian Piero de Bellis, *From totalitarian democracy to libertarian polyarchy*, polyarchy.org

Politics as democracy

The current form assumed by contemporary politics in most countries is democracy. Nowadays, there is no politician nor political party who does not call himself a democrat. Democracy is a magic word, referring partly to historical reality and partly to fairy tales.

This magical aura that surrounds the word democracy has its foundations on:

- historical reasons. Certain societies (e.g. the Athens of ancient Greece, the States of the early American Federation) that have prospered in the past, are said to be founded on democracy.

- theoretical appeal. Many famous and highly esteemed persons (Rousseau, Tocqueville, Lincoln, Jefferson, etc.) have celebrated the virtues of democracy as the best system of governance.

During the XX century, the full appearance of the masses and their movements (socialism, syndicalism, trade unionism) on the political and economic scene, with the pressing demands for recognition of their role and rights, added new impetus to the claims and aims of democracy.

From that moment onwards, in many countries, politics became associated with democracy or with the fight for democracy.

Given the importance attributed to the term/concept of “democracy” it needs to be analysed in its:

- etymology (descriptive)
- ethics (prescriptive)
- praxis (practice).

Democracy : etymology (descriptive)

The word “democracy” comes from the Greek **δημος** (people, multitude) + **κρατος** (power), meaning the power of the people.

If we take democracy in its simple etymological sense, as power in the hands of people (the multitude), it would refer simply to any instance when many people have assumed some decision, autonomously, on any subject.

From this it would follow that, a lynch mob and a gentlemen’s country club, both with power in their hands, should both be included under the label of democracy. Certainly, feeling would resist this wide application of the word democracy, but logic should insist unless further qualifications are added to the term.

This is why, based only on etymology, the term democracy does not refer, necessarily, to a noble or progressive reality, unless it is complemented by ethics, that is by prescriptive characterizations and qualifications.

Democracy : ethics (prescriptive)

In his famous definition of democracy, Abraham Lincoln characterized it as “government of the people, by the people, for the people.” (1863)

In practical terms, this definition stresses the fact that power is located in the hands of everybody (the people) and is exerted directly by them, in the interest of everybody.

According to this very appealing definition, a democratic organization is the one in which the government (governing body plus ruling decisions) is:

- composed of everybody (i.e. assembly of the people)
- run directly by everybody (i.e. decisions taken by the people)
- in the interest of everybody (i.e. benefiting all the people).

With respect to this view, only the concomitant presence of

- universal personal participation
- universal active involvement
- universal positive benefices

makes the use of the term democracy appropriate and the striving for it worthwhile.

In fact, the persistent appeal exerted by the word derives from the (implicitly assumed) contemporaneous presence (or pretence of presence) of these three factors.

It is then necessary to endow the word democracy with these strong qualifications given the fact that the term is universally used as indicating the best way, from an ethical point of view, of administering a society (i.e. conducting common affairs, solving common problems). Because of this deep and wide positive characterization, no ambiguities should be attached to the word otherwise it might be used to cover all sort of abominations.

We need to see how this prescriptive characterization fares in current reality.

Democracy : praxis (practice)

In the course of history, democracy, while keeping the same positive emotional connotation, came to represent in actual fact something very different from what Lincoln had expressed in so noble words.

Keeping the same appealing term while altering or adulterating both form and content, it is one of the most (ab)used tricks of political discourse and practice.

Contrary to its professed nature, the reality of democracy, especially during the XX century, has been characterized by:

- **delegation.** Universal personal participation (as in a general assembly of a village debating topics of common interest) has been deemed infeasible and impractical as towns grew in population and the territorial nation states took over, controlling very large areas. So, participation in political activities was limited to particular occasions (the electoral process that replaced the town meetings) and to particular people (those whose name was in the electoral register with the exclusion, for instance, of so-called foreigners). The delegation of responsibility through a vote, without proper discussion, unless we include propaganda as a way of debating, became the rule.

- **representation.** Once participation had gone, it was logical that universal active involvement could not exist any longer it being a further and deeper exercise of participation. The concomitant result of delegation was that some quick-minded individuals offered their services in the huge untapped market of political representation as the paid voice of “the people.”

The deliberations on social topics and the carrying out of political acts became the prerogative of a few particular personages who acted in the name of the many. So, professional figures took over the (political) decision-making process while the individuals were taken out of it, except for the few moments necessary, every so many years, to cast their vote and chose their masters.

- **imposition.** The safeguard and enhancement of the interests of everybody, that is of each and every one composing the people, was deemed an impractical unworkable factor for the implementation of the new version of democracy (delegated representative democracy). In the new democracy, the majority would rule in the name of the “public” interest. No serious objection was raised that the so called “public” interest could very well be contrary to the interest of a relevant number of people and certainly was not the interest of all the people.

The imposition on everybody of the will of the majority (real or fictitious) replaced the attainment of universal benefits via the political process. The particular gains of some people (the so-called majority) became the legitimate hallmark of democracy even if that meant crushing the way of life or the life altogether of other people (the so-called minorities).

In order to affirm its power, the presumed majority at the ballots has also used bullets whenever a presumed minority has tried to go its own way (from America in the XIX century to Europe in the XX century).

The updated version of democracy could, very well, be characterized as government imposed to all the people, without the consent of many people, in the name of all the people.

The pre-conditions for democracy

This new (fake) version of democracy took over and became the creed and deed of XX century politics because the pre-conditions that favoured the development of the original (true) democracy had all but disappeared.

As a matter of fact, the idea and the practice of democracy had started emerging within the circumscribed reality of some Greek cities, in the local assemblies of the Vikings, in the alpine communities of Switzerland, in the popular government of mediaeval cities and, later on, in the town life of New England.

All these experiments and manifestations of democracy were characterized by three factors:

- **small**: democracy developed within a small entity, and the smaller its reality, the more pregnant was the democratic experiment and the more effective its performance.
- **free**: the towns where some democratic experiments took place were free territories or freer (e.g. offering more choices) than the surrounding countryside. As the saying went, "town air makes free"; and the freer the town the more democratic its government and the more flourishing the arts of life.
- **abstinent**: a limited territory and a circumscribed intervention, focused only on some aspects of life in common, characterized the temperate non-intrusive government of the best democratic experiments.

These three aspects of classical democracy sustained and reinforced each other. Restrictions of freedom in one town could make people move to the next town or, even, push them to found a new settlement, diluting the concentration of power. The undue interference by the rulers could lead to an uprising and to the driving out of those in power who had become a nuisance to the inhabitants of the city.

The disappearance of the pre-conditions

Probably, only in a few very limited historical cases, the co-presence of these three factors took place. For instance, in some towns of the New England in the early phase of colonization or in some communities in the Swiss mountains.

Certainly, with the outbreak of the First World War and the coming into overall dominance of the nation state, the bucolic image of small town life based on democratic practices was totally shattered, at least in Europe, surviving perhaps as a folkloric example somewhere in the plains and mountains of the Helvetic Confederation

In its stead, the new reality, centred on the nation states, was characterized by the following aspects:

- big vs. small

The cult of bigness became the new creed of the XX century: “Big is good and more is better” could be taken as a typical slogan of that century. The highest building, the largest ship, the biggest city, the richest country, all these became matters of pride and propaganda even when the gigantic size was associated with gigantic troubles, as the tragedy of the *Titanic* showed in an exemplary way.

- monopolistic vs. free

The monopolization, by the state, of the means of communication (radio, TV), the monopolization of the territory (called national

sovereignty), the monopolization of the exercise of power and violence, the monopolization of the conferring of licenses and professional titles, the monopolization of the internal market (protectionism); these are only some aspects of the new climate that characterized XX century version of democracy.

- absolute vs. abstinent

The (centralizing) nation state got into the habit of intervening in every field, putting forward a law for every occurrence or possible case, exercising an absolute sovereignty over everybody and everything within its jurisdiction. The so-called absolutism of the kings of the *ancien régime* pales if compared with the range of controlling and intervening power in the hand of the so called "democratic" states (i.e. their "democratic" rulers) and the means at their disposal for exercising it.

These new aspects made the survival of democracy as depicted and advocated in Lincoln's words, a practical impossibility. In its place emerged, more and more, strong, centralized governments, with wider and wider powers of intervention on every aspect of social and personal life.

Nevertheless, the magical feeling associated with the word democracy remained and so the word got preserved and it is still in current use even if its form and content have been totally modified.

In fact, the disappearance of the pre-conditions led, during the XX century, to the disappearance of the tempered classical democracy based on individuals and small communities and to its replacement by the totalitarian contemporary democracy centred on nation states and large bureaucracies.

The totalitarian democracy

Totalitarian democracy is here intended to mean a system of government centred on the nation state and on the silent acceptance of its overall supremacism. This translates into:

- exclusive territorial sovereignty

The State arrogates to itself the topmost power over everything (e.g. rights of expropriation) and everybody (e.g. rights of imposition) within a specific territory. From the subjugation of native Americans to the destruction of the Chechnyan town of Grozny, exclusive territorial sovereignty has meant the crushing, by the central state, of any independent or slightly unruly entity.

- extensive decision-making sovereignty

The state, in a totalitarian democracy, has the power to intervene in relation to most of the aspects (almost the totality) concerning the life of individuals under its territorial jurisdiction. To justify this extensive power, totalitarian democracy has accepted the myth of the general will as the expression of the majority. It would be more correct to say that, through the myth of the general will, the individuals count for nil while the generals (i.e. the army élite, the political élite, the economic élite, etc.) count for everybody. The might of numbers (majority rule) becomes the right assigned to a few to impose wide ranging/all inclusive decisions.

In this respect, it is perhaps not pointless to remember that, in the past, Socrates and Jesus Christ, among others, have been condemned to death by the will of the majority or by representatives of the majority. In more recent times, overwhelming majorities have supported/imposed fascism, national socialism and communism (to refer to the best known cases) or have been more or less willing accomplices of the atrocities perpetrated by the state rulers in the name of the majority.

Throughout history, when exclusive and extensive power has been conferred on anyone (be it a single person or an organization) under whatever justification (be it the will of God or the general will) crimes and misdeeds have, almost inexorably, followed.

In the second half of the XX century, many states have lost some of their most aggressive features but they still remain big organizations with the pretence of monopolistic power that they try to exert in an absolute way. In other words, the cosmetic changes towards a more liberal state of affairs, still cover a totalitarian democracy whose real brutal face comes to the fore in situations of crisis, reaffirming its power through the usual armoury of statism (i.e. bombing, blasting, beating).

Democracy as statocracy

During the XX century, society has died by suffocation because the state has invaded and occupied the entire scene previously taken by individuals and communities. Totalitarian democracy is then a better characterization of democracy in the age of statism; totalitarian democracy can also be defined as statocracy (everything for the state, from the state, by the state).

The main characteristics of current totalitarian democracy, i.e. statocracy, are:

- minocracy

The personal feeling of impotence in changing the political situation through voting for parties that repeat more of the same and behave even more the same, has bred disillusion and disaffection in the electorate.

This means that a compact minority can dominate, through state power, an entire society. If only 60% of the people bother to cast their vote, in a majority system with two parties, 31% of the elec-

torate can impose its will on the remaining 69%; with three parties competing, 21% of the people could rule a country through an appointed élite.

This 21% can give to a party a huge parliamentary majority so that not every representative's vote is necessary for the passing of laws. So, like Russian dolls or Chinese boxes, power is exerted by the smallest piece deep inside (the inner core) while the largest one on the outside (e.g. the Parliament) performs only the function of the "democratic" cover (justification for unlimited action) and shield (protection from indiscreet looks).

For example, an American President, concentrating in his hands an incredible amount of power with respect to the entire world, can be designated by less than 30% of the votes of the national electorate (e.g. Ronald Reagan in 1980 with 27%). As for representatives allegedly elected by the majority of the adult population, only 35% of the electorate turned up to vote for the USA Congress in 1978.

In the U.K., in 1974, the Labour Party gained a Parliamentary majority with 39.2% of the vote. In 1983, the Conservative gained 61% of the seats in the House of Commons with only 43% of the vote. And the situation has since deteriorated as far as participation to the polls is concerned.

- mediocracy

Totalitarian democracy is dominated by some individuals (leaders), supported by lobbies and surrounded, very often, by a cohort of mediocre people. This has the effect, sooner or later, of transforming even clever individuals called to positions of responsibility into total morons. So, when total morons are themselves elected to high office (for instance the Presidency of the USA), we can only imagine the menace to peace and well-being they represent.

Mediocrity becomes then the rule, procrastination the practice and unlimited irresponsibility one of the privileges associated with totali-

tarian democracy. With the justification of a popular mandate, the politician has been given the licence to squander resources and bring chaos into the world without being accountable for it.

- bureaucracy

The state and the parties that dominate the state are made up, mainly, of professional figures, that is by people whose exclusive activity, throughout their life, is to meddle in politics and in political administration.

Here is the real power, that gives reality and continuity to the implementation of the totalitarian democracy.

The role of the bureaucrats is, essentially, to run people's lives; they are at the service of any power, once they are granted that their role, i.e. their existence, is not questioned.

Bureaucracy is the pillar of totalitarian democracy.

Beyond totalitarian democracy

Towards the end of the XX century something has started changing with respect both to exclusive and extensive sovereignty of the state.

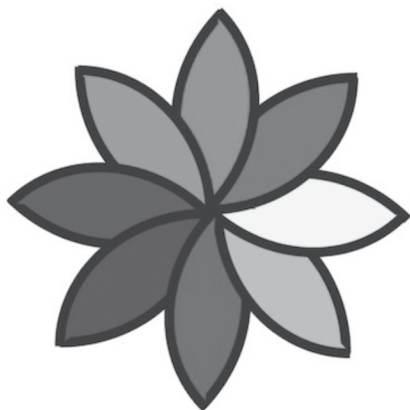
Nevertheless, we are still totally stuck with an empty word (democracy) and with obsolete practices that state propaganda wants us to believe are the highest attainments of humanity, i.e. the best of all possible worlds as far as social organization is concerned.

On the contrary, this revised version of democracy, the current mino-medio-buro-cracy, in one word, this monster of statocracy, is a backward and obsolete form of organization that survives only due to the inertia of the many and through the cheating perpetrated by the few (sometimes a large few) who have a big stake in parasitism. Most of the people are only unaware hostage of the state power.

To individuals and communities who want to count, that is to be in control of their lives, the only message of current democracy is: let's have another election, the result of which is to have the same or similar unaccountable representatives, elected by an even smaller minocracy, imposing on everybody even more deadly strictures called state laws.

To get out of the confusion, created by the misappropriation and misuse of the magic word *democracy*, might require we drop that word altogether.

To do so, more than a revolution, that is always an affair of imposition, we need a personal re-evolution, a peaceful profound re-orientation of minds and hearts and deeds by willing, conscious, responsible individuals and communities.



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