SOME SUGGESTIONS TOWARDS A TOTAL CRITIQUE OF THE STATE

Most of the categories used here are provisional, and in many cases, unmediated. Comments are welcome.

For most of the Left today, the state is an externally existing 'instrument of the ruling class', something that is used for enacting policies. This reactionary naivete betrays an imprisonment within the necessary appearances of modern society. The Left does not see itself as the movement to abolish this monstrous institution, but rather, wishes to 'capture the state power' and refine it. The state is not even negated in thought, because it is the Axis par excellence of all realpolitik. The truth is, that society, is mesmerized by the state, which is always perceived as something objectified, not to be looked for within society itself.

If we conceive of some of the ubiquitous social relations of everyday life, such as marriage, purchase, sale, voting, contracting, &c as a series of events-in-process, we observe that all these events take place within an institutional nexus, they presuppose the existence of & derive their meaning from, say a certain proprie-
torial structure, money & capital accumulation, a given mode of political legitimation, &c. Social life is lived & experienced through a series of such institutions, separate but interrelated 'spheres' of legal social behaviours, & each event may presuppose & strengthen several of these spheres.

Implied in the logic of all these events, however, as the outermost concentric circle, as arena, is the state. The state is the internal rational principle of each relation, the ground upon which the relation is established, it is the rational principle presupposed in each contract, it is the guarantor of the legitimacy of all relations. The state embodies in an externalized objective form, the coercive rationality internal to property & its various metamorphoses; proprie-
torial contract, social relations. The state form derives from the principles underlying & permeating the totality of social relationships. Analytically, therefore, the specific violent contractual principles of a given society are the ground of the state & its different spheres. The argument, however, is circular & turn in on itself, as we see that the state reappears as the arena, enforcer, & ascribing agent of these very principles.
By 'sphere' is meant the space not of a physical entity, but of an institutional nexus, a social-ideological space. This connotes a specific political/cultural grammar, habits, rituals, conventions, mass symbols, &c, all of which require a correspondingly specific style of political manipulation on the one hand, & the established institutions of specific production rationality such as value production, on the other. The sphere, thus, is a deeply ingrained groove, with an established language, which confers meaning & legitimacy on various events. The most universal such sphere is the state itself. The existence of institutional spheres & their political grammar indicates the rules which delimit social life, & constitute the ground for 'free human activity'. Analytically we may distinguish the spheres—the given production institutions (the rationality of the mode of production); legal praxis (the activities of executive, legislature & judiciary); & state legitimation, (within which illusory symbols such as Nation & Popular Will are manipulated by various agencies). But socially these spheres presuppose & reinforce each other, such that it becomes impossible to look for determinist priorities, beyond saying that the state-form is specific as an epochal totality. There exist therefore, not ruling classes, but ruling institutions, which confer class status on various social groups. The capitalist is a mere personification (albeit a privileged one) of one or other metamorphosis of the production category, capital. The state institutions represent the alienated & objectified mediators of human social relations.

2) The objects in which human labour is materialized have a social form, value, inherent in them & yet distinct from their physical characteristics. Human beings also have a social form which has nothing to do with their biological existence. This is the political quality of citizenship, which derives from the fact that every person must possess legitimate existence by virtue of 'belonging' to a state. Capitalist production casts all men into an uniform mould, that which gives all men the character of salesmen of one or other type of commodity. The state casts all men into the legal mould of citizen, its ultimate particle. Capital accumulation, in its historically specific circumstances, exudes specific state-forms as adequate to its
Thus certain 'totalitarian' state formations arise in situations of belated or crisis-ridden capitalist development where they appear as the most 'national' or adequate organizing principle of the accumulation process. (Nationalism, as I shall try to argue, is the ideology of the state as representative of the 'social' interest, i.e., 'national growth', i.e. accumulation of capital ideologized as 'Socialist construction', 'Nation Building', etc.) Thus men, being purveyors of commodities, are citizens of nations. The state is always a specific nation-state, this being the only form in which it can reproduce itself as a legitimate organism. The 'nation' is how the subjects of the state see themselves, it is the euphemism for state, it is the ideological category which the state actively ascribes to the citizenship. But however, it be organized, whether as refied representative of an agglomeration of 'free' & 'equal' property-owners; or as 'socialist' bureaucratic corporation, it is only as nation-state that the modern capitalist state gains viable existence.

In his section on commodity fetishism, Marx shows how under capitalist production human relations become transmuted into external relations between persons & social relations between things (values). The labour of the individual asserts itself as social only through the relations which exchange establishes between things, which as values, acquire a uniform social status independent of their utility. The laws of value production appear as mysterious determiners of discrete & atomized human existence. But the state inheres in value production, because it inheres in 'money' and 'law' which in their modern forms are thoroughly generalized institutions permeating every nook & cranny of society. What is more, contrary to the chaos of value production, the state appears as the very embodiment of Reason, Harmony, organization, Order, & c.

The battalions of warring contractors carry with them constantly the abstract legal quality of citizenship, the placid badge of sociality in the battleground of market. In the form of the citizen, the state sits in the conscience of each warrior. Thus, as 'money', 'law', and alienated representative of abstract property owners, the state is the Arch-ideologist of all social relations in their totality, not merely the production process in its immediacy. As such the state becomes an active Sovereign Subject,
with a personality of its own. States converse with each other, using men as their representatives. The wheel turns a full cycle. No longer do states represent men, but men are honoured to represent—not themselves—but the state. (The language of third-worldism typified by articles on the subject in Peking Review—expresses most clearly this reinforced alienation. Here it is nations which bully each other, befriend each other, "stand up", resist hegemony, & c. One is reminded of the language of bourgeois 'economics', where experts are constantly talking about the 'productivity' of capital.

"Public Interest" is the ideologised form of the needs of 'growth', accumulation, & c. The state is the objectified guardian & representative of the public interest. It is legitimised through the institutions of legal praxis. The very principle of delegation implies statehood, for it lays down that the 'people' can only exercise their 'will' or power through an alien 'representative'. The power of this representative is reduced to nothing if it does not embody a despotic authority over the represented. (This has nothing to do with how 'democratic' actuexgencrinccmmccmm is the process by which the 'people' alienate their 'will') 'Politics' becomes the profession of the representatives, while the populace is once more condemned to its lonely 'economic' activity. 'Politics' directs or manages 'economic', & thus does class society reproduce itself. The division between politics & economics, representative & citizen, is a reflex of the cleavage between classes in modern society.

4. The state confronts the citizen in the form of the Official. Since the state is simultaneously alienated form & internalised content, however, it is not merely the official who is the state, but the citizen as well, because the latter is an official human being. Thus the line between citizen & state is constantly shifting, the citizen in one case is the official in the other. Officials carry identities corresponding to the various schizophrenia personalities of the state. Thus we have the Executive Official (the Diplomatic Bureau), the Ideological Official, (politicians, party bosses & c), & the Judicial Official, (Judges). These are the players & references of legal praxis.

5. Reactionary political currents, i.e., those which function passively within the
established political grammar of the institutions of legal praxis, have of necessity to accept the existence of the other spheres of state-life, & the classes connected with these. Since the existence of the state form is posited upon the reproduction of a given type of social relationships, the major reactionary currents must, in non-critical moments of state life, establish their acceptability to all major classes & strata including, for example, the T.U.'s as corporations engaged in the sale of the commodity labour-power. This is the basis for various types of populism, bourgeois socialism, & c. Hence the major state-parties become institutionalized ideological areas of what managerial sociology calls 'conflict resolution', where the theory & practice of dealing with the class struggle is worked out. As such these parties play a stabilizing role for the state at given moments. Most C.P.'s today play the role of state-parties.

The established social propriety is discovered & codified by the legislature, but the act of codification appears as willful, & voluntary. Here discovery becomes ingenious invention. Hence the illusion of the legislature as creative agent of social propriety & Law. The state projects the Constitution as the civilian God, through which its own godliness is mysteriously revealed. The judiciary is the purveyor & interpreter of God's word, the high priest of the holy Books of the state. It is the neutral institutional, the bumps outside the harum of pure & unsullied constitutional rules & regulations. In its antithesis the judiciary objectifies the illusion of state neutrality & godliness. When the judiciary pays obeisance to the Law, it performs an act of self-worship, when society at large pays obeisance to the Law, it prostrates itself-worship, then before the state & performs an act of self-blame.

The institution of the Executive (the representative of the representatives) must by its very nature receive individualized personification. It is here that the state appears as one person, & a person as the state. The executive is the most fetishized aspect of the state, of social alienation. Through it the godliness of the state is actually revealed. It is power sphere of Pure Activity, Pure Freedom, benevolent or terrible. It is power personified. By its active self-legitimization on
the representative principle, it provides hallucinatory illustration to society of the deeply impalpable character of the state, but this principle itself ensures the continued alienation of state from society, because after the citizens exercise their right to rule, the power to rule must be transferred to the executive. The executive is the most adequate form of the state, it represents. Total Power, Total Mystery, & Total Alienation.

4). Legitimacy. There are two different types of legitimization. The institutional arena which we call the state must exist within a certain physical & cultural boundary, it must represent a people, a nation, regardless of whether such a homogeneous entity exists or not. That is, the state must possess certain viable grounds for projecting itself as a nation state. Secondly, on the ground of the nation, the state must periodically enact the illusion of social self-determination. The state must be popular, the executive must be of the people.

The nation is a mysterious category. To attempt to define it in terms independent of the state is to drown in the multifarious & conflicting evidences thrown up by the nature of various nation-states: the nation simply cannot be defined in terms of race, language, cultural, religion, & c. Rather, all these factors must receive their explanation within a broader & more rational argument. A nation is fundamentally a fait accompli; it is the constituted state which controls & defines the nation. Nationalism is the ideology of the state, or in the case of 'liberation' movements, of political currents aspiring to state power by seeking a revitalization of state legitimacy on subjectivist nationalist grounds, of course, such as race, culture, & c. The nationalist consciousness is actively ascribed to its subjects by the state; it is that mysterious category which confers, for example, the identity of 'Indian'-hood on Tamils & Kashmiris. In the 'socialist' states, the C.P.'s in power ascribes a certain 'Leninist' patriotism to the working class, through which the relation: Class--Party--State becomes a nationally ideal identity within the limits of "Socialism in one Country". In such cases, the principle of representation takes the form of the doctrine of Substitutionism: "The state is a dictatorship of the proletariat, the Party represents the True
Consciousness of the proletariat, the Central Committee represents the Party, & the Great & Beloved Leader Heads the Central Committee. For all states, without exception, "All that is real is rational, & all that is rational is real." That is why the state is the most powerful & ultimate bastion of anti-communism.

Crisis of Legitimacy. In the colonial transfer-of-power situation, most of the spheres of state-life remain intact. The form of legitimization changes, a new principle, embodied in a more legitimate (visible) 'national' party, hegemonises this sphere. In colonial situations the state has always been inadequately legitimised. Such situations presupposed (in terms of historical immaturity, state structuration by juridical superimposition, etc.) and maintained the alienation between society & the state. With the gradual maturation of these societies, this tension became the ground for the constitution of new legitimising institutions: national movements.

Given the belated development of capitalism in these areas, state capitalism appeared as the only viable form of accumulation, & the Party of the Nation transcended itself into the Party of the State. The state-form here corresponds more closely to the party-state of the 'radical' variety than to the liberal parliamentary republic.

In the revolutionary situation, there occurs the dissolution of all the institutions of state life. The state remains, but the form changes, this is 'transformation'. The total crisis is manifested in an acute crisis of legitimacy. This makes it possible for a revolutionary party to hegemonise the revolution by infusing society by a new state principle, composites in the revolution-by-nature, embodying a new production rationality, a new legality, a new mode of legitimisation. The entrapment of all non-spheres of state life in the capitalist state are destroyed: (for example, the specific ideological role of the market, which inculcates specific illusions about private vs public life; Benthamite self-interest, the notion of the state as arbitrator, & c.). All the new institutions of the transformed state now become subject to the assessment & manipulation of the Party, & therefore, permeated with the doctrines of the New Dispensation. Thus, in certain 'socialist' & revolutionary 'Third World' states, the ideological character of the State is such
more blatant than in well established capitalist democracies, & takes the form of an explicit propagandist & organizationalist interest on the part of the state towards mass ideology. Here therefore, we have the totalization of all spheres of state-life by Doctrine (whose Jesuits reside in the Party), so much so that the very distinctions between various spheres outlined above tend to lose meaning. No longer does social life derive legitimacy from seemingly supra-ideological & fetishized legal institutions, rather, the new legality is constantly subject to the vicissitudes of doctrinal interpretation. The party is the state, the state the Party. Human existence is validated within doctrine. The party-state assigns to society certain totalizing categories which it either 'represents' or exercises: masses, People, Counter-revolutionaries, &c which, regardless of whether or not are exhausted of progressive historical content, are persisted with because they form the basis for the continued existence of dominant bureaucracies. (A proletarian is a proletarian only as long as he submits to the Party Line, which represents his true consciousness; else, he is a class enemy).

The well known fetish ridden boast of the liberal statist runs, "laws are a government of laws & not of men". The liberal state, contrasted with the party-state which is based on symbols of mass power, revolutionary conscious. The party-state is totalitarian because it totalizes its doctrines; it is blatantly arbitrary because its institutional foundations are insecure, grounded in doctrine, it is contentiously conscious of being declared illegitimate by another, more revolutionary doctrine. A paradox, it is all too strong because it is all too weak. It represents the death agony of the state. It also represents the counter-revolutionizing of the revolution which brought it to power.

A revolution is the rejection of established principles of legitimacy, an overthrow of the democracy based on the abstract 'citizen'. It is an assertion of humanity against citizenship. The bourgeoisie challenges revolutions on grounds which it the revolution rejects, 'nation', 'national will', &c, which are the philosophical and geopolitical ground of the abstract citizen. It is rejection even of representation itself, witness the tremendous outburst of self-governing institutions in the Russia
however, Soviets vs Constituent Assembly actually ended up as CPSU vs Constituent Assembly; the representative of Jacobin state-capitalist accumulation vs the representative of bourgeois counter-revolution. (The colonial transfers-of-power are no revolutions at all, merely the assertion of democratic, citizen-based alienated state-power, against undemocratic, equally alienated state-power. Legitimised alienation alienation is the more viable state-form.)

A voluntary association of free producers, with no class of wage labour in existence, needs no despotic representation, no alienation of 'politics' from 'economics', & hence no democracy, citizenship, sovereignty, republics, & nations. A soviet, though an elemental assertion of communism, negates it because it is still a representation-more democratic, of course-of wage-labour as class. Hence, it is political, involves statehood, & seeks legitimacy in order to become a sovereignty, a new despot. (The soviet in revolution is communist; institutionalised, it symbolises counter-revolution.) The question of 'transition', therefore, is simultaneously the the question of the retention of classes, citizens, & representation.

Communism is the real movement towards the abolition of value production, the abolition of the separation between man & his creative power which has taken the alien & monstrous form of capitalist state and state-capital. Politics as such is formal, for it is concerned with the formal aspects of state-life, (the modality of alienation-democratic process &c., legitimacy, form management of value production, or form of reproduction of state-life). Just as advertising is the discourse of discrete capitals, politics is the internal discourse of state-life, or representation, & of human alienation. Men engaged in the discourse of democracy, state-sovereignty, legality, &c., have become state-particles in toto, they are alienated twice over, since they are now but mere shadows of that which represents them. All states eschew ideologies to society which are grounded upon the 'timeless' fact of their own existence.

The left is now face to face with the slogans of the Communist Manifesto of 1848.

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