

to the complex texture of social life, the differentiation of functions, etc.

Such references look "scientific"; they lull the philistine to intellectual repose and softly obliterate the main point: the separation of society into irreconcilably hostile classes.

If it were not for this division, "independent armed organizations of the population" might differ by their greater complexity, by the advanced stage of their technique, from the primitive organization of the ape stage, which bore sticks, or from the aborigines, or from people united in the clan society; but organizations of this kind would still be possible.

Such organization is at present impossible, because civilized society is divided into hostile—irreconcilably hostile—classes, whose independent armaments would lead to armed conflict between them.

The state has been built up; a special force is created, special bodies of armed men, and as each revolution destroys the state mechanism, it presents us with the interesting spectacle of the governing class attempting to recreate the special bodies of armed men useful *to it*, while the oppressed class aims to create a new organization of this kind, adapted to the use, not of the exploiters, but of the exploited.

In the passage quoted, Engels puts theoretically the question which is practically and visibly put, and on a mass-action scale, by each great revolution, namely, the question of the mutual relations of the "special" bodies of armed men and the "independent armed organizations of the population." We shall see how this question was concretely illustrated by the experience of European and Russian revolutions.

But let us return to Engels' exposition.

He points out that sometimes, such as, for example, in North America, this social power is weak (he is here discussing a rather rare exception in capitalist society, as applied to certain parts of North America in their pre-capitalistic stage,

when the free colonist was still the most common figure), but in general he emphasizes that:

"The social power becomes stronger in proportion as the class contradictions within the state are aggravated, and in proportion as the states which have mutual contact become larger and more densely populated. Consider for a moment present-day Europe, in which the class struggle and the competition for conquests have developed to a state power of such high degree, that it threatens to swallow up all society, including even the state itself."

This was written not later than the early nineties of the last century; Engels' last foreword was dated June 16, 1891. At that time the trend toward imperialism—in the sense of a complete domination by trusts, as well as the absolute power of the great banks, a large-scale colonial policy, etc.—was only beginning in France, and was very weak in North America and in Germany. From that time on the "competition in conquests" made all the more gigantic strides, since the whole earth seemed at the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century to be definitely divided among these "competing conquerors," i. e., the predatory great powers. Military and naval armaments increased incredibly from that time on, and the war of conquest of 1914-17, fought to determine whether England or Germany should rule the world, for a division of the booty, brought this "swallowing up" of all the forces of society by the rapacious state power to a full catastrophic stop.

Engels was able as early as 1891 to point out this "competition for conquest," as one of the chief distinguishing marks of the external policy of the great powers, but the wretched social-chauvinists of 1914-1917, at the very moment when this competition, having been raised to the *n*th power, had given birth to the imperialistic war,—proceeded to conceal the defense of the interests of "their" bourgeoisie, with such phrases as "the defense of the fatherland," "the defense of the republic and the revolution," etc., etc.!