

3. The State is the Instrument of the Exploitation of the Oppressed Class

For the maintenance of a special social power standing above society, there is necessary the imposition of taxes and obligations toward the state.

"Ruling by social power and by the right of imposing obligations," writes Engels, "the office-holders, as organs of society, rise above society. The voluntary, unaffected respect which was felt toward the organs of family (clan) society, is no longer sufficient for them—as if they could attain even that." Special laws are created, providing for the sanctity and inviolability of the official class. "The pettiest policeman" has more "authority" than the representatives of the clan, yet even the head of the military power of the civilized state might envy the elders of the clan, who enjoy the respect of their society "without enforcing it with clubs."

The question of the privileged position as organs of state power of the official class is here clearly put. It is pointed out as fundamental. What puts them over society? We shall see later how this theoretical question was answered in practice by the Paris Commune of 1871, and squashed in a reactionary spirit by Kautsky in 1912.

"As the state arose from the necessity of holding in check the opposition of the classes, and as it arose at the same time from the very collisions between these classes, it will naturally become, as a general rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which with the aid of the state established itself as the politically dominant class and thus creates new modes for suppressing and exploiting the downtrodden classes" . . . Not only the ancient and feudal societies were organs for the suppression of the slaves and serfs, respectively, but "our present-day representative govern-

ment" is an instrument for the exploitation of wage labor by capital. Exceptional periods may occur, in which the struggling classes attain a certain equilibrium of forces, so that the state power for a time has a certain independence with respect to both of them: it is then apparently a "mediator between them." Such was the absolute monarchy of the 17th and 18th centuries, the Bonapartism of the 1st and 3rd empires in France, and Bismarck in Germany.

And such, we may add for ourselves, was the Kerensky-Government in republican Russia, after it began to persecute the revolutionary proletariat at the moment when the Soviets, owing to the fact that they were led by petit bourgeois democrats, were still powerless, while the bourgeoisie was *not* yet strong enough to disperse them.

"In a democratic republic," Engels continues, "wealth exercises its power indirectly, but all the more truly;" in the first place, simply as in America, by "the outright purchase of officials"; in the second place, by "a union between the government and the moneyed interests" (France and America).

In our day imperialism and the domination of the banks "has developed" both these means of defending and putting into force the universal power of wealth, in any democratic republic, to an unprecedented degree. If, for example, in the earlier months of the democratic republic in Russia, during the honeymoon, as it were, of the union of the S. R. and Menshevik "socialists" with the bourgeoisie in one coalition government—Mr. Palchinsky sabotaged all methods of checking the capitalists and their marauding agents, their seizures of public moneys for war supplies; and if, after Mr. Palchinsky leaves the ministry (to be succeeded, of course, by another man exactly like him), he is "recompensed," by the capitalists, with a little job and an annual salary of 120,000 rubles attached,—what would you call that? Is that a direct or an indirect purchase of officials? Is that an alliance of the govern-