

Engels and the Bourgeois State: From Separated Public

Power to *Gewalt*

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Gewalt'a' ('Engels and the Bourgeois State: From Separated Public Power to *Gewalt*'). *İştirakî* 13: 41-58. Translated into Turkish.

A perfect society, a perfect 'State [*Staat*]', are things which can only exist in the imagination [*Phantasie*]. On the contrary, all successive historical states [*Zustände*] are only transitory stages in the endless course of development of human society (Engels 1886c, 359; 1886d, 126).

The present study comprises the first part of a longer project that examines Friedrich Engels's potential contribution to understanding the form of the state under socialism in power. Such a project must begin with Engels's material on the state as a separated power. Most of the relevant material comes from the 1870s and 1880s, when he attempted a 'historical materialist' (his term) rewriting of human history, with a particular focus on European – and especially German – history¹. Four distinct topics arise from Engels's

¹ The most signal example is *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Engels 1884c; 1884d), but we also find it with unfinished efforts to retell German history, as well as significant moments in *Anti-Dühring* (Engels 1878a, 95-99, 128, 166-68, 245-54, 267-71; 1878b, 302-6, 333-34, 368-70, 426-35, 444-47, 535-38). Nonetheless, much of the project – especially in relation to Germany – remained incomplete, given the onerous task of revising and editing the second and third volumes of *Capital*. We are left with first drafts,

texts: a) hitherto existing states as powers separated from society; b) the tensions between whether the state is an instrument of the ruling class, whether it is autonomous, or whether its nature is infused by the class that wields power; c) the crucial insight that the bourgeoisie was able to shape European states even if this class was not directly power; d) and the importance of the untranslatable *Gewalt*, the semantic field of which includes force, power and violence.² These topics move from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Whereas the material on the state as a separated power has become standard Marxist theory of the state, and whereas debates continue over the instrument-autonomy-nature conundrum, the sections concerning indirect rule and *Gewalt* are rarely, if ever, covered. Why? As with most founding texts of a tradition, a 'canon within the canon' soon develops, with perceived central texts highlighted and 'marginal' texts dropped and forgotten. The approach used here is different: it works with the full range of relevant texts in order to construct a complete sense of Engels's thought. Simple but effective, it enables us to identify features that enrich our understanding of Engels's reflections in the state.³

plans and fragments. The disadvantage is that we do not have the complete picture; the advantage is that the material available gives voice to Engels's core ideas.

2 Unfortunately, Morfino (2009) reduces the term to 'violence', ignoring its semantic field.

3 Given its focus, this article does not deal with Engels's many observations on the dictatorship of the proletariat and its presence in the Paris commune, as well as the long development of the 'dying away' (or withering away, as it is often translated) of the state in opposition to the Anarchist 'abolition' of the state. These are the topics of subsequent studies.

Hitherto Existing States

Let us begin with Engels's reflections on actually existing states. Since these thoughts are the most well-known and influential, they can best be summarised as a series of theses. In the analysis that follows, I identify the ambivalences in Engels's apparent clarity.⁴

1. Engels repeatedly asserts that the state is a 'public power [*öffentliche Gewalt*]' that is 'separated [*getrennte*]' from society (Engels 1884c, 201, 210, 213, 221, 269-70; 1884d, 95, 103, 107, 115, 165-66).⁵ This definition is based on the assumption that political ideas and practices '*in letzter Instanz*' (Engels and Kautsky 1887b, 494) derive from economic conditions.⁶ It determines all of Engels observations concerning the nature and history of the state, from the ancient Athenians to his own day.

2. Thus, the state may either be imposed from without or it arises from a society riven with 'irreconcilable opposites', which are 'classes with conflicting economic interests'.⁷

4 The best summary may be found in *The Origin of the Family* (Engels 1884c, 268-72; 1884d, 164-68), from which the quotations in the following theses are drawn.

5 Engels already used '*öffentliche Gewalt*' more than a decade earlier, in 'The Housing Question' (Engels 1872-1873b, 71).

6 The economic determination of the state is emphasised in Engels's piece on Feuerbach (Engels 1886c, 391-93; 1886d, 158).

7 Engels's texts evince a slight tension between the two possibilities – from without or from within. In *The Origin of the Family*, he writes that the state is 'by no means a power forced on society from without' (Engels 1884c, 269; 1884d, 165). By contrast, in 'The Frankish Period' with its focus on German history and the resilience of the Mark, he writes: 'the continued existence of the nation depended on a state power [*Staatsgewalt*] which did not derive from these communities but confronted them as something alien' (Engels 1882a, 59; 1882b, 475). The difference between the two texts may be explained in terms of Engels's desire to find a common path to the state in all contexts and his awareness of distinct histories and social formations.

3. So that society does not tear itself to pieces, a *Gewalt* is necessary to 'alleviate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of "order"'.⁸

4. This *Gewalt* 'alienates itself more and more' from society, so that it becomes 'separated', 'alienated' and 'above' society.

5. While the initial manifestation of this *Gewalt* may be in terms of an armed force that is no longer coterminous with the people (as a militia), it is also comprised of 'material adjuncts, prisons and institutions of coercion of all kinds'. In short, these are instruments of repression.

6. Alongside such institutions are what Engels calls 'organs of society [*Organe der Gesellschaft*]'. These are not part of society, standing in its middle, but are 'above' and 'alien [*entfremdenden*]' and need to be asserted through a system of laws and sustained through taxes. Although he does not use the term 'apparatus', he here describes an apparatus that is both above society and mediates between state power and society.⁸

7. Is the state an instrument of the ruling class, somewhat autonomous, or determined by the class in power? The question arises from three different emphases in Engels's text, emphases that set the boundaries of subsequent Marxist debate:

⁸ Engels adds that the state divides its subjects '*according to territory*', not tribe or gens, although he had earlier in *The Origin of the Family* noted that territory already characterises 'pre-state' tribal formations.

a. 'As a rule', Engels writes, the state provides the means whereby the economically dominant class also becomes the politically dominant class. Engels speaks of the state being a 'means of keeping' down the oppressed, an 'instrument [*Werkzeug*]' for exploitation.

b. At the same time, he speaks of the state as an 'organisation of the possessing class [*Organisation der besitzenden Klasse*]', so much so that we have the 'state of slave owners', the 'feudal state [*Feudalstaat*]' and the 'modern representative state [*Repräsentativstaat*]' or the 'state of the capitalists',⁹ implying that specific states are imbued with and even determined by a specific nature.¹⁰

c. At times a state gains relative autonomy, especially when class conflict reaches a certain balance, with neither dominating. In this situation, the state acquires temporarily a 'certain degree of independence of both' classes. The pertinent example, in relation to Engels's detailed study on the 'The Role of Force', is Bismarck's Germany.

These theses raise a number of issues. To begin with, the crucial point is that hitherto existing states may be defined as separated powers. The

9 The final quotation comes from *Anti-Dühring*, where he adds by way of clarification, 'the ideal personification of the total national capital [*der ideelle Gesamtkapitalist*]' (Engels 1878a, 266; 1878b, 443).

10 This tendency is expressed well in his comment in the introduction to Borkheim's pamphlet concerning the 1848 revolutions: 'the state is becoming more and more estranged from the masses of the people and is now well on the way to transforming itself into a consortium of landowners, stockbrokers and big industrialists for the exploitation of the people' (Engels 1887c, 450; 1887d, 53).

opposite may be called an integrated or enmeshed state-society. In terms of the latter, Engels speaks of the ‘organs of the gentile constitution [*Organe der Gentilverfassung*]’ that stand ‘in the midst of society [*eben mitten in der Gesellschaft*]’ (Engels 1884c, 270; 1884d, 166). Given his definition of the state as a separated public power, he cannot describe this enmeshed form of governance as a state, but it constitutes a form of governance nonetheless (with implications for socialism in power). The separated-enmeshed distinction runs through *The Origin of the Family*, where Engels casts the distinction primarily as a historical narrative: the unseparated or integrated nature of pre-state formations contrasts, but also provides the conditions for, the separated nature of the state that follows. This approach may be called a narrative of differentiation,¹¹ moving from an undifferentiated state to one that is clearly differentiated, with the Athenian state¹² providing the purest example while the later Roman and German states are less ‘pure’ (Engels 1884c, 252-54; 1884d, 147-49).¹³

11 The most sustained example of such a narrative of differentiation appears in the final section of *The Origin of the Family*, but this section also summarises the whole treatment of the state in this work (Engels 1884c, 256-76; 1884d, 152-73; see also Engels 1882a, 60; 1882b, 476; 1878a, 166-69; 1878b, 368-72).

12 With the rise of the Athenian state Engels finds various commercial, money and property relations that develop class relations and thereby the state, with the constitutions articulating the new conditions (Engels 1884c, 213-22; 1884d, 107-16).

13 See also Engels’s fascinating studies of the rise of the feudal state, both in his study on the Frankish period and Charlemagne and in his draft concerning the decline of feudalism (Engels 1882a; 1882b; 1884a; 1884b).

Instrument, Nature or Autonomy

At the same time, the distinction produces some tensions in Engels's presentation. He seeks to be sensitive to historical variations, which appear most obviously in the question I posed in place of thesis 7. Let me begin with the third answer to the question, concerning the autonomy of the state, even though Engels suggests that this situation is only temporary, found at certain moments when class conflict is evenly balanced. In some respects, this would seem to be the most logical outcome of his initial proposal that the state arises from irreconcilable class conflict and that a *Gewalt* is needed to ameliorate the conflict and keep it within bounds (so that the system is not torn apart).¹⁴

The first and second answers to the question are more intriguing. Is the separated state a relatively neutral 'instrument [*Werkzeug*]' in the hands of the dominant class? Engels tends in this direction with his comment, 'as a

¹⁴ Many subsequent Marxist analyses of the bourgeois state follow this line, offering a range of variations (Carnoy 1984, 50; Esping-Andersen et al. 1976). For example, since the bourgeois state arose from the contradictory logic of capitalist accumulation, it performs the long-term enabling tasks (law, police and military, infrastructure, education and so on) that capital cannot perform itself (Holloway and Picciotto 1978). Or the state's autonomy is 'embedded' through the specific connections between the state and elite interests (Evans 1995). Or, this form of the state is an internally contradictory apparatus that is constrained, in light of capitalist demands, in acting in the best interests of the population (the contradiction between capitalist accumulation and democratic legitimation). While it attempts to solve problems arising from capitalist relations (inequality, exploitation, social breakdown), it cannot deal with the core capitalist features that generate such problems (Offe 1984, 1974). Perhaps the most extreme proposal is that the bourgeois state is an autonomous organisational actor, having developed independently from capital and class and seeking to enhance its own interests and power, at times at the expense of dominant capitalists (Skocpol 1979; Evans et al. 1985; Block 1980; Mann 1986-2013). Notably, all these efforts deal specifically with what Engels calls the 'modern representative state', which is none other than the liberal European nation-state, or 'bourgeois state', using more concise terminology.

rule [*in der Regel*].¹⁵ Yet this position can slip into another: the ruling class may determine the nature of the state in question, shaping it into a particular form. One can see how the connection may be made, for an instrument may take on a distinct shape, having been constructed by its wielder. Yet an instrument and a distinct form are not necessarily the same: the former is more neutral – an instrument, means or tool – and the latter indicates a particular nature, determined by the ruling class in question.¹⁶

Engels's text struggles with this distinction, at times seemingly connecting instrument and nature,¹⁷ while at others suggesting that they are distinct. A notable example is the fascinating paragraph towards the close of *The Origin of the Family*,¹⁸ where Engels explores the historical variations of distinct types of states. Here he writes of an 'organisation of the possessing class [*Organisation der besitzenden Klasse*]' for the sake of protection against the non-possessing class.¹⁹ An organisation is already more than a mere

15 A number of later Marxist analyses of the bourgeois state agree, suggesting that the concentration of capital in relatively few hands enables the ruling class to have material and ideological control over the levers of power (Sweezy 1942; Miliband 1969; Baran and Sweezy 1966; Domhoff 1979).

16 I would also locate Lenin's proposals in the tension between instrument and determined nature (Lenin 1917a, 392-94; 1917b, 7-9), but since a subsequent study will deal carefully with Lenin, I leave this analysis for later.

17 So also Engels's comment in *Anti-Dühring*, where he speaks of state-ownership (the example given in a footnote is to Bismarck's nationalisation of the railways). He writes that the state is 'the organisation that bourgeois society takes on in order to support the general external conditions of the capitalist mode of production against the encroachments as well of the workers as of individual capitalists. The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine [*kapitalistische Maschine*], the state of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital' (Engels 1878a, 266; 1878b, 443).

18 The quotations that follow are drawn from this paragraph (Engels 1884c, 271-72; 1884d, 167-68).

19 In *Anti-Dühring* Engels sides more strongly with this position: the state is 'an organisation of the particular

instrument, suggesting structures, shaping and the nature of the state itself. It may take the form of property or wealth qualifications for the right to participate in the state (from Athens and Rome to the early parliamentary systems of his own day), or direct corruption of government officials, or an alliance between the government and stock exchange for the sake of building infrastructure. Tellingly, at each suggestion Engels notes that such mechanisms are actually not necessary for the ruling class to determine the state: neither property qualifications, nor corruption, nor alliances between government and stock exchange are needed. Why not? A crucial sentence indicates the direction of his thought, especially in light of the bourgeois state and its emerging practice of apparent universal suffrage. In this situation, how does wealth control the state? It ‘exercises its power indirectly, but all the more surely [*seine Macht indirekt, aber um so sichrer aus*]’. One may object that he writes only a few sentences later that the possessing class rules ‘directly by means of [*direkt mittelst*]’ universal suffrage (Engels 1884c, 271-72; 1884d, 167-68). The initial impression is that he seems to slide back to an instrumental position. But he does not simply write *direct*, adding

class which was *pro tempore* the exploiting class’ (Engels 1878a, 267; 1878b, 444, 535). And in ‘The Housing Question’ of more than a decade earlier, he writes: ‘The state is nothing but the organised collective power [*organisirte Gesamtmacht*] of the possessing classes, the landowners and the capitalists, as against the exploited classes, the peasants and the workers’ (Engels 1872-1873a, 362; 1872-1873b, 51). He makes a comparable point in ‘The Frankish Period’, where an externally imposed state becomes despotism, while one that arises on the basis of the big landowners entails political rule by an aristocracy (Engels 1882a, 60; 1882b, 475-76).

immediately afterwards *mittelst*, which indicates an intermediary, a ‘medium’ (as the MECW translation has it), through which direct rule must operate.

Indirect Rule

Let me press more heavily on the term ‘indirect’. To begin with, in a piece written with Kautsky called ‘Lawyers’ Socialism’, Engels observes that in the European transition from feudalism to capitalism, the Church was replaced by the State as the arbiter of all matters economic and social – or at least this was how people saw the situation. Crucially, it was the rise of a ‘legal world view’ that signalled such a shift. While we may quibble that the Church had developed its own complex legal system since the ‘lawyer popes’ of the eleventh century, the important point is that the bourgeoisie sought a legal system controlled not by the Church but by the state. The bourgeoisie’s battle cry was equality before the law, pressing more and more legal demands so that a new form of the state arose, the ‘classical one of the bourgeoisie’ (Engels and Kautsky 1887a, 598; 1887b, 492). The clear implication is that this form developed without direct power held by the bourgeoisie, but rather as a process of transformation from without.

Further, in the paragraph I have been exegeting – from *Origin of the Family* – in the paragraphs preceding the last one, Engels mentions Bismarck

as an example of the indirect rule of the bourgeoisie. Only a few years later, he would come to devote more attention to Bismarck in the extremely insightful (albeit largely ignored) work, ‘The Role of Force in History’.²⁰ This text is worthy of detailed study in its own right, not least because it offers an excellent complement to the myriad twists and turns of Marx’s ‘Eighteenth Brumaire’. While Marx deals with Louis Napoleon (III), Engels focuses on Bismarck’s rise to power and Germany’s dialectical leap into becoming a significant European power.²¹ Crucially, Engels argues that no matter how much Bismarck – like Louis Napoleon – may have sidelined the bourgeoisie from the reins of power, he enabled the very structures of a bourgeois state in political and economic terms. Since the bourgeoisie, especially since the 1848 revolutions, had expanded as never before the network of industry and international trade, it needed not the many individual states but a unified German state, with uniform laws and regulations and currency, to facilitate

20 ‘The Role of Force in History’ was written in draft in 1887-1888 and was initially planned as the fourth and final chapter to a work with the same name (Engels 1887-1888g; 1887-1888h; 1887-1888a; 1887-1888b; 1887-1888c; 1887-1888d; 1887-1888i; 1887-1888j; see also Engels 1886a, 529; 1886b, 574-75; 1887a, 126; 1887b, 730; 1888a, 142; 1888b, 15; 1888c; 1888d; 1888e; 1888f; 1888g; 1888h; 1888i; 1888j). The preceding part was to include three chapters from *Anti-Dühring* on the theory of force (Engels 1878a, 146-71; 1878b, 350-73). As with a number of works in the 1880s dealing with the state and German history, ‘The Role of Force in History’ remained unfinished, with the draft chapter published in a heavily edited form (by Eduard Bernstein) as ‘Gewalt und Ökonomie bei der Herstellung der neuen Deutschen Reichs’, in *Die Neue Zeit*, vol. 1, nrs. 22-26 (1895-1896): 722-76. Only later were some missing pages of the original manuscript found, with the MEGA version of 2002 being the first based on the extant manuscript. The full four chapter work was later published in German as *Über der Gewaltstheorie: Gewalt und Ökonomie bei der Herstellung der neuen Deutschen Reichs* (Engels 1946), with a belated English translation appearing more than two decades later (Engels 1968). Curiously, Morfino (2009, 91-94) ignores this text, focusing only on the three chapters from *Anti-Dühring*.

21 Instead of simply ‘catching up,’ Germany enacted a dialectical leap through its very backwardness. For distinct emphasis on this chronic backwardness, see the notes gathered as ‘Varia on Germany’ (Engels 1873-1874a, 1873-1874b).

the process even further – including the easy mobility of labour.²² Bismarck obliged, enacting law after law that met bourgeois demands while ensuring that actual state power remained out of their hands. To this the bourgeoisie consented, since they could see that Bismarck was not only shaping the new German state in their image but that he was also ensuring they did not yet have to face their real enemy, the working class (Engels 1874e, 628; 1874f, 514).²³ As Engels puts it, the ‘bourgeoisie triumphed without having to put up a serious fight’ (Engels 1887-1888e, 472; 1887-1888f, 80).²⁴

Gewalt

While this argument reinforces Marx’s similar conclusion in ‘The Eighteenth Brumaire’, with the significant implication that the nature of a particular state is shaped and even determined by the dominant class even

22 We may identify here the seeds of Wallerstein’s (2011) later argument that capitalism needs strong states with unified economic and legal frameworks to ensure the passage of goods across borders.

23 I emphasise the indirect rule of the bourgeoisie, since this approach is crucial for Engels’s analysis and meshes with that of Marx. However, he elsewhere explores some additional features. For example, the rise of bourgeoisie was closely connected with the rise of absolute monarchies (Engels 1884a, 1884b; Boer In press), so much so that the bourgeoisie was reluctant to embrace republican state forms. While the republic is the ultimate form of the rule of the bourgeoisie, its reluctance came not from nostalgia but because in a republic it had to come face to face with the working class (Engels 1873e). Further, Engels also outlines the bourgeoisification of the older classes under the new conditions in Germany, since the economic conditions were increasingly determined by bourgeois norms (Engels 1872-1873a, 362-64; 1872-1873b, 52-54).

24 Or more dialectically, Engels later speaks of carrying out ‘the will of the bourgeoisie against its will’ (Engels 1887-1888e, 480; 1887-1888f, 87) – a point completely missed by Retallack (2011). A rough earlier version of this argument appears in ‘The “Crisis” in Prussia’ (Engels 1873c, 1873d). Perhaps the closest that subsequent Marxist analyses come to this approach to the bourgeois state is the proposal that such a state is a structure – divided between apparatus and power – that is shaped to provide a relatively stable environment for capital, which it does so by ameliorating and regulating class struggle, as well as the inherent crises of capitalist economics and its uneven development (Mandel 1975; Poulantzas 1978, 1980; Therborn 1978; Wright 1978; Jessop 1982; Przeworski 1985).

when it does not have direct political power, Engels also develops much further a unique insight. It concerns *Gewalt*, a term that is best left untranslated.²⁵ What do Engels's texts indicate concerning the meaning of *Gewalt*?²⁶ In the opening sentence of 'The Role of Force [*Gewalt*]', Engels identifies his topic as the analysis of contemporary German history and its '*Gewaltspraxis von Blut und Eisen*' (Engels 1887-1888 [2002]-a, 66).²⁷ The practice of *Gewalt* entails 'blood and iron'. It may be very well to speak in abstract terms of 'power', 'force' and 'authority' (the tendency of translators when encountering *Gewalt*), but the reality is clearly in the direction of the violence of weapons and blood spilled in conflict.²⁸

But perhaps 'blood and iron' is a one-off emphasis, due to the subject matter of the text – the belated unification of Germany under Bismarck and

25 For a background in Hegel, see Morfino (2009, 82-91).

26 I have deliberately put the question in this form, since I prefer to leave aside the vexed and well-nigh impossible task of determining what an author intended at a particular moment. Instead, it is better to examine how Engels's texts elaborate on the term.

27 Or, as Engels puts it in *Anti-Dühring*, '*Gewalt*, nowadays, is the army and navy' (Engels 1878a, 154; 1878b, 358).

28 Engels's background also plays a role with this emphasis. Already since 1842, military matters had been close to Engels's thoughts and occasionally actions. In that year, he enlisted in the 12th Foot Company of the Guards Artillery Brigade in Berlin, to be followed by military action during the 1848 revolutions (at first in Elberfeld and Barmen and a little later with the militia in the Palatinate and Baden). These experiences, with their insights and disappointments, led him to deeply insightful articles as a military correspondent and then analyst of the history and present realities of all aspects of military forces, such as training, equipment, discipline, morale, fortifications, tactics and the first real contribution to the need for a good and decisive military force for any revolutionary movement. This material is rarely appreciated, even though it forms a substantial amount of Engels's published work. The items are too many to cite here, but an interested reader may consult frequent items on military correspondence from MECW 11 and MEW 11 onwards (from the 1848 revolutions to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871), as well as analyses of military forces in MECW 18-19 and MEW 14-15. In these cases, MEW generally has less articles than MECW. It should be no surprise that, in his schematic depiction of the rise of the state as a 'separated public power', a military force distinct from the people should be the first sign of this development, or indeed in his reply to Dühring that he should dig into his knowledge of military matters (Engels 1878a, 155-61; 1878b, 357-64).

its underlying economic realities.²⁹ Not at all. In order to show how Engels uses the term beyond ‘The Role of Force’, I have undertaken an analysis of his texts from the 1870s and 1880s.³⁰ The usages include *Gewalt* itself, the important adverbial form *gewaltsam* (and *mit Gewalt*), the adjectival *Gewalttätig*, and the expected German linked words such as *Gewaltmaßnahmen* and *Gewalttätigkeiten*. The overwhelming weight of usage falls on the hard edge of the term. For example, a regime – as a ‘special repressive force [*besondere Repressionsgewalt*]’ – keeps its subjects in check ‘violently’ and ‘with terror’ (both are senses of *gewaltsam*),³¹ often by means of ‘armed [*bewaffneten*]’ ‘police power [*Polizeigewalt*]’. It expels others ‘with violent force [*mit Gewalt*]’ and deals with opposition forces, like the International, with ‘violent measures [*Gewaltmaßnahmen*]’³² – even though ‘there is no force in the world [*auf der Erde keine Gewalt*]’ strong enough to suppress the ever-growing revolutionary movement of the modern

29 In his polemic against Dühring, Engels stresses the importance of economic might (*Macht*) as a determining feature of political *Gewalt*. In this case, he sets out to undermine Dühring’s hypothesis that political *Gewalt* is primary and economic realities secondary (Engels 1878a, 146-71; 1878b, 350-73). ‘The Role of Force in History’ may therefore be seen as Engels’s answer at a more comprehensive level: this is what *Gewalt* really entails (and not some mythical tale of Robinson Crusoe and Friday, beloved by Dühring).

30 The sample from the 1870s and 1880s is enough to make my point. One may find similar usages before the 1870s and in the 1890s.

31 The sense of terror (*gewaltsamen*, translating from the original French *terroristes*) emerges when Marx and Engels speak of Bakunin and another Russian anarchist, Nechayev (Marx and Engels 1873a, 535; 1873b, 23 4; 1874, 417).

32 Or indeed the anarchists under Bakunin, who against The International use *le guet-à-pens* (ambush) (Marx and Engels 1873b, 170), which appears in the official German translation as ‘*Gewalttat aus feigem Hinterhalt*’ (Marx and Engels 1874, 333). MECW renders it with ‘the stab in the back’ (Marx and Engels 1873a, 458).

proletariat'.³³ All of this is summed up with the term 'brutal force [*brutale Gewalt*]' (Engels 1887-1888e, 495; 1887-1888f, 102).³⁴ *Gewalt* may also be used in a revolutionary context: Engels – and indeed Marx – uses the term in relation to the workers' movement. A good example is the comment made in the preface to the 1872 reprint of the Manifesto, where they reflect on the implications of the Paris Commune: the proletariat 'for the first time held political power [*politische Gewalt*]' for two months, revealing that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes' (Marx and Engels 1872c, 175; 1872d, 96).³⁵

To return to 'The Role of Force': military machinations constitute the line of blood that draws the many parts together,³⁶ defining the sense of

Gewalt. In this light, Engels points out that German political and economic

33 Since the references to such usages are extensive, I place them here, citing only texts published originally in German (Marx and Engels 1872a, 80, 121; 1872b, 8, 50; Engels 1872e, 138; 1872f, 64; 1872c, 284; 1872d, 178; 1872-1873a, 329, 361, 363, 371; 1872-1873b, 20, 51, 52, 62; 1873a, 585, 586; 1873b, 480, 481; 1873-1874a, 600; 1873-1874b, 590; 1874a, 616; 1874b, 499; 1874c, 621; 1874d, 504; 1874e, 628, 631; 1874f, 514, 517; 1877c, 173; 1877d, 90; 1877a, 188; 1877b, 104-5; 1878a, 24, 245, 263-64, 267-68; 1878b, 234, 427, 442, 535-36; Marx and Engels 1879a, 265; 1879b, 179; Engels 1880c, 289, 302, 316, 321-22; 1880d, 193, 206, 219, 223-25; 1887-1888e, 475-77, 480, 487, 495, 507; 1887-1888f, 82, 84-85, 87-88, 94, 101, 114; 1882c, 450; 1882d, 325; 1882e, 29; 1882f, 446; 1882a, 59-63, 74-77, 81, 95; 1882b, 475-78, 488-91, 494, 508). Marx's use at the time of the *gewalt* root has a very similar tone (Marx 1872a, 143; 1872b, 69; 1872g, 161; 1872h, 86; 1872e, 223; 1872f, 133; 1872c, 255; 1872d, 160; 1875a, 52; 1875b, 568). Occasionally, we find other dimensions of the semantic field invoked, such as 'executive power [*Exekutivgewalt*]' (Engels 1887-1888e, 499; 1887-1888f, 106), or indeed the sense of weighty, serious or enormous, for which *gewaltig* is used. For example, we find a 'grave mistake [*gewaltig irren*]' or 'enormous progress [*gewaltigen Fortschritt*]' (Marx and Engels 1872a, 99; 1872b, 26; Engels 1872a, 148; 1872b, 74; 1872-1873a, 360, 366; 1872-1873b, 50, 55; 1873c, 403, 404; 1873d, 293, 294).

34 Although Engels's predominant concern is political, he also refers to nature, which works 'blindly, violently [*gewaltsam*], destructively [*zerstörend*]' (Engels 1878a, 266; 1878b, 534; 1880c, 319-20; 1880d, 222-23). The analogy drawn is with productive forces under a capitalist market economy, although the sense of an elemental spontaneous force, outside human control, would be taken up by Lenin and Stalin (*Stikhiinyi* and *stikhiinost'*) in relation to a communist revolution (Boer 2013).

35 The original comment appeared in 'The Civil War in France' (Marx 1871, 328).

36 In his draft treatment of the decline of feudalism, Engels traces – among other elements – the changes in military technology and strategy (Engels 1884a, 562-64; 1884b, 398-400).

unity had to be ‘won in struggle [*er kämpft werden*]’ against both external and internal enemies (Engels 1887-1888e, 46o; 1887-1888f, 7o). Externally, it required continual wars, realignments of alliances, temporary settlements and new wars.³⁷ The turning point – for Engels’s analysis – is when reunification takes the path of Prussian hegemony (in contrast to the two other possibilities of genuine abolition of differences between all the German states and Austrian hegemony). This process was kick-started by humiliation at the hand of Denmark in the mid-nineteenth century, which spurred Bismarck to undertake a wholesale reorganisation of the armed forces, leading to decisive defeat of Denmark in a little over a decade. From there, the path led eventually to the conquest of France, at which point the new German empire became the ‘first power [*erste Macht*]’ in Europe, with all power (*Macht*) concentrated in the dictator Bismarck’s hands (Engels 1887-1888e, 498; 1887-1888f, 104).³⁸ Internally, the first hint is provided by Engels’s use of ‘dictator’ to speak of Bismarck. In a crucial paragraph, he speaks of the tensions and collaboration between the bourgeoisie and Bismarck. The former demanded a revolutionary transformation of Germany, but this could

37 Albeit not determinative, as Tilly’s selective approach would have it (Tilly 1985, 1990).

38 At this point Engels uses *Macht* when speaking of power and strength. Although not quite as frequent as *Gewalt* in the texts under consideration, we may note the following: when the emphasis falls on power per se, Engels prefers to use *Macht*; when the more forceful and indeed violent sense is to the forefront, he tends to use *Gewalt* and its associated terms. For detailed accounts of the defeat of the French and conquest of Paris in 1870-1871, with Engels’s insightful and enthralling war correspondence, see his ‘Notes on the War’ (Engels 1870-1871).

be achieved ‘only by force [*nur durch die Gewalt*], which he immediately defines as ‘only by an actual dictatorship [*nur durch eine tatsächliche Diktatur*]. Two types of *Gewalt* exist in the modern state, namely the ‘elemental power of the popular masses [*elementare Gewalt der Volksmassen*]’ and ‘organised state power [*die organisierte Staatsgewalt*]. The latter is found in none other than the army. While the German bourgeoisie had grown deeply suspicious of the force of the masses, it also did not have the army at its disposal. ‘But’, Engels points out, ‘Bismarck had’, so much so that he embodied *Staatsgewalt* (Engels 1887-1888e, 479; 1887-1888f, 87; 1872-1873a, 364; 1872-1873b, 53).³⁹

Conclusion: Towards an Analysis of Socialist Governance

To sum up the analysis thus far: much of Engels’s basic material on the state as a ‘separated public power’ is reasonably well-known. Indeed, it has become what many would regard as a conventional Marxist theory of the state. We may go further, for Engels set in place both the framework for subsequent Marxist analyses and the tensions with which they continue to

³⁹ Bismarck’s influence on Germany’s dialectical leap would draw Engels’s attention again and again, as he sought to show how economic concerns influenced Bismarck’s moves. These include the supposed ‘socialism’ of Bismarck’s nationalisation of railways and industry, the introduction of insurance ... - all of which have erroneously been claimed as the origins of the ‘welfare state’ (Engels 1878a, 265; 1878b, 538; 1880a; 1880b; 1881; 1890a; 1890b; 1890c).

struggle (see the discussion in the footnotes).⁴⁰ That he also influenced Weber is quite clear, even if the latter's definition fails to acknowledge Engels: 'the form of human community [*Gemeinschaft*] that (successfully) lays claim to the *monopoly of legitimate physical violence* [*Gewaltsamkeit*] within a particular territory' (Weber 2004, 33; 1919, 6).⁴¹

Of more interest are three items relating directly to the bourgeois state. First, while Engels prevaricates on whether such a state is an instrument of the bourgeoisie, somewhat autonomous, or determined by the nature of the class exercising power, my analysis has focused on his tendency in other writings to see each form of the state as determined by its specific social and class formations. In these analyses, Engels speaks less of an abstract 'state', usually with the definite article as 'the state', but more of specific states shaped by historical, cultural and economic conditions. He is particularly drawn to the modern European state, or bourgeois state, where – and this is the second point – he stresses the indirect rule of the bourgeoisie. His key example is Bismarck, who shaped the unified German state in the image of the bourgeoisie even as he sidelined them from direct power. Third, the study

40 With one caveat: while Engels wrote of different forms of the state throughout European history, let alone pre-state forms, the vast bulk of subsequent work has focused on the liberal European nation-state. This includes transition forms such as the 'familial' state, the much-studied 'welfare' state and – in an effort to apply the European concepts further afield – the loosely defined 'developmental' state (Esping-Andersen 1990; Barrow 1993; Evans 1995, 47-59, 229-34; Woo-Cumings 1999). Some efforts at transcending these tensions usually end up replicating them (Jessop 1982, 1990; Held and Krieger 1984; Alford and Friedland 1985).

41 Thus, efforts to belittle Engels's contribution are curious indeed (Carnoy 1984, 45-61; Held 1989, 37-38).

of the relevant texts revealed the important role of *Gewalt*, which bears the senses of force and violence.⁴² Not only are hitherto existing states defined in terms of a ‘separated public *Gewalt*’, but Bismarck’s deployment of *Gewalt* entailed ‘blood and iron’. The question that arises is whether the proletariat also exercises what may be called socialist *Gewalt*.

While the manifestation of socialist *Gewalt* is the topic of a subsequent study of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as well as Engels’s direct usage of *Gewalt* to speak of the communist movement as it both seeks and exercises power, we may also look beyond this moment. Let us return to the initial distinction, between the state as a separated public power and enmeshed governance, in which state and society are integrated. When speaking of ‘pre-state’ formations, Engels deploys the terminology of ‘organs of gentile society [*Organe der Gentilgesellschaft*]’ standing ‘in the midst of society [*eben mitten in der Gesellschaft*]’ (Engels 1884c, 270; 1884d, 166). These are forms of social organisation rather than a ‘state’, but such organisation includes complex patterns of governance, organic democracy, elections, councils, leaders, office holders, as well as sovereignty and *Gewalt*. Are these manifestations of enmeshed governance merely relics of a bygone era? Not at all, for Engels came to see this type of governance as a harbinger of communism, dialectical

42 It remains a puzzle as to why critics have not realised the importance of *Gewalt*. For example, Draper’s old but still very useful studies make virtually no mention of the term (Draper 1970, 1986).

transformed so that it appears in a whole new way (Engels 1882c, 456; 1882d, 330).

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