



“THE BENEVOLENCE” OF POWER

By F. McEachran

THE development of Machiavellianism is, however, only one of the results of power articulated in the monopoly State. The more lasting and devastating effect is the psychological one, the “benevolence” of power which deludes the victim into accepting its philosophy. No one denies of course that in present conditions the state must perforce help the victim; and by means of “free” education, “free” welfare services, doles, and so on, preserve a semblance of normal life. The flaw, as we have seen, lies in the fact that as people have been robbed of the rent of land, and of part of wages, by the very powers that the state represents, the state is giving back only a part — and no big part either — of the total plunder. More than that — and this is the metaphysical pathos — it is teaching the people that “power” can be good and generous, and that wealth socialised through a bureaucratic centre and “re-distributed” is the means of establishing social justice. Because of this development — into which monopoly has been forced by the very growth of its own enormity — people have ceased to believe in human freedom and appeal to “power” instead, which they fondly think they can control through the ballot. It is no use saying that bureaucracy is frequently benevolent. So might be any authority so long as it feels itself safe. Only when its power is threatened does it turn bitter. But power creates anti-power, and the human psyche will not, in the long run, put up with it. Man wants to produce wealth; he does not want to depend upon others. (Economics and charity are separate orders. To be able to be generous you must first produce.)

In connection with human freedom, probably the most often quoted name is that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau with his theory of the antithesis between man and society. Without going into the niceties of this discussion it is hard not to think that while Rousseau’s instincts were generally right, his conclusions were often wrong, largely because of his ignorance of economics. Economics as a science was still in its infancy in the eighteenth century; the Physiocrats were only just beginning to talk of the *impôt unique*; and Ricardo, and still more, Henry George, were not yet born. Rousseau went wrong in failing to distinguish clearly between the state and society, and in not realising that in a “natural” society there would be no antithesis between the individual and the state. That man *naturally* co-operates is the whole theme of my argument, and this is equally true of both savage and civilised men.

Now the socialists and communists attack bourgeois

society precisely on the point that the capitalistic *laissez-faire* philosophy presupposes an anti-social man who works for himself alone, not for society; produces for profit, not for use; and creates “anarchy” instead of well-planned “order.” This is so completely a misunderstanding of what the natural order and *laissez-faire* imply that it might well make the angels weep; “capitalist” man co-operates, of course, as much as any other man, a point we need hardly labour any further. Secondly, profit is the same as utility, in the sense that exchange is pointless unless it benefits the parties who exchange, and this benefit is precisely the profit. Finally, the chaos which accompanied *laissez-faire* in the nineteenth century was not due to “private” enterprise or to “private” property, which is grounded in nature, but to the tremendous blockage which the liberal state never removed and indeed never understood. If I have not made this clear in these pages then I admit to complete failure. The conclusions drawn by the communists that public enterprise through state departments is the only possible public service strikes at liberty at the very root and confines it to the limbo of Utopianism. It may be true that under present conditions the growth of monopoly in western Europe, with all the misery of pseudo *laissez-faire*, may justify the Marxist analysis of revolution and war. This I fully grant. It may be true, too, that where the bourgeoisie are in power, they will hold on by violence; and liberty, as we know it, may yield to dictatorship. I grant this to the full, pressed down and overflowing. All I wish to add is that over and above this there is also something else which marxists, socialists and fascists, red, grey and brown, have overlooked, and that is — *the law of nature*. All I ask is that, while the revolution is on, and seems to be going on endlessly, a few may remember that there is a science in the world underlying human effort, which ultimately no human power can defy. When we have allowed for the dialectic in nature and history, when we have allowed for the subject-object relation, and for the changing environment of changing men, something still remains that is permanently and eternally true, and that is the conception of scientific law in physics, chemistry, mathematics and economics. This element of permanent truth moves like a thin red line throughout the vicissitudes of human society, and it may after all have the last word to say. Power and production are united in scientific economics.

It is important to remember that the world is already one country — but for “states” — and has been one for

many years. There are telephone books in London which can give the connection to Shanghai or Aden, and there are travel agencies in London which can, with few exceptions, provide a ticket for any country in the world, not to mention couriers and hotel rooms anywhere. They have made business connections in every country and they have made them on their private initiative in free and intelligent co-operation with foreigners. The only obstacles they have to face are precisely those set up by the state in the form of customs duties, visas, passports, controlled currencies and so on, down to the flat refusal sometimes to allow travel at all. Foreign trade itself is, of course, *ex hypothesi* international, and it has had most to suffer in late years from the depredations of the state. If anything in the world has no need of states, and indeed suffers most from them, it is international trade. But whether it be at home or abroad, trade will persistently continue (hindered by the state or not), in obedience to the natural instincts of men.

The national state as we see it today raises some curious questions, both for the present and the future. For those who still argue that the state keeps order, and is necessary to keep order in populous communities, the following queries may seem puzzling. Why is it that Belgium is under one state and France under another when both might economise by having one only? Or if it is good for a small community like Belgium or Southern Ireland to govern itself in absolute sovereignty, why is it not good for Oklahoma, Brittany or Yorkshire? If it is good for 180,000,000 people in the United States of America to belong to one state, what is it that holds back Canada, Mexico and the central American republics from joining it? If the argument be brought forward that the reluctance is caused by racial or linguistic differences, then the question arises how these difficulties are overcome in Canada, South Africa, Switzerland and Poland. The problem of how large a state should be, resolves itself indeed into a problem with two and only two possible answers. One is that the various states now existing, with all their irregular and irrational shapes and sizes, should finally join together to become one state, as Tennyson fondly dreamed — the other the evolution towards ever smaller units till ultimately we reach the smallest unit of all (whatever it be). Neither of these, as they are conceived of at present, come within any distance of the real thing.

First let us take the United States of the World, which we will imagine for the sake of argument to be a federation rather than a unitary State, even though (from the point of view of monopoly) the distinction is a small one. Our criticism still stands where it did before. The State is there to maintain unnatural, and that is also what the world state would be there for. The main difference is that instead of war expressing itself primarily as international war, and only secondarily as revolution or civil war, all wars would be civil wars and so probably even more bitter than those we have known. Those who dream of the world state, of course, fondly imagine that the State

would preserve order in much the same way as the masters or prefects do in a school. Even in the case of the League of Nations, an important function — after its primary one of maintaining the injustice of Versailles (which itself only followed on many previous injustices) — was to divert the attention of people of various countries from the monopoly in their midst. It will perhaps hardly be necessary to waste many words on the United Nations Organisation, which is, at its best, but a pale shadow even of the late lamented League of Nations. But at least under the present regimes of many states, the individual who quarrels with his rulers is always able to take refuge elsewhere, or at least he has had the possibility of doing so. Red Russians escaped in Czarist days from Russia, white Russians have evaded the Bolsheviks, and German Jews and Italian liberals have taken refuge in other countries. Where, if we had the World State, would the wretched fugitive go? It is no use saying the World State would be the good society. That begs the question. If the "world subject" disagreed with the World State, where would he go for refuge?

On the other hand we have the tendency towards the formation of smaller states on the basis of national feeling, as in Ireland, and the newly emerged states of recent decades. Needless to say, the fundamental *raison d'être* of this modern development is always some form of monopoly *screening itself with a façade of racial or linguistic enthusiasm*. Even in our own time it has been possible to observe the growth of nationalism as a cloak to cover up a burning land question, and the example of Ireland, where Home Rule has not brought prosperity, should give us pause. If there is any real foundation in nationalism, and if nationalism could provide national boundaries, the Treaty of Versailles, which called into being more small nations than any treaty in the world before, should be regarded as a model treaty. The truth is, of course, that behind the fervour of nationalism lies always the unnaturalness of monopoly; and the shifting of boundaries, in lieu of their total abolition, merely reshapes the monopoly. It is unlikely that we shall ever have a Versailles again, with its almost pedantic plebiscites and its minute map-drawing. *What the next attempt will be is hard to say, but very likely it will follow the line of demarcating bourgeois and communist powers*. Yet we know that a solution cannot be found on those lines, any more than it could be found in the religious boundary making of the sixteenth century. In those days, the Huguenots were expelled from France and the Meriscoes from Spain; now it is the Jews or the Kulaks. The solution to all boundary questions is to remove the monopoly behind them, and when this is done there will be no question of boundaries. The cartographers may then place them wherever they think fit. Political frontiers would exist no more.

The ultimate answer then to the problem of the state is not one large state nor many small states but simply no states at all.