

The Political Form of Association: The Possibility and Limitation of “the Social State”

Sumida Soichiro (Rissho University)

In the recent post-capitalism debate, the materialistic state theory developed in the 1970's state-derivation debate is rarely seen. The state-derivation debate criticized “the class theory approach” according to a former Soviet jurist Paschukanis and was based on *Capital* which grasped the fundamental characteristics of the capitalistic mode of production not as “class domination” or “private property” but as “value” or “private production”. In other words, the participants in this debate derived the concept of “state” as “political form” corresponding to “economic form determinations” such as commodity and money. They proposed “the limitations of state activity” in the capitalist society from the theoretical perspective that the state was a historically specific form of social relations as well as value and capital. That is to say that “there was a limit to the ability of the state to solve the problems of capital, on the other hand, there was a limit to the possibility of realizing the transition to socialism through the use of the state”(Holloway & Picciotto 1978).

In fact, Marx's critique of political economy was an analysis of the capitalist social system including the state as a totality. Marx continued to emphasize “proletariat dictatorship” consistently throughout his life, but contrary to the traditional Marxist arguments, “the extinction of the state” will not be possible with the conquest of political power. As Marx himself emphasized, the transition to the communist society (i.e. association) requires total economic and political reform. In other words, in the transition period to association over the long term, the problem is how to abolish the commodity exchange by the associated relation of production and at the same time to make the state (i.e. the political form of capitalism) subordinate to society. In this paper, I reexamine the political form in the transition period to association and one of association.

“The Commune—the reabsorption of the State power by society, as its own living forces instead of as forces controlling and subduing it, by the popular masses themselves, forming their own force instead of the organized force of their suppression” (MEGA I/22, 56) is a special political form different from the capitalist state. Its primary purpose is “the economical emancipation of Labour” (ibid, 142). If we

reformulate this statement in *The Civil War in France* from the viewpoint of the possibility and limitation of "the social state", we can conclude as follows: The political form determination of the extent to which the state institutions are separated from society is decisively dependent on the power structure of the economic form determination which is intertwined with the political one. Therefore, the workers' associations under the capitalist social system have to self-organize the communal forms against the state form itself that epitomizes the bourgeois society, taking into account the possibility and limitation of "the social state". In the long-term transition period to the associated social system, it is extremely important to reorganize "the social state" through class struggle by "socialist democracy".