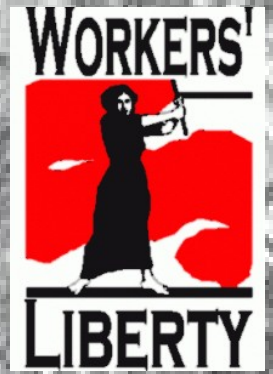


# The State and Revolution

A five week reading group on  
Lenin's 1917 book *The State  
Revolution*



An online study course over five weeks Thursday 8pm 8<sup>th</sup> June to 6<sup>th</sup> July 2023

<http://bit.ly/sta-rev>

# The State and Revolution

## Educational notes

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## The approach

This series is being run as a book reading group. To participate fully you should read the chapter(s) for the week in advance, and preferably have a look at the questions for that session. We would hope that some people have the time to pursue the suggestions for further reading. For those pushed for time, there is a slimmed down “Notes on the Text” in the booklet that accompanies this series (see resources below). These notes are generally useful since they clearly separate out the quotes that Lenin is using (and the text is particularly reliant on quotes).

The sessions will not be lecture-based, but will operate as a reading group focusing on the questions in the booklet, although there will be people in the group prepared to answer (at least) some questions. We would also encourage discussion about the ideas contained in the book (these are not tablets of stone handed out from on high, *The State and Revolution* can and should be questioned).

We will also make available a text of *The State and Revolution* (we will be using Todd Chretien’s recent annotated edition).

## The programme

### **Week 1. Chapter 1: Class Society and the State**

This session will look at the context in which Lenin wrote *The State and Revolution*: this was both that the working class seizure of power seemed possible in Russia, but also that leading Marxists had moved away from the views on the state that Marx and Engels had developed and defended. In order to do this, Lenin looks back at key texts, particularly Engels’s *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* and *Anti-Dühring*. The material here summarises the rest of *The State and Revolution*: the state is a body of class rule of one class over others; that this state cannot be simply taken over by subordinate classes, but rather overthrown by the workers and replaced with their own revolutionary state; and only through the victory of this state is it possible for the state to “wither away”.

### **Week 2 - Chapter 2. The Experience of 1848-51**

In this chapter and the next Lenin examines the two major class struggles that shaped Marx and Engels’s view of the state. The first, the subject of this chapter, are the revolutions of 1848 which occurred after Marx and Engels had completed *The Communist Manifesto*. The experiences of 1848 sharpened their view that the working class must not only smash the capitalist state, but replace it with their own (which is sometimes called “the dictatorship of the proletariat” although here the term “workers’ state” will be preferred).

### **Week 3 – Chapter 3: Experience of the Paris Commune**

The next step forward in Marx and Engels’s thinking came with the first time the working class took power into its own hands in Paris in 1871. This brought the previous vague notion the workers taking state power into sharp relief, Marx and Engels suggesting that *The Communist Manifesto* needed amending to add that “one thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., that the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes.” Power was taken out of the hands of a minority and put in the hands of the majority. Lenin saw *The State and Revolution* as a demand that the socialist movement re-learn the lessons of Paris.

### **Week 4 – Chapter 4: Further remarks by Engels on the Paris Commune**

Continuation of the above . We will also briefly look at Chapter 6 The Vulgarization of Marxism by the Opportunists.

### **Week 5 - Chapter 5. The Economic Basis of the Withering Away of the State.**

Here, Lenin bases himself on Marx’s *Critique of the Gotha Programme* of the German SDP of 1875 which emphasised that only after the working class take state power is the withering away of the state possible, since only then will a state not be necessary to maintain the domination of one class over another (since the working class state will destroy the social basis of the existence of exploiting classes). This chapter relates the material on the end of the state with a vision of how a socialist society would be organised on the basis of the full equality of “from each according to their ability, to each according to their need.”

The text: In the course we will use VI Lenin (2014) *State and Revolution: Annotated and Introduced by Todd Chretien* (Chicago: Haymarket Books). We can make copies of this available to participants in the group.

## Aims

In *The State and Revolution* Lenin states that he was not attempting to create a new theory of the state. Rather, he gathered together Marx and Engels's main arguments on the state in one place. Particularly, he was focused on showing that Karl Kautsky, the leading Marxist theoretician of the Second International, had moved away from Marx and Engels's ideas on the state. (Lenin had broken from the Second International in general, since the leadership's of many of its party's had collapsed into supporting their own ruling classes on the outbreak of war in 1914).

Lenin establishes a clear view of the role of the state in capitalist society, which must be smashed by the working class if it is to take power into its own hands. It also explains some of the key issues to face in a revolutionary situation. However, despite Lenin's protests that he was doing nothing more than restating Marx and Engels's position, his ideas can be seen as a new synthesis of these ideas, especially in the conditions of the revolutionary upheaval in Russia in 1917 (the book was largely written between the two Russian revolutions of 1917). It is also possible that Lenin himself may have departed from Marx and Engels's view of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" (see Hal Draper's critique outlined in appendix 3 of this guide).

*The State and Revolution* thus provides an account of the fundamentals of the Marxist view of the state in capitalist society, and the nature of the workers' state that Lenin believed, following Marx and Engels, must replace it. Marx never produced more than an outline. He planned to write a separate book on the state, but never did. What Lenin worked with are fragments, concrete analyses and insights. (However, Lenin did not consider the role of the state in relation to the economy, something that Marx hinted at in *Capital*. Some more recent Marxists have elaborated a theory of the state drawing more on this.)

Reading *The State and Revolution* should help you to:

- Understand the functions and limitations of capitalist states
- Understand how workers' states will be different from capitalist states
- Make sense of the phrase "the dictatorship of the proletariat"
- Understand how different conceptions of the state affect politics

## Key points

The main points of Lenin's argument are:

- The state is a means of class rule.
- The state comprises special bodies of "armed men".
- The state cannot be abolished but must wither away.
- For the state to begin to wither away, the bourgeois state must be smashed and replaced by a workers' state.
- The workers' state is a semi-state.
- The workers' state is a more thorough democracy because of
  - officials at workers' wages
  - right of recall
  - integration of legislature and executive
  - workers able to take part in government rather than excluded by poverty, overwork, lack of education
  - armed people rather than standing army.
- The "dictatorship of the proletariat" means the class rule of the working class, not a specially "dictatorial" form of that rule.

## The text

Lenin wrote *The State and Revolution* in August and September 1917, when he was in hiding from persecution by the Provisional Government.

According to the outlined plan, *The State and Revolution* was to contain seven chapters, but the seventh and last chapter, "The Experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917," remained unwritten; all we have is a detailed plan for it. Concerning the publication of the book Lenin indicated in a note to the publisher that if he "should take too long to finish this seventh chapter, or if it should turn out to be too bulky, the first six chapters should be published separately as Part One."

On the first page of the manuscript the author of the book appears under the pseudonym of F. F. Ivanovsky. Lenin proposed to use it because the Provisional Government would otherwise confiscate the book. The book was not published until 1918, when there was no longer any need for a pseudonym. A second edition containing a new section, "The Presentation of the Question by Marx in 1852," added by Lenin to Chapter II, appeared in 1919.

The earliest references to an English language translation of *The State and Revolution* appear to be from Workers' Intelligence Bureau or International Bookshop, Melbourne, from 1918. The Australian Socialist Party published an edition in Sydney, 1920.

*The State and Revolution* was first published in the UK by British Socialist Party/Socialist Labour Press, in Glasgow, October 1919. Allen & Unwin published it as *Marxist Teaching on the State and the Task of the Proletariat in the Revolution* in 1919. The Communist Party of Great Britain published an edition in London, 1925. It was subsequently published in the English language *Lenin Selected Works*, Volume 7, 1937, pp.3-112.

Page references in this guide refer to two editions:

- The questions in the next section of this booklet refer to Todd Chretien annotated edition (Haymarket Book, 2014)
- The précis of *The State and Revolution* ("Notes on the Text" later in this booklet) reference the edition found in *Lenin's Collected Works (LCW)*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1964, Volume 25, pp.381-492.

This text can be downloaded from the Marxist Internet Archive:

<http://www.marxistsfr.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/index.htm>

There are other English translations, for example the Penguin edition, 1992 translated by Robert Conquest.

There is also an English version published in China, 1976: [http://www.cym.ie/documents/State\\_Rev.pdf](http://www.cym.ie/documents/State_Rev.pdf)

VI Lenin (2014) *State and Revolution: Annotated and Introduced by Todd Chretien* (Chicago: Haymarket Books) has some footnotes to the text which readers unfamiliar with the background will find useful. It is based on the 1919 translation but includes some of Conquests translations where these add clarity.

# Questions

All page numbers are with reference to the Todd Chretien edition of *The State and Revolution* which we would encourage group members to use for easy reference. Copies of this can be made available to members of the reading group.

## Week 1

### Chapter 1: Class Society and the State (pp40-58)

#### *Section 1: The State: A Product of the Irreconcilability of Class Antagonisms.*

1. What does Engels mean when he writes that “the state is ... by no means a power forced on society from without?” (42-43)
2. What does it mean to say that the state creates order? (42-43)
3. So in the view of Engels and Lenin, what is the state? How does the state differ from society?
4. How does Lenin criticise the SR and Menshevik view of the state, and the more subtle “Kautskyite distortion” of Engels’s view? (43-44)

#### *Section 2: Special Bodies of Armed Men, Prisons, Etc.*

5. How does the state differ from “men united in clans” in pre-class societies? Why is the modern state not just a more complex version of this as bourgeois sociologists claim? (45-46)
6. Why does this show the necessity of why the “oppressed class strives to create new [armed] organisations?” Do you think that this new state is simply the working class armed? (46-47).
7. Why does the state grow stronger as capitalism develops? (47)

#### *Section 3: The State: An Instrument for the Exploitation of the Oppressed Class.*

8. The first three quotes in this section are from Engels *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Why, on occasion, is it necessary for the state to have a degree of independence from the ruling class? (48-49)
9. Lenin spends some time on the corruption of state officials, but why does the capitalist class not have to solely rely on such corruption to dominate the state in capitalist society ? (49-50)
10. Why does Lenin state that “a democratic republic is the best possible *political shell* for capitalism”? (50)
11. Lenin states that universal suffrage [under the present-day state] can neither reveal the will of the majority of the working people nor realise that will. Do you think that is right? How does this compare to the quote from Engels that is universal suffrage the “gauge of the maturity of the working class” (and although not fully quoted here, Engels continues to say “On the day when the thermometer of universal suffrage shows boiling-point among the workers, they as well as the capitalists will know where they stand”)? (50-51)

#### *Section 4: The “Withering Away” of the State, and Violent Revolution.*

12. What state is it that “withers away”? When and why does this happen? In the quote from *Anti-Dühring* Engels writes that “The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and by the conduct of processes of production.” How should we understand this? (52-54)
13. How does this withering away differ from both social democratic and anarchist views of the state? (53-54)
14. Lenin states that the workers’ state is “the most complete democracy” but will, nonetheless, wither away. Why not keep this democratic state? (55-56)
15. What is wrong with the idea of the “Free People’s State” as promised in the German Social Democratic Gotha Programme? (57)
16. Lenin ends the chapter by laying great emphasis on the need for “violent revolution”. Why? Was this right then? Is it right now? (57-58)

17. In summary, how is the state different from society?
18. Here, the state is presented as *only* an instrument of the oppression of one class by another. What other functions does the state play in a country like the UK today?

## **Week 2**

### **Chapter 2: The Experience of 1848-51** (59-72)

#### *Section 1: The Eve of Revolution.*

1. When Marx wrote in *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847) that when the working class overcome the “old bourgeois society” there will be “no more political power groups” what is missing from his formulation? (59-60)
2. How do Marx and Engels formulate their view on how the working class take power in *The Communist Manifesto*? (60)
3. At this time Marx introduces the idea of “the dictatorship of the proletariat.” [Lenin is wrong that he only used the term after the 1871 Paris Commune – as Hal Draper has shown, Marx and Engels used the term only intermittently and infrequently from the 1850s onwards, see appendix 1 of this guide]. What does he mean by this? (60)
4. How does the workers’ state differ from that of the capitalists? (61)
5. Why is the working class the only class that can lead the struggle to replace capitalism? (62)
6. In this section Lenin writes that, as well overcoming the resistance of the capitalist class, the “proletariat needs state power, a centralized organisation of force ... to lead the enormous mass of the population—the peasants, the petit-bourgeoisie, and semi-proletarians—in the work of organizing a socialist economy.” Do you think this is right?
7. What is, in Lenin’s view, the role of Marxism in relation to this working class struggle? (62-63)

#### *Section 2: The Revolution Summed Up.*

8. How does Marx see the development of the state after the French revolution of 1789? (63-66)
9. Lenin states that the development of the state bureaucracy and standing army is both an expression of the antagonisms of class society, and “a parasite” that “chokes all of its vital pores”. What does he mean by this? (66)
10. How does Lenin apply this view of the state under capitalism, and the working class response to it, to what happened after the February 1917 revolution in Russia? (66-67)

#### *Section 3: The Presentation of the Question by Marx in 1852.* [This section was added by Lenin in 1918 to respond to Kautsky’s *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*]

11. What is the significance of Marx’s 1852 letter to Wedemeyer? (70)
12. Lenin writes that the dictatorship of the proletariat will be both democratic in a new way and a dictatorship in a new way. What does he mean by this? (71)
13. In summary, how do the capitalist state and workers’ state differ in their relationship to society?

## **Week 3**

### **Chapter 3: Experience of the Paris Commune of 1871. Marx’s Analysis** (73-94)

#### *Section 1: What made the Communards’ Attempt Heroic?*

1. How and why did Marx and Engels think that it was necessary to revise *The Communist Manifesto* in the light of the events of the Paris Commune? (74-75)
2. In the 1870s Marx thought that the UK was an exception to most European states that the weakness of the state bureaucracy and state machinery meant that there was little to smash. Do you think he was right (and



what would a revolution have looked like if he was right)? And if right, did this view continue to be right? (75-76)

3. How does Lenin interpret Marx's comment that "the precondition for every real *people's* revolution" is the smashing, the destruction of the "ready-made state machinery"? (76-78)

#### *Section 2: What Is to Replace the Smashed State Machine?*

4. Why was Marx and Engels's 1847 understanding of the nature of what it meant for the working class to become the ruling class limited? How did Marx develop this understanding in *The Civil War in France*? (78-79).
5. What measures were enacted by the Commune that were to create, for Marx, a new blueprint of what a workers' state would look like? (79-80)
6. How can the Commune's creation of the new state also be seen as the implementation of a thorough-going democracy? (80)
7. How can the Commune be seen as the replacement of the state as a "specific force" with a state as a "general force"? What are the implications of this for its future as a state? [think back to the question on the force used by clans before class society in session 1, but also why might this be a partial or unhelpful comparison?] (80-81)
8. Lenin reports that Bernstein criticises the kind of democracy represented by the Commune as "primitive democracy" (that is direct, fully participatory democracy). How is "primitive democracy" made fuller and more meaningful by the society developed under capitalism (compared to a primitive, clan-based society? (81-82)

#### *Section 3: The Abolition of Parliamentarism.*

9. Is the creation of this full political democracy all that is necessary for a workers' revolution? (82)
10. According to Lenin, what is the problem with "parliamentarism" and how is it abolished? (82-85)
11. Why does Lenin think it important that "the parliamentarians themselves have to work, to execute their own laws..."? (85-86)
12. Why does Lenin think that the state bureaucracy cannot be abolished immediately? (86-87)
13. Why does Lenin think that "reduc[ing] the role of state officials to that of simply carrying out our instructions as responsible, revocable, modestly paid 'foremen and accountants'" will be the first step in "the gradual 'withering away' of all bureaucracy"? (87)

#### *Section 4: The Organisation of National Unity*

14. Did Marx (or the Communards) support a new government in France based on a federation of independent communes? (88-92)

#### *Section 5: The abolition of the Parasitic State*

15. In what sense is the capitalist state "parasitic" and how does the workers' state overcome this? (92-94)
16. In summary, why do we see the Commune as a workers' state (or should be see it as one at all)?

### **Week 4**

#### **Chapter 4: Supplementary Explanations by Engels** (95-120)

##### *Section 1: The Housing Question.*

1. Looking at the section on *The Housing Question*, why need there be a transition period where there is still a state and rents still charged on property. (95-98)

##### *Section 2: Controversy with the Anarchists*

2. Looking at the section on the disputes with anarchists, on what did Marx and Engels agree with the anarchists and on what did they disagree? (98-101)

##### *Section 3: Letter to Bebel*

##### *Section 4: Criticisms of the Draft Erfurt Programme.*

3. Lenin states that "the democratic republic is the nearest approach to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Such a republic, without in the least abolishing the rule of capital and therefore the oppression of the masses

and the class struggle, inevitably leads to such an extension, development, unfolding, and intensification of this struggle that, as soon as it becomes possible to meet the fundamental interests of the oppressed masses, this possibility is realized inevitably and solely through the dictatorship of the proletariat, through the leadership of those masses by the proletariat.” What are the implications of this? (108)

*Section 5: The 1891 Preface to Marx’s The Civil War in France.*

4. What does Lenin (following Engels) understand by the “abolition of democracy”? (118-120)

### **Chapter 6: The Vulgarisation of Marxism by Opportunists (pp142-162)**

*Section 1: Plekhanov’s Controversy with the Anarchists.*

1. What is wrong with Plekhanov’s critique of anarchism?

*Section 2: Kautsky’s Controversy with the Opportunists.*

2. Looking at how Kautsky thinks that the workers will run industry, how does Lenin criticise Kautsky’s view? How does this extend to a more general criticism of Kautsky’s view of the role of the state in achieving socialism? (149-151, 156-158)

*Section 3: Kautsky’s Controversy with Pannekoek.*

3. In his debate with Pannekoek, how does Kautsky depart from the view of the state developed by Marx and Engels? (153-155)

## **Week 5**

### **Chapter 5: The Economic Basis of the Withering Away of the State (121-142)**

*Section 1: Marx’s presentation of the Question*

*Section 2: The Transition for Capitalism to Communism.*

1. What is the role of the state in what Marx (in *The Critique of the Gotha Programme*) calls the “political transition period” between capitalism and socialism? (And why “political?”) (124-129)
2. How does Lenin see democracy being limited by capitalist society? Does this explain why workers cannot use the democracy under socialism to achieve their aims? (125-126)
3. Why did Engels say that that if there is freedom, then the state (even a workers’ state) cannot exist? (126)
4. ...and under what conditions is this freedom possible? (127)
5. Why is this transitional state already not truly a state? (128)

*Section 3: The First Phase of Communist Society*

6. Why does Marx criticise Lassalle for saying that under socialism workers will receive the full product of their labour? (129-132)
7. Why does Marx think that inequality, and some aspects a bourgeois law, will persist in this first stage? (132-133)

*Section 4: The Higher Phase of Communist Society.*

8. Why is the eradication of inequality (“from each according to their ability, to each according to their need”) only attained under the second stage (stateless communism)? (133-135)
9. Why is it difficult to predict the nature of the “higher stage” of communism?
10. .... but in general principle, what might it look like? (139-142)
11. In summary, how does the “first phase of communist society” (that is society under the workers’ state) differ from stateless communism?

## **Further reading**

[Contact us if you need copies of these texts, which in some cases we can supply]

### **Context**

Andrew Hornung and John O'Mahony, "Lenin and the Russian Revolution", *Workers' Liberty* 3/28, 15 March, 2010 (originally 1974/1982) <http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2010/03/15/lenin-and-october-revolution-0>

Paul Hampton, "The Bolsheviks Come to Power", May 2010 <https://www.workersliberty.org/node/14150>

### **Commentary**

Hal Draper (1987), *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat from Marx to Lenin* (Monthly Review Press)

Chapter 1 online at <https://www.marxists.org/subject/marxmyths/hal-draper/article2.htm>

### **Classical Marxism**

Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852)

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/>

Lenin on the Paris Commune, *Solidarity* 3/176, 24 June 2010

<https://www.workersliberty.org/story/2010/06/23/lenin-paris-commune>

Trotsky, *Lessons of the Paris Commune* (February 1921) *New International*, Vol.2 No.2, March 1935, pp.43-47.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1921/02/commune.htm>

### **Commentary on Marx and Engels.**

Hal Draper (1977), *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution, Vol. I: The State and Bureaucracy* (New York: Monthly Review Press) [Esp. book 1, part 2, book 2 is on Bonapartism, an important element of Marx's thinking on the state not considered in this programme]

Hal Draper (1986) *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution, Vol. III: The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*

Hal Draper (1970) *The Death of the State in Marx and Engels. Socialist Register* 7

### **The Paris Commune**

Hippolyte-Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray (1876) *History of the Paris Commune of*

1871 <https://libcom.org/article/history-paris-commune-1871-prosper-olivier-lissagaray> [epub and mobi only] [This is a contemporaneous text, but will not give you any of context; for this wider context, have a look at one of general texts below.]

Tombs, Robert (1999) *The Paris Commune 1871. [A general history of the Paris Commune]*

John M. Merriman (2016) *Massacre: The Life and Death of the Paris Commune of 1871 [A general history of the Commune]*

### **Academic**

Ralph Miliband (1970) "Lenin's *The State and Revolution*" in *Socialist Register*, 7,

<https://socialistregister.com/index.php/srv/article/view/5303/2204> [Critical, but important, take on Lenin's view of the workers' state]

Jessop, Bob (1982) *The Capitalist State Marxist Theories and Methods* [First chapter relevant here, other chapters about the development of academic Marxist theory and less relevant]

Bob Jessop (2007) *State power: a strategic-relational approach*, Cambridge: Polity [More on recent developments in academic Marxist theory, not relevant here]

John Holloway and Sol Picciotto, (eds.) (1978) *State and Capital: A Marxist Debate*. London: Edward Arnold.

## **Glossary**

Karl Marx (1818-1883) was one of the greatest thinkers of all time and the co-founder of working class socialism, who developed the materialist conception of history and the critique of capitalist political economy.

Frederick Engels (1820-1895) was the co-founder of working class socialism and a major figure in the development of European socialism at the end of the nineteenth century.

Karl Kautsky (1854-1938) was one of the best-known theoreticians of German social democracy (SPD) and the Second International until 1914.

Georgi Plekhanov (1856-1918) was the founder and chief propagandist for Marxism in Russia for the last decades of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) was the principal leader of the Bolshevik party, which led the Russian revolution in 1917. His contribution to Marxism included major works on agriculture, the party, the national question, imperialism and the state.

Nikolai Bukharin (1888-1938) was one of the principal theoreticians of the Bolshevik Party. He blocked with Stalin against Trotsky but was executed by Stalin.

Anton Pannekoek (1873-1960) was a Dutch socialist who was active in the German Social Democratic party while living in Germany 1906-14.

Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) was after Lenin the principal leader of the Russian revolution. He made major contributions to Marxism, including his fight against Stalinism.

Edward Bernstein (1850-1932) was a one-time Marxist who became the chief proponent of revisionism within German social democracy.

# **The context**

## **1) Struggle against Social Democrats who supported their own governments in WWI**

*Extract from Andrew Hornung and John O'Mahony, Lenin and the Russian Revolution, Solidarity, 15 March 2010.*

Lenin had participated in the congresses of the international socialist movement, though he had concentrated heavily on Russian affairs. In 1914, when the World War broke out, the whole international socialist movement splintered into nationalist sections. Instead of the international brotherhood of the working class against war to which the International had repeatedly pledged itself, the outbreak of war produced fratricidal slaughter.

The same artillery fire that lit up the corpse-littered battlefields now highlighted the real situation within the international labour movement, which had become rotten with careerism and reformism. Social Democrats became "social chauvinists" overnight, supporting their national governments in the war. Jules Guesde, a leader of the French socialists, even became Minister of War.

Russia was one of the few countries where the majority of socialists did not spring to "defend the fatherland", though even here a social chauvinist wing emerged, headed by Plekhanov.

For Lenin the most crushing and unexpected blow was the fate of German Social Democracy, which also supported the imperialist war. This party, representing over four million voters, went over massively to chauvinism. What shocked Lenin was the fact that Karl Kautsky, the revered "Pope of Marxism", and the man whom Lenin had regarded as his teacher for the previous two decades, refused to echo the words of the revolutionary left, led by Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht: "The enemy is at home! Turn the imperialist war into a civil war". Instead, he began to rationalise for the renegades.

Kautsky's betrayal, masked by chatter about disarmament conferences, drew from Lenin a number of brilliant articles which exposed the social chauvinists, including those who had been pillars of "Marxist orthodoxy" during the debates with the "revisionists" like Bernstein.

Now Lenin turned to a complete examination of the whole of the preceding period of the Marxist labour movement. He set about digging down to the very roots of the rottenness that had corrupted both the theory and practice of the parties of the Second International. He bitterly rejected and combated the shallow programme of the Kautsky's that after the war they should "reconstruct the Second International". He exposed how the daily life of the Second International parties had led them gradually to accommodate and intermesh with the bourgeois state, much as the liquidators had tended to in Russia. He reworked his way through the whole literature of Marxism, relating it to the whole experience of the class struggle.

He uncovered and, in a series of famous pamphlets like *The State and Revolution* (1917), proved that the "orthodox" Marxists like Kautsky had for years falsified, vulgarised and bowdlerised the real teachings of Marxism on the state, the class struggle and the proletarian revolution. Implacably Lenin struggled to understand, expose and eliminate from the labour movement the baseness, loathsomeness and vileness of social-chauvinism and 'Kautskyism'.

This was the only way to cleanse the labour movement and rebuild a working class international on firmer foundations.

## **2) Struggle inside the Bolshevik Party**

*Lenin began collecting materials for an article on the state in response to his differences with other Bolsheviks. In an article "The Youth International", published in Sbornik Sotsial-Demokrata No. 2, December 1916, Lenin criticised Bukharin for blurring the differences between Marxism and anarchism on the state. O Lenin, The Youth International, December 1916, LCW 23 1964 p.165-166)*

### **Criticism of Bukharin**

On the question of the differences between socialists and anarchists in their attitude towards the state, Comrade

Nota-Bene [Bukharin] in his article (issue No. 6) falls into a very serious error (as he also does on several other questions, for instance, our reasons for combating the “defence of the fatherland” slogan). The author wishes to present “a clear picture of the state in general” (together with that of the imperialist predatory state). He quotes several statements by Marx and Engels, and arrives at the following two conclusions, among others:

It is absolutely wrong to seek the difference between socialists and anarchists in the fact that the former are in favour of the state while the latter are against it. The real difference is that revolutionary Social- Democracy desires to organise social production on new lines, as centralised, i.e., technically the most progressive, method of production, whereas decentralised, anarchist production would mean retrogression to obsolete techniques, to the old form of enterprise

This is wrong. The author raises the question of the difference in the socialists’ and anarchists’ attitude towards the state. However, he answers not this question, but another, namely, the difference in their attitude towards the economic foundation of future society. That, of course, is an important and necessary question. But that is no reason to ignore the main point of difference between socialists and anarchists in their attitude towards the state. Socialists are in favour of utilising the present state and its institutions in the struggle for the emancipation of the working class, maintaining also that the state should be used for a specific form of transition from capitalism to socialism. This transitional form is the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is also a state.

[...]

The anarchists want to “abolish” the state, “blow it up” (sprengen) as Comrade Nota-Bene expresses it in one place, erroneously ascribing this view to the socialists. The socialists—unfortunately the author quotes Engels’s relevant words rather incompletely—hold that the state will “wither away”, will gradually “fall asleep” after the bourgeoisie has been expropriated.

Social-Democracy, which is, or at least should be, the educator of the masses, must now more than ever emphasise its hostility to the state in principle ... The present war has shown how deeply the state idea has penetrated the souls of workers,

writes Comrade Nota-Bene. In order to “emphasise” our “hostility” to the state “in principle” we must indeed understand it “clearly”, and it is this clarity that our author lacks. His remark about the “state idea” is entirely muddled. It is un-Marxist and un-socialist. The point is not that the “state idea” has clashed with the repudiation of the state, but that opportunist policy (i.e., the opportunist, reformist, bourgeois attitude towards the state) has clashed with revolutionary Social-Democratic policy (i.e., the revolutionary Social-Democratic attitude towards the bourgeois state and towards utilising it against the bourgeoisie to overthrow the bourgeoisie). These are entirely different things. We hope to return to this very important subject in a separate article.

### Notebooks and plans

*Lenin wrote out a plan for his research on the state, dated 1 December 1916. The Plan for an Article “On the Question of the Role of the State”, is in the collected works (LCW 41 1977 p.381-382). This material was closely written in small handwriting in a blue-covered notebook entitled Marxism on the State. It contained a collection of quotations from Marx and Engels and excerpts from books by Kautsky, Pannekoek and Bernstein, with Lenin’s critical annotations, conclusions and generalisations.*

In a letter to A. M. Kollontai d[Lenin, Letter to Kollontai, 17 February 1917, LCW 35 1976 p.286], Lenin stated that he had almost finished his material on the Marxist attitude to the state.

“I am preparing (have almost got the material ready) an article on the question of the attitude of Marxism to the state. I have come to conclusions which are even sharper against Kautsky than against Bukharin (have you seen his “Nota Bene” in No. 6 of Jugend-Internationale? and Sbornik Sotsial-Demokrata No. 2?). The question is exceptionally important. Bukharin is far better than Kautsky, but Bukharin’s mistakes may destroy this “just cause” in the struggle with Kautskianism.”

### 3) 1917 and the workers' revolution

[Extract from Paul Hampton, 'The Bolsheviks Come to Power', May 2010]

In February 1917, workers created the soviets (workers' councils) and overthrew the tsar. But the Bolsheviks had only 2,000 members in Petrograd. By April they had grown to 16,000 and by June to 32,000 members. (All references from Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, 2004) However at the first congress of the soviets (3-24 June 1917) 533 registered delegates were Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) and only 105 were Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks faced a more powerful provisional government as well as a majority of SRs and Mensheviks in the soviets.

Therefore when workers and soldiers agitated for the seizure of power in July 1917, most Bolsheviks argued that an uprising was premature. When armed demonstrations called for "All Power to the Soviets", the Bolsheviks joined the half-million workers in protest. The provisional government and the soviet majority suppressed the workers and drove the Bolsheviks underground, accusing them of being German agents. As one newspaper put it at the time, "The Bolsheviks are compromised, discredited, and crushed... they have been expelled from Russian life, their teaching has turned out to be an irreversible failure..."

However it was the role of the Bolsheviks in thwarting the would-be military dictator Kornilov that gave them the opportunity to win majority support. On 11 August, Kornilov said that it was "high time to hang the German agents and spies headed by Lenin" and to "disperse the soviet of workers and soldiers in such a way that it would not reassemble anywhere". The Executive Committee of the Petrograd soviet created an extraordinary military defence organ, Committee for Struggle against the Counterrevolution, which began to function on 28 August, and which was led by SRs, Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. As the Menshevik Sukhanov put it in his memoirs, "With the Bolsheviks, the committee had at its disposal the full power of the organised workers and soldiers."

#### Bolshevik ascendancy

The Bolshevik defence of the revolution against the military reaction, which meant fighting alongside the Provisional government, while maintaining the political independence of the soviet forces, was well summed up by Lenin: "A Bolshevik would tell the Mensheviks: 'We shall fight, of course, but we refuse to enter into any political alliance whatever with you, refuse to express the least confidence in you...' A Bolshevik would tell the workers and soldiers: 'Let us fight, but not one iota of trust in the Mensheviks if you don't want to rob yourselves of the fruits of victory'." (Rumours of a Conspiracy, LCW 25, p. 247-48)

Above all, the Bolsheviks showed that they were the only party serious about putting into practice the demands of peace, bread and land through a soviet government. According to Rabinowitch, the Bolsheviks demands and actions closely corresponded to popular aspirations, while the other major political parties were "widely discredited because of their failure to press hard enough for meaningful internal changes," including ending Russia's participation in the war.

In Petrograd there were clear signs of Bolshevik ascendancy in the soviets. The Bolshevik Lazar Bregman became chair of the soviet at the Kronstadt naval base on 27 August. At the Petrograd soviet on 31 August, a clear majority of the deputies present voted for the Bolshevik resolution 'On Power' - the first time on any political issue. Within the Petrograd garrison, control of many regimental committees passed from more moderate elements into the hands of the Bolsheviks. The Moscow soviets followed on 5 September. In the first half of September, 80 soviets in large and medium towns backed the call for a transfer of power to the soviets.

On September 25 the leadership of the Petrograd soviet was completely reorganised. Making up the new presidium were two SRs, one Menshevik, and four Bolsheviks (Trotsky, Kamenev, Rykov and Fedorov); Trotsky replaced Chkheidze as chairman. Bolshevik party membership in Russia as a whole rose from around 10,000 in March to nearly 400,000 by October 1917. This was double the size of the Mensheviks, though still smaller than the SRs.

### The seizure of power

With these signs of support for the Bolsheviks, but with reactionaries still active and the provisional government looking to turn on the soviets, Lenin attached seminal importance to seizing power. His preference was taking power through the Bolsheviks own forces. However the leaders of the Bolshevik Military Organisation were "divided and pessimistic" about the wisdom of initiating an insurrection without significant further preparation. And with the second congress of soviets due to convene on 25 October, the party decided to take power through the soviet organisation, but still presenting delegates with the fait accompli of a soviet government.

Rabinowitch argued that this position, taken by Trotsky and others "seems to have been based on a realistic appraisal of available evidence regarding the prevailing mood and correlation of forces in Petrograd, the provinces, and the front". As he put it: "Accounts of the October Revolution by writers in the Soviet Union, seeking to maximise Lenin's role in the Bolshevik seizure of power at the expense of Trotsky's, convey the impression that under the latter's influence, the party exaggerated Kerensky's strength and underestimated that of the left, and passively awaited a vote of the congress of soviets to create a revolutionary government. This interpretation is, of course, seriously distorted... these tactics were dictated, more than anything else, by what seems to have been a realistic evaluation of the prevailing correlation of forces and popular mood."

The Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) was conceived on 9 October, that is, the day before the Bolshevik central committee's decision regarding preparation of an uprising. It started out as principally a defensive organisation. Most Stalinist historians consider the insurrection to have begun some time on 24 October. Yet this interpretation ignores the crucial significance of the steps taken by the MRC on 21-22 October. This including securing bridges, moving the fleet into the centre of the city and setting up key checkpoints. On the night of 23-24 October Kerensky gave Trotsky the pretext he was looking for when he ordered the Bolshevik printing press to be shut down, as a prelude to moving against the MRC. And contrary to most accounts written in the Soviet Union (as well as Eisenstein's film), the Winter Palace was not captured by storm.

### The new state

Did the Bolsheviks intend to create a one-party state from the beginning? On Rabinowitch's account, certainly not. In fact the Bolsheviks repeatedly attempted conciliation with the Mensheviks and SRs. In early September, Lenin proposed a peaceful transfer of power to the soviets, if the moderate socialists were willing to draw the lessons of the previous six months and break with the discredited Kadets and other ruling class parties. However these parties stuck to their support for the provisional government.

On 25 October, the second congress of soviets unanimously voted to form a coalition government of parties represented in the Soviets. The minority moderate socialists then immediately chose to ignore the resolution that they had just voted for, denounced the Bolsheviks for overthrowing the provisional government, and stormed out of the meeting. It was at this point Trotsky denounced them in evocative terms: "You are miserable bankrupts, your role is played out; go where you ought to go into the dustbin of history!"

The new central executive committee of the Petrograd soviet was not monolithic. It consisted of 62 Bolsheviks, 29 Left SRs, 6 Menshevik-Internationalists, and four representatives of minor leftist groups. The first government, Sovnarkom, was an exclusively Bolshevik administration, but only because the Left SRs refused to join it. The left SRs did subsequently join for the new regime. Even in the days after the congress, when the rail workers union threatened to paralyse the new government and the Bolshevik leadership was inclined toward compromise, "the Mensheviks and SRs displayed little interest in coming to terms with the Bolshevik regime". The moderates refused to accept the general programme of the soviets and the decrees it issued.

### The real Bolshevik party

The idea that the Bolshevik party was some kind of monolithic automaton, responsive only to the dictates of the central committee, or even just Lenin, has become entrenched by an alliance of bourgeois and Stalinist historians. It is reflected today in organisations like the SWP, which allow no factions and restrict debate to narrowly proscribed channels. This view of the revolutionary party is completely at variance with the entire history of Bolshevism.



From its emergence as a faction in 1903 to its subsequent demise in the late 1920s, there were deep schisms of strategy and tactics within the Bolshevik party, beneath a common understanding of working class politics. According to Rabinowitch, in 1917, "the essential difference between 'Leninists in spirit', like Trotsky, and right Bolsheviks, like Kamenev, was that while the former looked to a soviet congress to transfer power to a government of the extreme left pledged to immediate peace and a radical programme of internal change, the latter viewed a congress of soviets as a vehicle for building a broader, stronger alliance of 'democratic groups', which might, at the most, form a caretaker all-socialist coalition government, pending convocation of the Constituent Assembly."

Rabinowitch argued that his research had shown that "the relative flexibility of the party, as well as its responsiveness to the prevailing mass mood, had at least as much to do with the ultimate Bolshevik victory as did revolutionary discipline, organisational unity, or obedience to Lenin. He concluded that "the phenomenal success of the Bolsheviks can be attributed in no small measure to the nature of the party in 1917," and above all to "the party's internally relatively democratic, tolerant, and decentralised structure and method of operation, as well as its essentially open and mass character--in striking contrast to the traditional Leninist model"

The October revolution in Russia may have been almost a century ago, but it retains its world- historic significance. It was the first time the working class has taken power and retained it for a period (the Paris Commune was far more limited, for a shorter duration and geographically confined to one city). Workers were successful because they had organised and were led by a mass, democratic and disciplined Marxist party with a coherent theory, a programme that expressed the needs of workers and their allies, and the strategy and tactics to win.

#### **4) The State and Revolution after Lenin's death**

*Lenin's differences with Bukharin on the state were used by Stalin against Bukharin after Trotsky had been expelled from the USSR. Stalin, wrote an article, The Right Deviation in the C.P.S.U.(B). April 1929 raked over the wartime differences to build his case against Bukharin:*

Stalin wrote:

"You do not believe this, comrades? In that case, listen further. After the controversy in 1916, nine years later, during which interval Bukharin maintained silence, and a year after the death of Lenin—namely, in 1925—Bukharin published an article in the symposium *Revolutsia Prava*, entitled "Concerning the Theory of the Imperialist State," which previously had been rejected by the editors of *Sbornik Sotsial-Demokrata* (i.e., by Lenin). In a footnote to this article Bukharin bluntly declares that it was not Lenin but he, Bukharin, who was right in this controversy. That may seem incredible, comrades, but it is a fact."

Bukharin had written:

"!V. I. (i.e., Lenin) wrote a short article containing criticism of the article in *Internatsional Molodyozhy*. The reader will easily see that I had not made the mistake attributed to me, for I clearly saw the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat; on the other hand, from Ilyich's article it will be seen that at that time he was wrong about the thesis on 'blowing up' the state (bourgeois state, of course), and confused that question with the question of the withering away of the dictatorship of the proletariat.\* Perhaps I should have enlarged on the subject of the dictatorship at that time. But in justification I may say that at that time there was such a wholesale exaltation of the bourgeois state by the Social-Democrats that it was natural to concentrate all attention on the question of blowing up that machine.

When I arrived in Russia from America and saw Nadezhda Konstantinovna [Krupskaya] (that was at our illegal Sixth Congress and at that time V. I. was in hiding) her first words were: V. I. asked me to tell you that he has no disagreements with you now over the question of the state.' Studying this question, Ilyich came to the same conclusions\* regarding 'blowing up,' but he developed this theme, and later the theory of the dictatorship, to such an extent as to create a whole epoch in the development of theoretical thought in this field.

In his biography of Bukharin, Stephen Cohen argued that "Bukharin had been the first to revive Marx's anti-statism" and the fact that his "initiative prompted Lenin's subsequent formulation in *State and Revolution*+ was generally acknowledged in the Soviet Union until 1929" (1980 p.399 n.154) In particular the Stalinists used Lenin's

emphasis on the “dictatorial” aspects of the dictatorship of the proletariat to justify the authoritarianism of the bureaucratic regime.

# **Notes on the text**

## **Prefaces**

Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 p.383-384

"The question of the state is now acquiring particular importance both in theory and in practical politics. The imperialist war has immensely accelerated and intensified the process of transformation of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism. The monstrous oppression of the working people by the state, which is merging more and more with the all-powerful capitalist associations, is becoming increasingly monstrous. The advanced countries - we mean their hinterland - are becoming military convict prisons for the workers."

"The question of the relation of the socialist proletarian revolution to the state, therefore, is acquiring not only practical political importance, but also the significance of a most urgent problem of the day, the problem of explaining to the masses what they will have to do before long to free themselves from capitalist tyranny."

## **Postscript**

Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 p.492

"It is more pleasant and useful to go through the "experience of revolution" than to write about it." [November 30, 1917]

"This pamphlet was written in August and September 1917. I had already drawn up the plan for the next, the seventh chapter, "The Experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917". Apart from the title, however, I had no time to write a single line of the chapter; I was "interrupted" by a political crisis--the eve of the October revolution of 1917. Such an "interruption" can only be welcomed; but the writing of the second part of this pamphlet ("The Experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917") will probably have to be put off for a long time."

# Chapter 1: Class Society and the State

## 1. The State: A Product of the Irreconcilability of Class Antagonisms

Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 p.385-87

"During the lifetime of great revolutionaries, the oppressing classes constantly hounded them, received their theories with the most savage malice, the most furious hatred and the most unscrupulous campaigns of lies and slander. After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonise them, so to say, and to hallow their names to a certain extent for the "consolation" of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping the latter, while at the same time robbing the revolutionary theory of its substance, blunting its revolutionary edge and vulgarising it."

This epitaph might just as easily be applied to Lenin's treatment at the hands of Stalinism, or indeed the fate of Trotsky and Gramsci in the hands of most of their epigones.

Lenin quotes from Engels, *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*

"The state is, therefore, by no means a power forced on society from without; just as little is it 'the reality of the ethical idea', 'the image and reality of reason', as Hegel maintains. Rather, it **is a product of society at a certain stage of development**; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel. But in order that these **antagonisms, these classes with conflicting economic interests**, might not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, it became necessary to have a power, seemingly standing above society, that would alleviate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of 'order'; and this power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it, and alienating itself more and more from it, is the state.]]

Engels, *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, (1884) MECW 26, 1990 p.269

"This expresses with perfect clarity the basic idea of Marxism with regard to the historical role and the meaning of the state. The state is a product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms. The state arises where, when and insofar as class antagonism objectively cannot be reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state proves that the class antagonisms are irreconcilable."

"According to Marx, **the state is an organ of class rule**, an organ for the oppression of one class by another; it is the creation of "order", which legalises and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between classes."

"That the state is an organ of the rule of a definite class which cannot be reconciled with its antipode (the class opposite to it) is something the petty-bourgeois democrats will never be able to understand."

## 2. Special Bodies of Armed Men, Prisons, etc

Lenin quotes from Engels, *Origins etc*, LCW 25 1964 p.388-90

"As distinct from the old gentile [tribal or clan] order, the state, first, divides its subjects according to territory... The second distinguishing feature is the establishment of a public power which no longer directly coincides with the population organising itself as an armed force. This special, public power is necessary because a self-acting armed organisation of the population has become impossible since the split into classes ... This public power exists in every state; it consists not merely of armed men but also of material adjuncts, prisons, and institutions of coercion of all kinds, of which gentile [clan] society knew nothing."

What does this power mainly consist of? It consists of special bodies of armed men having prisons, etc., at their command.

Lenin quotes from Engels, *Origins...*

"It [the public power] grows stronger, however, in proportion as class antagonisms within the state become more acute, and as adjacent states become larger and more populous. We have only to look at our present-day Europe, where class struggle and **rivalry in conquest** have tuned up the public power to such a pitch that it threatens to swallow the whole of society and even the state."

Engels, *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, (1884) MECW 26, 1990 p.270

Compare the classic (non-Marxist) sociological definition of the state, pronounced by Max Weber in 1918 (published 1919 as *Politics as a Vocation*), that **"a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory"**. Weber preceded this definition with some instructive comments. He said:

"Every state is founded on force" said Trotsky at Brest-Litovsk. That indeed is right. If no social institutions existed which knew the use of violence, the concept of "state" would be eliminated, and a condition would emerge that could be designated as "anarchy" in the specific sense of this word. Of course, force is certainly not the normal or the only means of the state - nobody says that - but force is a means specific to the state. Today the relation between the state and violence is an especially intimate one. In the past the most varied institutions - beginning with the sib - have known the use of physical force as quite normal."

Note: The "common sense" view of the state equates it with the various bureaucratic public bodies people deal with daily, including schools, the health service, etc. The Marxist view is much deeper, and explains much more of the behaviour of states.

### **3. The State: An Instrument for the Exploitation of the Oppressed Class**

From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 p.391-394

"The maintenance of the special public power standing above society requires taxes and state loans."

Lenin quotes from Engels, *Origins...*

Having public power and the right to levy taxes, the officials now stand, as organs of society, above society. The free, voluntary respect that was accorded to the organs of the gentile [clan] constitution does not satisfy them, even if they could gain it ... Special laws are enacted proclaiming the sanctity and immunity of the officials. -The shabbiest police servant has more 'authority' than the representative of the clan, but even the head of the military power of a civilised state may well envy the elder of a clan the "unrestrained respect" of society."

Engels, *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, (1884) MECW 26, 1990 p.270

Lenin quotes from Engels, *Origins...*

Because the state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but because it arose, at the same time, in the midst of the conflict of these classes, it is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which, through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class ... The ancient and feudal states were organs for the exploitation of the slaves and serfs; likewise, - the modern representative state is an instrument of exploitation of wage-labour by capital. By way of exception, however, periods occur in which the warring classes balance each other so nearly that the state power as ostensible mediator acquires, for the moment, a certain degree of independence of both. Such were the absolute monarchies of the 17th and 18th centuries, the Bonapartism of the First and Second Empires in France, and the Bismarck regime in Germany.||

Engels, *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, (1884) MECW 26, 1990 p.270-71

Lenin quotes from Engels, *Origins...*

In a democratic republic, Engels continues, "wealth exercises its power indirectly, but all the more surely", first, by means of the "direct corruption of officials" (America); secondly, by means of an "alliance of the government and the Stock Exchange" (France and America).

Engels, *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, (1884) MECW 26, 1990 p.271

"We must also note that Engels is most explicit in calling universal suffrage as well an instrument of bourgeois rule. Universal suffrage, he says, obviously taking account of the long experience of German Social-Democrat [quoting Engels] "the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more in the present-day state.""

Lenin argues that even a "perfect" democratic republic can serve bourgeois class rule. He locates the reason not so much in formalities but in the social subjugation - exclusion from politics by poverty, overwork, lack of

confidence, lack of facilities such as newspapers and meeting halls - of the working class.

Lenin quotes from Engels, *Origins...*

"The state, then, has not existed from all eternity. There have been societies that did without it, that had no idea of the state and state power. At a certain stage of economic development, which was necessarily bound up with the split of society into classes, the state became a necessity owing to this split. We are now rapidly approaching a stage in the development of production at which the existence of these classes not only will have ceased to be a necessity, but will become a positive hindrance to production. They will fall as they arose at an earlier stage. Along with them the state will inevitably fall. Society, which will reorganise production on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers, will put the whole machinery of state where it will then belong into a museum of antiquities, by the side of the spinning-wheel and the bronze axe."

Engels, *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884) MECW 26, 1990 p.272

#### **4. The "Withering Away" of the State, and Violent Revolution**

[From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 p396-.400]

Lenin quotes from Engels, *Anti-Dühring*

**"The proletariat seizes from state power and turns the means of production into state property to begin with.** But thereby it abolishes itself as the proletariat, abolishes all class distinctions and class antagonisms, and abolishes also the state as state. Society thus far, operating amid class antagonisms, needed the state, that is, an organisation of the particular exploiting class, for the maintenance of its external conditions of production, and, therefore, especially, for the purpose of forcibly keeping the exploited class in the conditions of oppression determined by the given mode of production (slavery, serfdom or bondage, wage-labour). The state was the official representative of society as a whole, its concentration in a visible corporation. But it was this only insofar as it was the state of that class which itself represented, for its own time, society as a whole: in ancient times, the state of slave-owning citizens; in the Middle Ages, of the feudal nobility; in our own time, of the bourgeoisie. When at last it becomes the real representative of the whole of society, it renders itself unnecessary. As soon as there is no longer any social class to be held in subjection, as soon as class rule, and the individual struggle for existence based upon the present anarchy in production, with the collisions and excesses arising from this struggle, are removed, nothing more remains to be held in subjection — nothing necessitating a special coercive force, a state. The first act by which the state really comes forward as the representative of the whole of society — the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society — is also its last independent act as a state. State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies down of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The state is not 'abolished'. **It withers away.** This gives the measure of the value of the phrase 'a free people's state', both as to its justifiable use for a long time from an agitational point of view, and as to its ultimate scientific insufficiency; and also of the so-called anarchists' demand that the state be abolished overnight."

Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, (1878) MECW 25, 1987 p.267-268 (different translation - withers = dies out)

In the first place, at the very outset of his argument, Engels says that, in seizing state power, the proletariat thereby "abolishes the state as state"... As a matter of fact, however, these words briefly express the experience of one of the greatest proletarian revolutions, the Paris Commune of 1871, of which we shall speak in greater detail in its proper place. As a matter of fact, Engels speaks here of

the proletariat revolution "abolishing" the bourgeois state, while the words about the state withering away refer to the remnants of the proletarian state after the socialist revolution.

Secondly, the state is a "special coercive force". Engels gives this splendid and extremely profound definition here with the utmost lucidity. And from it follows that the "special coercive force" for the suppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, of millions of working people by handfuls of the rich, must be replaced by a "special coercive force" for the suppression of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat (the dictatorship of the proletariat).

Thirdly, in speaking of the state "withering away", and the even more graphic and colourful "dying down of itself", Engels refers quite clearly and definitely to the period after "the state has taken possession of the means of production in the name of the whole of society", that is, after the socialist revolution... Revolution alone can "abolish" the bourgeois state. The state in general, i.e., the most complete democracy, can only "wither away".

Fourthly, after formulating his famous proposition that “the state withers away”, Engels at once explains specifically that this proposition is directed against both the opportunists and the anarchists...

We are in favour of a democratic republic as the best form of state for the proletariat under capitalism. But we have no right to forget that wage slavery is the lot of the people even in the most democratic bourgeois republic. Furthermore, every state is a “special force” for the suppression of the oppressed class. Consequently, every state is not “free” and not a “people's state”. Marx and Engels explained this repeatedly to their party comrades in the seventies.

Fifthly, the same work of Engels', whose arguments about the withering away of the state everyone remembers, also contains an argument of the significance of violent revolution. Engels' historical analysis of its role becomes a veritable panegyric on violent revolution. This, “no one remembers”.

Lenin quotes from Engels, *Anti-Dühring*,

“That force, however, plays yet another role [other than that of a diabolical power] in history, a revolutionary role; that, in the words of Marx, it is the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with a new one, that it is the instrument with which social movement forces its way through and shatters the dead, fossilised political forms — of this there is not a word in Herr Dühring. It is only with sighs and groans that he admits the possibility that force will perhaps be necessary for the overthrow of an economy based on exploitation — unfortunately, because all use of force demoralises, he says, the person who uses it. And this in Germany, where a violent collision — which may, after all, be forced on the people — would at least have the advantage of wiping out the servility which has penetrated the nation's mentality following the humiliation of the Thirty Years' War.[4] And this **parson's mode of thought — dull, insipid, and impotent** — presumes to impose itself on the most revolutionary party that history has ever known!

Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, (1878) MECW 25, 1987 p.171

The panegyric Engels sang in its honour, and which fully corresponds to Marx's repeated statements (see the concluding passages of *The Poverty of Philosophy* and the *Communist Manifesto*, with their proud and open proclamation of the inevitability of a violent revolution; see what Marx wrote nearly 30 years later, in criticising the Gotha Programme of 1875, when he mercilessly castigated the opportunist character of that programme) — this panegyric is by no means a mere “impulse”, a mere declamation or a polemical sally.”

\* \* \*

Lenin's references are in the next chapter. The most famous (though not a definition of the state as a whole) is:

“The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie”

Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) MECW 6 1976 p.486

He would also have known the passage from Engels in *Anti-Dühring*:

The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine — the state of the capitalists, the **ideal personification of the total national capital**. The more it proceeds to the taking over of productive forces, the more does it actually become the national capitalist, the more citizens does it exploit. The workers remain wage-workers — proletarians. The capitalist relation is not done away with. It is, rather, brought to a head.

Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, (1878) MECW 25, 1987 p.266

The supersession of the bourgeois state by the proletarian state is impossible without a violent revolution. The abolition of the proletarian state, i.e., of the state in general, is impossible except through the process of “withering away”.

Note Lenin's strictures on the limits of violence in 1917:

The “Jacobins” of the twentieth century would not guillotine the capitalists—to follow a good example does not mean copying it. It would be enough to arrest fifty to a hundred financial magnates and bigwigs, the chief knights of embezzlement and of robbery by the banks. It would be enough to arrest them for a few weeks to expose their frauds and show all exploited people “who needs the war”. Upon exposing the frauds of the banking barons, we could release them, placing the banks, the capitalist syndicates, and all the contractors “working” for the government under workers' control.

Lenin, “The Enemies of the People”, *Pravda* No. 75, 7 June 1917, LCW 25 1977 p. 57-58





# Chapter 2: The Experience of 1848-51

## 1. The Eve of Revolution

From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 p.402-403

Lenin quotes Marx, *Poverty of Philosophy*, 25 1964 p.401

"The working class, in the course of development, will substitute for the old bourgeois society an association which will preclude classes and their antagonism, and there will be no more political power groups, since the political power is precisely the official expression of class antagonism in bourgeois society."

Marx, *Poverty of Philosophy* (1847) MECW 6 1976 p.212

Lenin quotes Marx, *Communist Manifesto*

"In depicting the most general phases of the development of the proletariat, we traced the more or less veiled civil war, raging within existing society up to the point where that war breaks out into open revolution, and where the **violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie** lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat....

"We have seen above that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class **to win the battle of democracy**.

"The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degree, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e., of the proletariat organised as the ruling class; and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible."

Marx, *Communist Manifesto* (1848) MECW 6 1976 p.495, p.504

[Note: "raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class" meant the conquest of political power by the working class.

"to win the battle of democracy": Marx and Engels were the first socialists to see democracy as a central means and aim of socialism. "Democracy" at the time of the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) meant a democratic regime with voting rights, free speech etc, liberties few workers had in 1848. Engels wrote in the *Principles of Communism* that "in the first place" the revolution+ would inaugurate a democratic constitution and thereby, directly or indirectly, the political rule of the proletariat." Engels' was also using the expression in the sense of a class alliance, with the proletariat leading the small peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie, which Engels called "the Democracy". Draper argues that the phrase "the winning of democracy" was deliberately cryptic and that Marx "put a veil of haze over the concept at a point in time when he was still uncertain or opposed". This was because Marx did not accept Engels' perspective, and had not made up his mind on the form of proletarian rule.

"hands of the state": This was one of the few statements by Marx in favour of state ownership of the means of production. State ownership is a form of social ownership, but Marx did not preclude others such as workers' associations or cooperatives. Marx and Engels made their most significant amendment to the Manifesto here – a point which is vital to any Marxist understanding of the bourgeois state. In the preface to the 1872 German edition of the Manifesto, "one thing was proved by the [Paris] Commune, viz, that the working class cannot simply lay hold of the read-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes". (Marx and Engels, Preface to the 1872 German Edition of the Manifesto of the Communist Party (1872) MECW 23 1988 p.175)]

Lenin continues that

"The proletariat needs the state... according to Marx, the proletariat needs only a state which is withering away, i.e., a state so constituted that it begins to **wither away immediately**, and cannot but wither away.

Hal Draper notes that "The most remarkable characteristic of *State and Revolution*... was the emphasis in this work – and only here – of the immediacy of the 'withering away' pattern." (Draper 1987 p.97)]

Lenin continues:

**"The state is a special organisation of force: it is an organisation of violence for the suppression of some class.** What class must the proletariat suppress? Naturally, only the exploiting class, i.e., the bourgeoisie. The working

people need the state only to suppress the resistance of the exploiters, and only the proletariat can direct this suppression, can carry it out. **For the proletariat is the only class that is consistently revolutionary**, the only class that can unite all the working and exploited people in the struggle against the bourgeoisie, in completely removing it.

**The exploited classes need political rule in order to completely abolish all exploitation**, i.e., in the interests of the vast majority of the people, and against the insignificant minority consisting of the modern slave-owners — the landowners and capitalists.

The proletariat needs state power, a centralised organisation of force, an organisation of violence, both to crush the resistance of the exploiters and to lead the enormous mass of the population — the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie, and semi-proletarians — in the work of organising a socialist economy.

### **Educating the workers' party**

From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 p.404-5

"By **educating the workers' party**, Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat which is capable of taking power and of leading the whole people to socialism, of orienting and organising the new order, of being the teacher, the guide, the leader of all the working and exploited people in the task of building up their social life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie. By contrast, the opportunism which now holds sway trains, from among the membership of the **workers' party**, representatives of the better-paid workers, who lose touch with the masses, "get along" fairly well under capitalism, and sell their birthright for a mess of pottage, i.e., renounce their role as revolutionary leaders of the people against the bourgeoisie."

[Note: This is the only significant statement in *The State and Revolution* connecting the role of the party with working class rule.]

Lenin continues:

"The state, i.e., **the proletariat organised as the ruling class**," this theory of Marx is inseparably bound up with all he taught on the revolutionary role of the proletariat in history. The culmination of this role is the **proletarian dictatorship**, the political rule of the proletariat.

But since the proletariat needs the state as a special form of organisation of violence against the bourgeoisie, the following conclusion suggests itself: **is it conceivable that such an organisation can be created without first abolishing, destroying the state machine created by the bourgeoisie for themselves?**

## **2. The Revolution Summed Up**

From Lenin, *State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 p.407-13

Lenin quotes Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*

"But the revolution is throughgoing. It is still journeying through purgatory. It does its work methodically. By December 2, 1851 [the day of Louis Bonaparte's coup d'etat], it had completed one half of its preparatory work. It is now completing the other half. First it perfected the parliamentary power, in order to be able to overthrow it. Now that it has attained this, it is perfecting the executive power, reducing it to its purest expression, isolating it, setting it up against itself as the sole object, in order to concentrate all its forces of destruction against it. And when it has done this second half of its preliminary work, Europe will leap from its seat and exultantly exclaim: well grubbed, old mole!

"This executive power with its enormous bureaucratic and military organisation, with its vast and ingenious state machinery, with a host of officials numbering half a million, besides an army of another half million, this appalling parasitic body, which enmeshes the body of French society and chokes all its pores, sprang up in the days of the absolute monarchy, with the decay of the feudal system, which it helped to hasten." The first French Revolution developed centralisation, "but at the same time" it increased "the extent, the attributes and the number of agents of governmental power. Napoleon completed this state machinery". The legitimate monarchy and the July monarchy "added nothing but a greater division of labor"....

"... Finally, in its struggle against the revolution, the parliamentary republic found itself compelled to strengthen, along with repressive measures, the resources and centralisation of governmental power. **All revolutions perfected this machine instead of smashing it.** The parties that contended in turn for domination regarded the possession of this huge state edifice as the principal spoils of the victor."

Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) MECW 11 1979 p.185-186

The centralised state power that is peculiar to bourgeois society came into being in the period of the fall of absolutism. Two institutions most characteristic of this state machine are the bureaucracy and the standing army...

The bureaucracy and the standing army are a "parasite" on the body of bourgeois society...

*In 1852, he did not yet specifically raise the question of what was to take the place of the state machine to be destroyed. Experience had not yet provided material for dealing with this question, which history placed on the agenda later on, in 1871. In 1852, all that could be established with the accuracy of scientific observation was that the proletarian revolution had approached the task of concentrating all its forces of destruction" against the state power, of "smashing" the state machine...*

### **3. The Presentation of the Question by Marx in 1852 [added in the second edition]**

From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 p.412-3

Lenin quotes Marx's letter to Weydemeyer (1852).

"And now as to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economists, the economic anatomy of classes. What I did that was new was to prove: (1) that the existence of classes is only bound up with the particular, historical phases in the development of production (historische Entwicklungsphasen der Produktion), (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the **dictatorship of the proletariat**, (3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society."

Marx, Letter to Weydemeyer, (5 March 1852), MECW 39 1983 p.62, p.65

A Marxist is solely someone who extends the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The essence of Marx's theory of the state has been mastered only by those who realise that the **dictatorship of a single class is necessary** not only for every class society in general, not only for the proletariat which has overthrown the bourgeoisie, but also for the entire historical period which separates capitalism from "classless society", from communism.

## Chapter 3: Experience of the Paris Commune of 1871. Marx's Analysis

### 1. What Made the Communards' Attempt Heroic?

From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 p.412-16

It is well known that in the autumn of 1870, a few months before the Commune, Marx warned the Paris workers that any attempt to overthrow the government would be the folly of despair...

Marx, however, was not only enthusiastic about the heroism of the Communards, who, as he expressed it, "**stormed heaven**". Although the mass revolutionary movement did not achieve its aim, he regarded it as a historic experience of enormous importance, as a certain advance of the world proletarian revolution, as a practical step that was more important than hundreds of programmes and arguments. Marx endeavoured to analyse this experiment, to draw tactical lessons from it and re-examine his theory in the light of it...

The last preface to the new German edition of the Communist Manifesto, signed by both its authors, is dated June 24, 1872. In this preface the authors, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, say that the programme of the Communist Manifesto "has in some details become out-of-date", and they go on to say:

"... One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., that '**the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes**'. ..."

Marx, *The Civil War in France*, MECW 22 1986 p.328; Marx and Engels, Preface to the 1872 German Edition of the Manifesto of the Communist Party, MECW 23 1988 p.175

The authors took the words that are in single quotation marks in this passage from Marx's book, *The Civil War in France*...

On April 12, 1871, i.e., just at the time of the Commune, Marx wrote to Kugelmann:

"If you look up the last chapter of my Eighteenth Brumaire, you will find that I declare that the next attempt of the French Revolution will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic-military machine from one hand to another, but **to smash it** [Marx's italics--the original is *zerbrechen*], and this is the **precondition for every real people's revolution** on the Continent. And this is what our heroic Party comrades in Paris are attempting." Marx, Letter to Kugelmann, (12 April 1871), MECW 44 1989 p.131

It is interesting to note, in particular, two points in the above-quoted argument of Marx. First, he restricts his conclusion to the Continent. This was understandable in 1871, when Britain was still the model of a purely capitalist country, but without a militarist clique and, to a considerable degree, without a bureaucracy. Marx therefore excluded Britain, where a revolution, even a people's revolution, then seemed possible, and indeed was possible, without the precondition of destroying "ready-made state machinery"...

Secondly, particular attention should be paid to Marx's extremely profound remark that the destruction of the bureaucratic-military state machine is "the precondition for every real people's revolution". [MECW 44 1989 p.131]

In Europe, in 1871, the proletariat did not constitute the majority of the people in any country on the Continent. A "**people's**" revolution, one actually sweeping the majority into its stream, could be such only if it embraced both the proletariat and the peasants. These two classes then constituted the "people". These two classes are united by the fact that the "bureaucratic-military state machine" oppresses, crushes, exploits them. To smash this machine, to break it up, is truly in the interest of the "people", of their majority, of the workers and most of the peasants, is "the precondition" for a free alliance of the poor peasant and the proletarians, whereas without such an alliance democracy is unstable and socialist transformation is impossible.

## 2. What is to Replace the Smashed State Machine?

From, Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 p.418-423

Lenin quotes Marx, *The Civil War in France*

Originating from the Middle Ages, there developed in the 19th century "the centralised state power, with its ubiquitous organs of standing army, police, bureaucracy, clergy, and judicature." With the development of class antagonisms between capital and labour, "state power assumed more and more the character of a public force organised for the suppression of the working class, of a machine of class rule. After every revolution, which marks an advance in the class struggle, the purely coercive character of the state power stands out in bolder and bolder relief." After the revolution of 1848-49, state power became "the national war instruments of capital against labour". The Second Empire consolidated this.

"The direct antithesis to the empire was the Commune." It was the "specific form" of "a republic that was not only to remove the monarchical form of class rule, but class rule itself."

Marx, *The Civil War in France* (1871) MECW 22 1986 p.328, p.329, p.330

Lenin quotes Marx, *The Civil War in France*

What was this "specific" form of the proletarian, socialist republic? What was the state it began to create?

"The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people."

Marx, *The Civil War in France* (1871) MECW 22 1986 p.331

Lenin quotes Marx, *The Civil War in France*

**"The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at any time.** The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class ... the police, which until then had been the instrument of the Government, was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible, and at all times revocable, agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the administration. From the members of the Commune downwards, **the public service had to be done at workmen's wages.** The privileges and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of state disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves. Having once got rid of the standing army and the police, the instruments of physical force of the old government, the Commune proceeded at once to break the instrument of spiritual suppression, the power of the priests.... The judicial functionaries lost that sham independence ... they were thenceforward to be elective, responsible, and revocable."

Marx, *The Civil War in France* (1871) MECW 22 1986 p.331-332

### Workers' wage

Lenin continues:

In this connection, the following measures of the Commune, emphasised by Marx, are particularly noteworthy: the abolition of all representation allowances, and of all monetary privileges to officials, **the reduction of the remuneration of all servants of the state to the level of "workmen's wages"**.

All officials, without exception, elected and subject to recall at any time, their salaries reduced to the level of ordinary "workmen's wages"

Lenin quotes Marx, *The Civil War in France*

"The Commune," Marx wrote, "made the catchword of all bourgeois revolutions, cheap government, a reality, by abolishing the two greatest sources of expenditure--the army and the officialdom."

Marx, *The Civil War in France* (1871) MECW 22 1986 p.334

## 3. Abolition of Parliamentarism

From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 p.422-430

Lenin quotes Marx, *The Civil War in France*

"The Commune," Marx wrote, "was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same

time....

"Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to represent and repress [verand zertreten] the people in parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people constituted in communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for workers, foremen and accountants for his business."

Marx, *The Civil War in France* (1871) MECW 22 1986 p.331, p.333

...the **"pigsty"** of bourgeois parliamentarism...

.To decide once every few years which members of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament--this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism, not only in parliamentary- constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics.

The way out of parliamentarism is not, of course, the abolition of representative institutions and the elective principle, but the conversion of the representative institutions from talking shops into "working" bodies. "The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time."

Parliament is given up to talk for the special purpose of **fooling the "common people"**.

...the **venal and rotten parliamentarism of bourgeois society**...

[Lenin is making a point about how unrepresentative bourgeois institutions are more generally.]

#### No division of labour between the legislative and the executive

Lenin continues:

Representative institutions remain, but there is no parliamentarism here as a special system, as the division of labour between the legislative and the executive, as a privileged position for the deputies. We cannot imagine democracy, even proletarian democracy, without representative institutions, but we can and must imagine democracy without parliamentarism...

#### Abolishing the bureaucracy at once is a utopia

the old bureaucratic machine at once and to begin immediately to construct a new one that will make possible the gradual abolition of all bureaucracy--this is not Abolishing the bureaucracy at once, everywhere and completely, is out of the question. It is a utopia. But to smash a utopia, it is the experience of the Commune, the direct and immediate task of the revolutionary proletariat.

#### Reduce the role of state officials

We shall reduce the role of state officials to that of simply carrying out our instructions as responsible, revocable, **modestly paid "foremen and accountants"**

#### Post as model

A witty German Social-Democrat of the seventies of the last century called the postal service an example of the socialist economic system. This is very true. At the present the postal service is a business organised on the lines of state-capitalist monopoly.

To organise the whole economy on the lines of the postal service so that the technicians, foremen and accountants, as well as all officials, shall receive salaries no higher than "a workman's wage", all under the control and leadership of the armed proletariat--that is our immediate aim.

### 4. Organisation of National Unity

Lenin quotes Marx, *The Civil War in France* LCW 25 1964 p.427:

"In a brief sketch of national organisation which the Commune had no time to develop, it states explicitly that the Commune was to be the political form of even the smallest village....." The communes were to elect the "National Delegation" in Paris.

"...The few but important functions which would still remain for a central government were not to be suppressed, as had been deliberately mis-stated, but were to be transferred to communal, i.e., strictly responsible, officials.

"...National unity was not to be broken, but, on the contrary, organised by the communal constitution; it was to become a reality by the destruction of state power which posed as the embodiment of that unity yet wanted to be independent of, and superior to, the nation, on whose body it was but a **parasitic excrescence**. While the merely repressive organs of the old governmental power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority claiming the right to stand above society, and restored to the responsible servants of society."

Marx, *The Civil War in France* (1871) MECW 22 1986 p.331, p.332

The extent to which the opportunists of present-day Social-Democracy have failed--perhaps it would be more true to say, have refused--to understand these observations of Marx is best shown by that book of Herostratean fame of the renegade Bernstein, *The Premises of Socialism and the Tasks of the Social-Democrats*. It is in connection with the above passage from Marx that Bernstein wrote that

"as far as its political content [this programme] "displays, in all its essential features, the greatest similarity to the federalism of Proudhon ... In spite of all the other points of difference between Marx and the 'petty-bourgeois' Proudhon [Bernstein places the word "petty-bourgeois" in inverted commas, to make it sound ironical] on these points, their lines of reasoning run as close as could be."

Of course, Bernstein continues, the importance of the municipalities is growing, but

"it seems doubtful to me whether the first job of democracy would be such a dissolution [Auflosung] of the modern states and such a complete transformation [Umwandlung] of their organisation as is visualised by Marx and Proudhon (the formation of a National Assembly from delegates of the provincial or district assemblies, which, in their turn, would consist of delegates from the communes), so that consequently the previous mode of national representation would disappear." (

Bernstein, *Preconditions*, [In Edward Bernstein, *The Preconditions of Socialism*, Cambridge University Press, 1993 p.154-155]

It is ridiculous. But the remarkable thing is that nobody argued with Bernstein on this point. Bernstein has been refuted by many, especially by Plekhanov in Russian literature and by Kautsky in European literature, but neither of them has said anything about this distortion of Marx by Bernstein.

...Consistent democratic centralism...

## **5. Abolition of the Parasite State**

From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 pp 430-432

Lenin quotes Marx, *The Civil War in France*:

"It is generally the fate of new historical creations," he wrote, "to be mistaken for the counterpart of older and even defunct forms of social life, to which they may bear a certain likeness. Thus, this new Commune, which **breaks [bricht, smashes] the modern state power**, has been regarded as a revival of the medieval communes... as a federation of small states (as Montesquieu and the Girondins visualised it)... as an exaggerated form of the old struggle against overcentralisation....

"... The Communal Constitution would have restored to the social body all the forces hitherto absorbed by that **parasitic excrescence**, the 'state', feeding upon and hampering the free movement of society. By this one act it would have initiated the regeneration of France...

"... The Communal Constitution would have brought the rural producers under the intellectual lead of the central towns of their districts, and there secured to them, in the town working men, the natural trustees of their interests. The very existence of the Commune involved, as a matter of course, local self-government, but no longer as a counterpoise to state power, now become superfluous."

Marx, *The Civil War in France* (1871) MECW 22 1986 p.331, p.333-334

### The Paris Commune as a working-class government

Lenin quotes Marx, *The Civil War in France*

"... The multiplicity of interpretations to which the Commune has been subjected, and the multiplicity of interests which expressed themselves in it show that it was a thoroughly flexible political form, while all previous forms of government had been essentially repressive. Its true secret was this: it was essentially a **working-class government**, the result of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which the economic emancipation of labour could be accomplished.... "Except on this last condition, the Communal Constitution would have been an impossibility and a delusion..."

Marx, *The Civil War in France* (1871) MECW 22 1986 p.331, p.334

[Note Marx's later qualification:

Perhaps you will point to the Paris Commune; but apart from the fact that this was merely the rising of a town under exceptional conditions, the majority of the Commune was in **no sense socialist**, nor could it be. With a small amount of sound common sense, however, they could have reached a compromise with Versailles useful to the whole mass of the people -- the only thing that could be reached at the time.

Marx to Domela-Nieuwenhuis, 22 February 1881, MECW 46 1992 p.65]

Lenin continues

The Commune is the first attempt by a proletarian revolution to smash the bourgeois state machine; and it is the political form "at last discovered", by which the smashed state machine can and must be replaced.



# Chapter 4: Supplementary Explanations by Engels

## 1. The Housing Question

From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 pp 433- 435

Lenin quotes Engels, *The Housing Question* LCW 25 1964 p.433:

"How is the housing question to be settled then? In present-day society, it is settled just as any other social question: by the gradual economic levelling of demand and supply, a settlement which reproduces the question itself again and again and therefore is no settlement. How a social revolution would settle this question not only depends on the circumstances in each particular case, but is also connected with much more far-reaching questions, one of the most fundamental of which is the **abolition of the antithesis between town and country**. As it is not our task to create utopian systems for the organisation of the future society, it would be more than idle to go into the question here. But one thing is certain: there is already a sufficient quantity of houses in the big cities to remedy immediately all real 'housing shortage', provided they are used judiciously. This can naturally only occur through the expropriation of the present owners and by quartering in their houses homeless workers or workers overcrowded in their present homes. **As soon as the proletariat has won political power**, such a measure prompted by concern for the common good will be just as easy to carry out as are other expropriations and billetings by the present-day state."

Engels, *The Housing Question* (1872) MECW 23 1988 p.330

Lenin quotes Engels, *The Housing Question*

"... It must be pointed out that the 'actual seizure' of all the instruments of labour, the taking possession of industry as a whole by the working people, is the exact opposite of the Proudhonist 'redemption'. In the latter case the individual worker becomes the owner of the dwelling, the peasant farm, the instruments of labour; in the former case, **the 'working people' remain the collective owners of the houses, factories and instruments of labour**, and will hardly permit their use, at least during a transitional period, by individuals or associations without compensation for the cost. In the same way, the abolition of property in land is not the abolition of ground rent but its transfer, if in a modified form, to society. The actual seizure of all the instruments of labour by the working people, therefore, does not at all preclude **the retention of rent relations**."

Engels, *The Housing Question* (1872) MECW 23 1988 p.386

Lenin quotes Engels, *The Housing Question* LCW 25 1964 p.435:

"... Necessity of political action by the proletariat and of its **dictatorship** as the transition to the abolition of classes and, with them, of the state..."

Engels, *The Housing Question* (1872) MECW 23 1988 p.370

## 2. Controversy with the Anarchists

From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 pp 435-438

Lenin quotes Marx, *Political Indifferentism*

"If the political struggle of the working class assumes revolutionary form," wrote Marx, ridiculing the anarchists for their repudiation of politics, "and if the workers set up their **revolutionary dictatorship** in place of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, they commit the terrible crime of violating principles, for in order to satisfy their wretched, vulgar everyday needs and to crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie, they give the state a revolutionary and transient form, instead of laying down their arms and abolishing the state."

Marx, *Political Indifferentism*, (January 1873) MECW 23 1988 p.393

### Differences with anarchists

We do not after all differ with the anarchists on the question of the abolition of the state as the aim. We maintain that, to achieve this aim, we must temporarily make use of the instruments, resources, and methods of state power against the exploiters, just as the temporary dictatorship of the oppressed class is necessary for the abolition of classes.

"These people imagine they can change a thing by changing its name"

Lenin quotes Engels, *On Authority*

"... When I counter the most rabid anti-authoritarians with these arguments, they only answer they can give me is the following: Oh, that's true, except that here it is not a question of authority with which we vest our delegates, but of a commission! **These people imagine they can change a thing by changing its name....**"

Engels, *On Authority* (1872-73) MECW 23 1988 p.424

"A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is"

Lenin quotes Engels, *On Authority*,

"Had the autonomists," he wrote, "contented themselves with saying that the social organisation of the future would allow authority only within the bounds which the conditions of production make inevitable, one could have come to terms with them. But they are blind to all facts that make authority necessary and they passionately fight the word.

"Why do the anti-authoritarians not confine themselves to crying out against political authority, the state? All socialists are agreed that the state, and with it political authority, will disappear as a result of the coming social revolution, that is, that public functions will lose their political character and become mere administrative functions of watching over social interests. But the anti-authoritarians demand that the political state be abolished at one stroke, even before the social relations that gave both to it have been destroyed. They demand that the first act of the social revolution shall be the abolition of authority.

**"Have these gentlemen ever seen a revolution? A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is;** it is an act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon, all of which are highly authoritarian means. And the victorious party must maintain its rule by means of the terror which its arms inspire in the reactionaries. Would the Paris Commune have lasted more than a day if it had not used the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie? Cannot we, on the contrary, blame it for having made too little use of that authority? Therefore, one of two things: either that anti-authoritarians don't know what they are talking about, in which case they are creating nothing but confusion. Or they do know, and in that case they are betraying the cause of the proletariat. In either case they serve only reaction."

Engels, *On Authority* (1872-73) MECW 23 1988 p.424-425

### 3. Letter to Bebel

From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 pp 439-42

Lenin quotes from Engels' letter to Bebel

"The free people's state has been transferred into the free state. Taken in its grammatical sense, a free state is one where the state is free in relation to its citizens, hence a state with a despotic government. The whole talk about the state should be dropped, especially since the Commune, which was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word. The 'people's state' has been thrown in our faces by the anarchists to the point of disgust, although already Marx's book against Proudhon and later the Communist Manifesto say plainly that with the introduction of the socialist order of society the state dissolves of itself [sich auflöst] and disappears. As the state is only a transitional institution which is used in the struggle, in the revolution, to hold down one's adversaries by force, it is sheer nonsense to talk of a 'free people's state'; so long as the proletariat still needs the state, it does not need it in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist. **We would therefore propose replacing the state everywhere by Gemeinwesen, a good old German word which can very well take the place of the French word commune.**"

Engels, Letter to Bebel, (18-28 March 1875), MECW 24 1989 p.71; MECW 45 1991 p.63-64

Bebel replied to Engels in a letter dated September 21, 1875, in which he wrote, among other things, that he "fully agreed" with Engels' opinion of the draft programme, and that he had reproached Liebknecht with readiness to make concessions (p.334 of the German edition of Bebel's memoirs, Vol.II). But if we take Bebel's pamphlet, *Our Aims*, we find their views on the state that are absolutely wrong.

"The state must... be transformed from one based on class rule into a people's state." (*Unsere Ziele*, 1886, p.14)

#### 4. Criticism of the Draft of the Erfurt Programme

From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 pp 442 448

Lenin quotes Engels, *Critique of the Erfurt Programme*,

"When we pass from joint-stock companies to trusts which assume control over, and monopolise, whole industries, it is not only private production that ceases, but also planlessness."

Engels, *Critique of the Erfurt Programme* (1891) MECW 27 1990 p.224

Lenin continues

"Here we have what is most essential in the theoretical appraisal of the latest phase of capitalism, i.e., imperialism, namely, that capitalism becomes monopoly capitalism. The latter must be emphasised because the erroneous bourgeois reformist assertion that monopoly capitalism or **state- monopoly capitalism** is no longer capitalism, but can now be called "**state socialism**" and so on, is very common.

...the Reichstag is only, as Wilhelm Liebknecht put it, "**the fig leaf of absolutism**" and that to wish "to transform all the instruments of labour into common property" on the basis of a constitution which legalises the existence of petty states and the federation of petty German states is an "obvious absurdity".

[For "the fig leaf of absolutism", see Engels, *Critique of the Erfurt Programme* (1891) MECW 27 1990 p.226]

#### Peaceful means

Lenin quotes Engels, *Critique of the Erfurt Programme*

"To touch on that is dangerous, however," Engels added, knowing only too well that it was impossible legally to include in the programme the demand for a republic in Germany. But he refused to merely accept this obvious consideration which satisfied -everybody|. He continued: "Nevertheless, somehow or other, the thing has to be attacked. How necessary this is shown precisely at the present time by opportunism, which is gaining ground [einreissende] in a large section of the Social-Democrat press. Fearing a renewal of the Anti-Socialist Law, or recalling all manner of overhasty pronouncements made during the reign of that law, they now want the Party to find the present legal order in Germany adequate for putting through all Party demands by **peaceful means** ..."

Engels, *Critique of the Erfurt Programme* (1891) MECW 27 1990 p.226

#### "Fig leaf from absolutism"

Lenin quotes Engels, *Critique of the Erfurt Programme*

"... in Germany, where the government is almost omnipotent and the Reichstag and all other representative bodies have no real power, to advocate such a thing in Germany, where, moreover, there is no need to do so, means removing the **fig leaf from absolutism** and becoming oneself a screen for its nakedness."

Engels, *Critique of the Erfurt Programme* (1891) MECW 27 1990 p.226

Lenin quotes Engels, *Critique of the Erfurt Programme*,

"... In the long run such a policy can only lead one's own party astray. They push general, abstract political questions into the foreground, thereby concealing the immediate concrete questions, which at the moment of the first great events, the first political crisis, automatically pose themselves. What can result from this except that at the decisive moment the party suddenly proves helpless and that uncertainty and discord on the most decisive issues reign in it because these issues have never been discussed? ...

"This forgetting of the great, the principal considerations for the momentary interests of the day, this struggling and striving for the success of the moment regardless of later consequences, this sacrifice of the future of the movement for its present may be 'honestly' meant, but it is and remains opportunism, and 'honest' opportunism is perhaps the most dangerous of all....

**"If one thing is certain it is that our party and the working class can only come to power in the form of the democratic republic. This is even the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the Great French Revolution has**

already shown ..."

Engels, Critique of the Erfurt Programme (1891) MECW 27 1990 p.227

Engels realised here in a particularly striking form the fundamental idea which runs through all of Marx's works, namely, that the democratic republic is the nearest approach to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Lenin quotes Engels, *Critique of the Erfurt Programme*

"What should take the place of the present-day Germany [with its reactionary monarchical Constitution and its equally reactionary division into petty states, a division which perpetuates all the specific features of Prussianism [instead of dissolving them in Germany as a whole]? In my view, the proletariat can only use the form of the one and indivisible republic. In the gigantic territory of the United States, a federal republic is still, on the whole, a necessity, although in the Eastern states it is already becoming a hindrance. It would be a step forward in Britain where the two islands are peopled by four nations and in spite of a single Parliament three different systems of legislation already exist side by side. In little Switzerland, it has long been a hindrance, tolerable only because Switzerland is content to be a purely passive member of the European state system. For Germany, federalisation on the Swiss model would be an enormous step backward. Two points distinguish a union state from a completely unified state: first, that each member state, each canton, has its own civil and criminal legislative and judicial system, and, second, that alongside a popular chamber there is also a federal chamber in which each canton, whether large or small, votes as such." In Germany, the union state is the transition to the completely unified state, and the "**revolution from above**" of 1866 and 1870 must not be reversed but supplemented by a "**movement from below**".

Engels, Critique of the Erfurt Programme (1891) MECW 27 1990 p.228 "Freedom"

It is extremely important to note that Engels, armed with facts, disproved by a most precise example the prejudice which is very widespread, particularly among petty-bourgeois democrats, that **a federal republic necessarily means a greater amount of freedom than a centralised republic. This is wrong.**

### 5. The 1891 Preface to Marx's *The Civil War in France*

From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 pp 449-453

Lenin quotes Engels, Introduction to Marx, *The Civil War in France*

In France, Engels observed, the workers emerged with arms from every revolution: "therefore the disarming of the workers was the first commandment for the bourgeois, who were at the helm of the state. Hence, after every revolution won by the workers, a new struggle, ending with the defeat of the workers."

Engels, Introduction to Marx, *The Civil War in France* (18 March 1891) MECW 27 1990 p.181

Lenin quotes Engels, Introduction to Marx, *The Civil War in France*

"As almost only workers, or recognised representatives of the workers, sat in the Commune, its decisions bore a decidedly proletarian character. Either they decreed reforms which the republican bourgeoisie had failed to pass solely out of cowardice, but which provided a necessary basis for the free activity of the working class--such as the realisation of the principle that in relation to **the state religion is a purely private matter**--or the Commune promulgated decrees which were in the direct interest of the working class and in part cut deeply into the old order of society."

Engels, Introduction to Marx, *The Civil War in France*, (18 March 1891) MECW 27 1990 p.185

Engels deliberately underlined the words "in relation to the state," as a straight thrust at German opportunism, which had declared religion to be a private matter in relation to the Party, thus degrading the party of the revolutionary proletariat to the level of **the most vulgar "free-thinking" philistinism**, which is prepared to allow a non-denominational status, but which renounces the Party **struggle against the opium of religion which stupefies the people.**

### Deputies and officials subject to recall

Lenin quotes Engels, Introduction to Marx, *The Civil War in France*

"... It was precisely the oppressing power of the former centralised government, army, political parties, bureaucracy, which Napoleon had created in 1798 and which every new government had since then taken over as a welcome instrument and used against its opponents--it was this power which was to fall everywhere, just as it had fallen in Paris.

"From the very outset the Commune had to recognise that the working class, once in power, could not go on managing with the old state machine; that in order not to lose again its only just-gained supremacy, **this working class must, on the one hand, do away with all the old machinery of oppression previously used against it itself, and, on the other, safeguard itself against its own deputies and officials, by declaring them all, without exception, subject to recall at any time. ...**"

Engels, Introduction to Marx, *The Civil War in France*, (18 March 1891) MECW 27 1990 p.188-189 #

### Elections, recall and workers' wage

Lenin quotes Engels, "Introduction" to Marx, *The Civil War in France*

"Against this transformation of the state and the organs of the state from servants of society into masters of society--an inevitable transformation in all previous states--the Commune used two infallible means. In the first place, **it filled all posts--administrative, judicial, and educational--by election** on the basis of universal suffrage of all concerned, **subject to recall at any time by the electors**. And, in the second place, it **paid all officials, high or low, only the wages received by other workers**. The highest salary paid by the Commune to anyone was 6,000 francs. In this way a dependable barrier to place-hunting and careerism was set up, even apart from the binding mandates to delegates to representative bodies, which were added besides"

Engels, Introduction to Marx, *The Civil War in France*, (18 March 1891) MECW 27 1990 p.190

Lenin continues:

Engels, however, did not make the mistake some Marxists make in dealing, for example, with the question of the **right of nations to self-determination**, when they argue that is impossible under capitalism and will be superfluous under socialism.

### "To develop democracy to the utmost"

To develop democracy to the utmost, to find the forms for this development, to test them by practice, and so forth--all this is one of the component tasks of the struggle for the social revolution.

### "the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another"

Lenin quotes Engels, "Introduction" to Marx, *The Civil War in France*

"... This **shattering [Sprengung] of the former state power** and its replacement by a new and truly democratic one is described in detail in the third section of *The Civil War*. But it was necessary to touch briefly here once more on some of its features, because in Germany particularly the superstitious belief in the state has passed from philosophy into the general consciousness of the bourgeoisie and even of many workers. According to the philosophical conception, the state is the 'realisation of the idea', or the Kingdom of God on earth, translated into philosophical terms, the sphere in which eternal truth and justice are, or should be, realised. And from this follows a superstitious reverence for the state and everything connected with it, which takes root the more readily since people are accustomed from childhood to imagine that the affairs and interests common to the whole of society could not be looked after other than as they have been looked after in the past, that is, through the state and its lucratively positioned officials. And people think they have taken quite an extraordinary bold step forward when they have rid themselves of belief in hereditary monarchy and swear by the democratic republic. In reality, however, **the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another, and indeed in the democratic republic no less than in the monarchy**. And at best it is an evil inherited by the proletariat after its victorious struggle for class supremacy, whose worst sides the victorious proletariat will have to lop off as speedily as possible, just as the Commune had to, until a generation reared in new, free social conditions is able to discard the entire lumber of the state."

Engels, Introduction to Marx, *The Civil War in France*, (18 March 1891) MECW 27 1990 p.190

## 6. Engels on the Overcoming of Democracy

From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 pp 454-456

### Communist, not Social Democrat

Lenin quotes Engels, *Preface to Internationales aus dem "Volksstaat"*,

"... For Marx and myself," continued Engels, "it was therefore absolutely impossible to use such a loose term to characterise our special point of view. Today things are different, and the word ["Social-Democrat"] may perhaps pass muster [mag passieren], inexact [unpassend, unsuitable] though it still is for a party whose economic programme is not merely socialist in general, but downright **communist**, and whose ultimate political aim is to overcome the whole state and, consequently, democracy as well. The names of real political parties, however, are never wholly appropriate; the party develops while the name stays."

Engels, *Preface to Internationales aus dem "Volksstaat"*, (3 January 1894) MECW 27 1990 p.417-418

### Democracy

No, democracy is not identical with the subordination of the minority to the majority. Democracy is a state which recognises the subordination of the minority to the majority, i.e., an organisation for the systematic use of force by one class against another, by one section of the population against another.

# Chapter 5: The Economic Basis of the Withering Away of the State

## 1. Presentation of the Question by Marx

From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 pp 457-458

Engels suggested to Bebel that all chatter about the state be dropped altogether, that the word "state" be eliminated from the programme altogether and the word "community" substituted for it.

Lenin quotes Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*,

"Present-day society' is capitalist society, which exists in all civilised countries, being more or less free from medieval admixture, more or less modified by the particular historical development of each country, more or less developed. On the other hand, the 'present-day state' changes with a country's frontier. It is different in the Prusso-German Empire from what it is in Switzerland, and different in England from what it is in the United States. 'The present-day state' is, therefore, a fiction.

"Nevertheless, the different states of the different civilised countries, in spite of their motley diversity of form, all have this in common, that **they are based on modern bourgeois society**, only one **more or less capitalistically developed**. The have, therefore, also certain essential characteristics in common. In this sense it is possible to speak of the 'present-day state', in contrast with the future, in which its present root, bourgeois society, will have died off.

"The question then arises: what transformation will the state undergo in communist society? In other words, what social functions will remain in existence there that are analogous to present state functions? This question can only be answered scientifically, and one does not get a flea-hop nearer to the problem by a thousandfold combination of the word people with the word state."

Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, (1875) MECW 24 1989 p.94-95

## 2. The Transition from Capitalism to Communism

From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 pp 458-463

Lenin quotes Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*

"Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the **revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat**."

Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, (1875) MECW 24 1989 p.95

"...political transition period..."

What is this largest proportion of politically conscious and active wage slaves that has so far been recorded in capitalist society? One million members of the Social-Democratic Party - out of 15,000,000 wage-workers! Three million organised in trade unions--out of 15,000,000!

[Note: Lenin emphasises this because workers' rule is a social matter, not just a matter of political forms]

And the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., the organisation of the vanguard of the oppressed as the ruling class for the purpose of suppressing the oppressors, cannot result merely in an expansion of democracy.

Lenin quotes Engels, Letter to Bebel

Engels expressed this splendidly in his letter to Bebel when he said, as the reader will remember, that "the proletariat needs the state, not in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist".

Engels, Letter to Bebel, (18-28 March 1875), MECW 24 1989 p.71; MECW 45 1991 p.64

Naturally, the exploiters are unable to suppress the people without a highly complex machine for performing this task, but the people can suppress the exploiters even with a very simple "machine", almost without a "machine", without a special apparatus, by the simple organisation of the armed people (such as the Soviets of Workers' and

Soldiers' Deputies, we would remark, running ahead).

### 3. The First Phase of Communist Society

From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 pp 465-467

Lenin quotes Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*

"What we have to deal with here [in analysing the programme of the workers' party] is a communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it comes."

Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, (1875) MECW 24 1989 p.85

Lenin quotes Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*

"But these defects are inevitable in the first phase of communist society as it is when it has just emerged, after prolonged birth pangs, from capitalist society. Law can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby."

Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, (1875) MECW 24 1989 p.87

The state withers away insofar as there are no longer any capitalists, any classes, and, consequently, no class can be suppressed.

### 4. The Higher Phase of Communist Society

From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 pp 468-474

Lenin quotes Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*

"In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and with it also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished, after labour has become not only a livelihood but life's prime want, after the productive forces have increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly--only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois law be left behind in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: **From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!**"

Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, (1875) MECW 24 1989 p.87

So long as the state exists there is no freedom. When there is freedom, there will be no state. [...]

From the bourgeois point of view, it is easy to declare that such a social order is "sheer utopia" and to sneer at the socialists for promising everyone the right to receive from society [...]

What is usually called socialism was termed by Marx the "first", or lower, phase of communist society. [...]

It follows that under communism there remains for a time not only bourgeois law, but even the bourgeois state, without the bourgeoisie! [...]

Democracy is of enormous importance to the working class in its struggle against the capitalists for its emancipation. But democracy is by no means a boundary not to be overstepped; it is only one of the stages on the road from feudalism to capitalism, and from capitalism to communism. [...]

For when all have learned to administer and actually to independently administer social production, independently keep accounts and exercise control over the parasites, the sons of the wealthy, the swindlers and other "guardians of capitalist traditions", the escape from this popular accounting and control will inevitably become so incredibly difficult, such a rare exception, and will probably be accompanied by such swift and severe punishment (for the armed workers are practical men and not sentimental intellectuals, and they scarcely allow anyone to trifle with them), that the necessity of observing the simple, fundamental rules of the community will very soon become a habit. [...]



## Chapter 6: The Vulgarisation of Marxism by Opportunists

Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 p.475

In general, it may be said that **evasiveness** over the question of the relation of the proletarian revolution to the state--an evasiveness which benefited and fostered opportunism--resulted in the distortion of Marxism and in its complete vulgarisation.

[Note: The main theorists of the Second International all held that the state was not neutral but a capitalist class state; a revolution was necessary; and under socialism the state would wither away. Lenin sought to explain where they had gone wrong.]

### 1. Plekhanov's Controversy with the Anarchists

Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 p.475

Plekhanov contrived completely to evade the most urgent, burning, and most politically essential issue in the struggle against anarchism, namely, the relation of the revolution to the state, and the question of the state in general! His pamphlet falls into two distinct parts: one of them is historical and literary, and contains valuable material on the history of the ideas of Stirner, Proudhon, and others; the other is philistine, and **contains a clumsy dissertation on the theme that an anarchist cannot be distinguished from a bandit.**

### 2. Kautsky's Controversy with the Opportunists

Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 p.477-481

The Marxist Zarya, which was published in Stuttgart in 1901-02, and advocated revolutionary proletarian views, was forced to enter into controversy with Kautsky and describe as "elastic" the half-hearted, evasive resolution, conciliatory towards the opportunists, that he proposed at the International Socialist Congress in Paris in 1900. Kautsky's letters published in Germany reveal no less hesitancy on his part before he took the field against Bernstein.

Lenin quotes Kautsky, *Bernstein und das Sozialdemokratische Programme*, LCW 25 1964 p.478

"We can quite safely leave the solution of the problems of the proletarian dictatorship of the future, [said Kautsky, writing "against" Bernstein.

It is his pamphlet, *The Social Revolution*. In this pamphlet, the author chose as his special theme the question of "the proletarian revolution" and "the proletarian regime". He gave much that was exceedingly valuable, but he avoided the question of the state. Throughout the pamphlet the author speaks of the winning of state power—and no more; that is, he has chosen a formula which makes a concession to the opportunists, inasmuch as it admits the possibility of seizing power without destroying the state machine. The very thing which Marx in 1872 declared to be "obsolete" in the programme of the Communist Manifesto, is revived by Kautsky in 1902.

A special section in the pamphlet is devoted to the "forms and weapons of the social revolution". Here Kautsky speaks of the mass political strike, of civil war, and of the "instruments of the might of the modern large state, its bureaucracy and the army"; but **he does not say a word about what the Commune has already taught the workers.** Evidently, it was not without reason that Engels issued a warning, particularly to the German socialists, against "**superstitious reverence" for the state.**

Lenin quotes Kautsky, *The Social Revolution*

"Still, it goes without saying that we shall not achieve supremacy under the present conditions. Revolution itself presupposes long and deep-going struggles, which, in themselves, will change our present political and social structure."

Kautsky, *The Social Revolution*, (1902) 1916 p.105

Lenin quotes Kautsky, *The Social Revolution*

"The most varied form of enterprises—bureaucratic [??], trade unionist, co-operative, private... can exist side by side in socialist society ... There are, for example, enterprises which cannot do without a bureaucratic [??] organisation, such as the railways. Here the democratic organisation may take the following shape: the workers elect delegates who form a sort

of parliament, which establishes the working regulations and supervises the management of the bureaucratic apparatus. The management of other countries may be transferred to the trade unions, and still others may become co-operative enterprises."

Kautsky, *The Social Revolution*, (1902) 1916 p.127

Kautsky here displays the same old "superstitious reverence" for the state, and "superstitious belief" in bureaucracy.

It is all the more characteristic, therefore, that although Kautsky so explicitly declared that the era of revolution had already begun, in the pamphlet which he himself said was devoted to an analysis of the "political revolution", he again completely avoided the question of the state.

These evasions of the question, these omissions and equivocations, inevitably added up to that complete swing-over to opportunism with which we shall now have to deal.

### 3. Kautsky's Controversy with Pannekoek

From Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, LCW 25 1964 p.483-489

In an article touching on the question of the state, entitled "Mass Action and Revolution" (*Neue Zeit*, 1912, Vol.XXX, 2), Pannekoek described Kautsky's attitude as one of "**passive radicalism**", as "**a theory of inactive expectancy**". "Kautsky refuses to see the process of revolution," wrote Pannekoek (p.616). In presenting the matter in this way, Pannekoek approached the subject which interests us, namely, the tasks of the proletarian revolution in relation to the state.

Lenin quotes Pannekoek, *Mass Action and Revolution*

"The struggle of the proletariat,|| he wrote, –is not merely a struggle against the bourgeoisie for state power, but a struggle against state power ... The content of this [the proletarian] revolution is the destruction and dissolution

"[Auflosung] of the instruments of power of the state with the aid of the instruments of power of the proletariat. (p.544)

"The struggle will cease only when, as the result of it, the state organisation is completely destroyed. The organisation of the majority will then have demonstrated its superiority by destroying the organisation of the ruling minority.||" (p.548)

[Neither Pannekoek's article *Mass Action and Revolution* nor Kautsky's reply are published in English. It is online in German <https://www.marxists.org/deutsch/archiv/pannekoek/1912/xx/massenaktion.htm> [although Google will offer a fair translation of it]

However a subsequent article by Pannekoek, *Marxist Theory and Revolutionary Tactics* (1912) is translated in D. Smart (ed.) *Pannekoek and Gorter's Marxism*, Pluto Press, 1978: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/pannekoek/1912/tactics.htm>]

Lenin quotes Kautsky's reply to Pannekoek,

"Up to now, the antithesis between the Social-Democrats and the anarchists has been that the former wished to win the state power while the latter wished to destroy it. Pannekoek wants to do both" (p.724)

### The distinction between Marxists and the anarchists

The distinction between Marxists and the anarchists is this: (1) The former, while aiming at the complete abolition of the state, recognise that this aim can only be achieved after classes have been abolished by the socialist revolution, as the result of the establishment of socialism, which leads to the withering away of the state. The latter want to abolish the state completely overnight, not understanding the conditions under which the state can be abolished. (2) The former recognise that after the proletariat has won political power it must completely destroy the old state machine and replace it by a new one consisting of an organisation of the armed workers, after the type of the Commune. The latter, while insisting on the destruction of the state machine, have a very vague idea of what the proletariat will put in its place and how it will use its revolutionary power. The anarchists even deny that the revolutionary proletariat should use the state power, they reject its revolutionary dictatorship.

(3) The former demand that the proletariat be trained for revolution by utilising the present state. The anarchists reject this.

To cover up his distortion of Marxism, Kautsky behaves like a doctrinaire: he puts forward a “quotation” from Marx himself. In 1850, Marx wrote that a “resolute centralisation of power in the hands of the state authority” was necessary, and Kautsky triumphantly asks: does Pannekoek want to destroy “Centralism”?

Lenin quotes Kautsky’s reply to Pannekoek, LCW 25 1964 p.485

“Perhaps he [Pannekoek] wants to abolish the state functions of the officials? But we cannot do without officials even in the party and trade unions, let alone in the state administration. And our programme does not demand the abolition of state officials, but that they be elected by the people. .... We are discussing here not the form the administrative apparatus of the ‘future state’ will assume, but whether our political struggle abolishes [literally dissolves - auflost] the state power before we have captured it. [Kautsky’s italics] Which ministry with its officials could be abolished?|| Then follows an enumeration of the ministries of education, justice, finance, and war. **“No, not one of the present ministries will be removed by our political struggle against the government ... I repeat, in order to prevent misunderstanding: we are not discussing here the form the ‘future state’ will be given by the victorious Social-Democrats, but how the present state is changed by our opposition.”**(p.725)

Revolution consists in the proletariat destroying the “administrative apparatus” and the whole state machine, replacing it by a new one, made up of the armed workers. Kautsky displays a “superstitious reverence” for “ministries”; but why can they not be replaced, say, by committees of specialists working under sovereign, all-powerful Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies? [...]

According to Kautsky, since elected functionaries will remain under socialism, so will officials, so will the bureaucracy! This is exactly where he is wrong. Marx, referring to the example of the Commune, showed that under socialism functionaries will cease to be “bureaucrats”, to be “officials”, they will cease to be so in proportion as—in addition to the principle of election of officials—the principle of recall at any time is also introduced, as salaries are reduced to the level of the wages of the average workman, and as parliamentary institutions are replaced by “working bodies, executive and legislative at the same time”. [...]

Under socialism much of “primitive” democracy will inevitably be revived, since, for the first time in the history of civilized society the mass of population will rise to taking an independent part, not only in voting and elections, but also in the everyday administration of the state. Under socialism all will govern in turn and **will soon become accustomed to no one governing.** [...]

Marx’s critico-analytical genius saw in the practical measures of the Commune the turning-point which the opportunists fear and do not want to recognise because of their cowardice, because they do not want to break irrevocably with the bourgeoisie, and which the anarchists do not want to see, either because they are in a hurry or because they do not understand at all the conditions of great social changes. “We must not even think of destroying the old state machine; how can we do without ministries and officials” argues the opportunist, who is completely saturated with philistinism and who, at bottom, not only does not believe in revolution, in the creative power of revolution, but lives in mortal dread of it (like our Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries). [...]

We must think only of destroying the old state machine; it is no use probing into the concrete lessons of earlier proletarian revolutions and analysing what to put in the place of what has been destroyed, and how,” argues the anarchist (the best of the anarchist, of course, and not those who, following the Kropotkins and Co., trail behind the bourgeoisie). Consequently, the tactics of the anarchist become the tactics of despair instead of a ruthlessly bold revolutionary effort to solve concrete problems while taking into account the practical conditions of the mass movement. [...]

Lenin quotes Kautsky’s reply to Pannekoek

“Its object [the object of the mass strike],|| Kautsky continues, –cannot be to destroy the state power; its only object can be to make the government compliant on some specific question, or to replace a government hostile to the proletariat by one willing to meet it half-way [entgegenkommende]... But never, under no circumstances can it [that is, the proletarian victory over a hostile government] lead to the destruction of the state power; it can lead only to a certain shifting [verschiebung] of the balance of forces within the state power ... The aim of our political struggle remains, as in the past, the conquest of state power by winning a majority in parliament and by raising parliament to the ranks of master of the government. (pp.726, 727, 732)



# Appendix 1: Marx and Engels on 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'

From Hal Draper (1987) *The "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" from Marx to Lenin*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Later in the 1920s, the term [dictatorship of the proletariat] entered into its final phase: its transmogrification under Stalin into nothing but a code word for a totalitarian dictatorship over the people. (8)

The key fact, which was going to bedevil the history of the term, is this: in the middle of the nineteenth century the old word 'dictatorship' still meant what it had meant for centuries, and in this meaning it was *not* a synonym for despotism, tyranny, absolutism, or autocracy, and above all it was not counterposed to democracy. (11)

Marx used the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in exactly the same way as he used 'rule of the proletariat' and the other labels for a workers' state. (22-23)

Ordinarily Marx's term for the idea would be... 'rule of the proletariat', 'political power of the working class', etc. But when it is a question of counterposing this class concept to the Blanquist- type dictatorship, it is dressed in the formula 'class dictatorship'. Class dictatorship is then counterposed to Blanquist dictatorship, to make the contrast. (25)

'Dictatorship of the proletariat' came into existence as an attempt to show would-be revolutionaries that there was another way of being revolutionary, Marx's way. (26)

For Marx and Engels, from beginning to end of their careers and without exception, 'dictatorship of the proletariat' meant nothing more and nothing less than 'rule of the proletariat' – the 'conquest of political power' by the working class, the establishment of a workers' state in the immediate postrevolutionary period. (26)

In not one single locus did Marx and Engels ever associate the use of the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat' with another question of obvious importance: the necessity for defending a victorious workers' state against counter-revolutionary force... On the other hand, virtually every reference to 'dictatorship of the proletariat' made after their time was tied to *this* question explicitly or implicitly. (45)

[the following section from Draper, 39-40]

## Marx and Engels on 'dictatorship of the proletariat'

### Period I: 1850-52 post-revolutionary period after 1848-49

#### Locus 1: Class Struggles in France

"In place of the demands, exuberant in form but still limited and even bourgeois in content, whose concession the proletariat wanted to wring from the February Republic, there appeared the bold slogan of revolutionary struggle: Overthrow of the bourgeoisie! **Dictatorship of the Working class!**"

Marx, Class Struggles in France (1850) MECW 10 1978 p.69

"the proletariat, forced by the terrible material defeat of June to raise itself up again through intellectual victories and not yet enabled through the development of the remaining classes to seize the **revolutionary dictatorship**, had to throw itself into the arms of the doctrinaires of its emancipation, the founders of socialist sects..."

Marx, Class Struggles in France (1850) MECW 10 1978 p.98

"the proletariat rallies more and more around revolutionary socialism, around communism, for which the bourgeoisie has itself invented the name of Blanqui. This socialism is the declaration of the permanence of the revolution, the **class dictatorship of the proletariat** as the necessary transit point to the abolition of class distinctions generally, to the abolition of all the relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these relations of production, to the revolutionizing of all the ideas that result from these social relations.||

Marx, Class Struggles in France (1850) MECW 10 1978 p.127

## Locus 2: Société Universelle des Communistes Révolutionnaires (SUCR)

"The aim of the association is the downfall of all the privileged classes, to subject these classes to the **dictatorship of the proletarians**, maintaining the revolution in permanence until the realisation of communism."

Probably written by Willich, signed by Marx and Engels, MECW 10 1978 p.614

## Locus 3: Reply to Lüning 1850

"In your newspaper's article of June 22 this year you reproached me for advocating **the rule and the dictatorship of the working class**, while you propose, in opposition to myself, the abolition of class distinctions in general. I do not understand this correction. You know very well that on p. 16 of the Manifesto of the Communist Party (published before the February Revolution of 1848) it is stated that

"If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class, if by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class."

"You know that I defended the same point of view in my *Misère de la philosophie* against Proudhon, before February 1848. Finally, in the very article you criticise, p. 32, No. 3, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung [Politisch-ökonomische Revue]*, it is stated:

"This Socialism (i. e. communism) is the declaration of the permanence of the revolution, the class dictatorship of the proletariat as the necessary transit point to the abolition of class distinctions generally, to the abolition of all the relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these relations of production, to the revolutionising of all the ideas that result from these social relations.||

Marx, Statement to the Editor of the *Neue Deutsche Zeitung* (June 1850) MECW 10 1978 p. 387-388

## Locus 4: Letter to Weydemeyer

"And now as to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economists, the economic anatomy of classes. What I did that was new was to prove: (1) that the existence of classes is only bound up with the particular, historical phases in the development of production (historische Entwicklungsphasen der Produktion), (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the **dictatorship of the proletariat**, (3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society."

Marx, Letter to Weydemeyer, (5 March 1852), MECW 39 1983 p.62, p.65

## Period II: 1871-75: After the Paris Commune

### Locus 5: To a meeting of Blanquists 1871

"The last movement was the Commune, the greatest that had yet been made, and there could not be two opinions about it — the Commune was the conquest of the political power of the working classes. There was much misunderstanding about the Commune. The Commune could not found a new form of class government. In destroying the existing conditions of oppression by transferring all the means of labour to the productive labourer, and thereby compelling every able-bodied individual to work for a living, the only base for class rule and oppression would be removed. But before such a change could be effected a **proletarian dictature** would become necessary, and the first condition of that was a proletarian army. The working classes would have to conquer the right to emancipate themselves on the battlefield. The task of the International was to organize and combine the forces of labour for the coming struggle."

Marx, Speech on the Seventh Anniversary of The International, in *New York World* 15 October 1871, MECW 22 1986 p.634

### Locus 6: Political Indifferentism

"If the political struggle of the working class assumes revolutionary form," wrote Marx, ridiculing the anarchists for their repudiation of politics, "and if the workers set up their **revolutionary dictatorship** in place of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, they commit the terrible crime of violating principles, for in order to satisfy their wretched, vulgar everyday needs and to crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie, they give the state a revolutionary and transient form, instead of laying down their arms and abolishing the state."

Marx, Political Indifferentism, (January 1873) MECW 23 1988 p.393

#### Locus 7: Engels, The Housing Question (1872)

"In the same way, when the so-called Blanquists made an attempt to transform themselves from mere political revolutionaries into a socialist workers' fraction with a definite programme – as was done by the Blanquist fugitives in London in their manifesto, *Internationale et Revolution* – they did not proclaim the -principles|| of the Proudhonist plan of social salvation, but rather adopted, and almost literally at that, the views of German scientific socialism on the necessity of the political action of the proletariat and of the **dictatorship of the proletariat** as the transitional stage to the abolition of classes and with them of the state, views such as had already been expressed in *The Communist Manifesto* and since then on innumerable occasions.||

Engels, The Housing Question (1872) MECW 23 1988 p.370

"Moreover, every real proletarian party, from the English Chartists onward, has put forward a class policy, the organization of the proletariat as an independent political party, as the primary condition of its struggle, and the **dictatorship of the proletariat** as the immediate aim of the struggle. By declaring this to be -absurd, Mülberger puts himself outside the proletarian movement and into the camp of petty- bourgeois socialism.||

Engels, The Housing Question (1872) MECW 23 1988 p.372

#### Locus 8: Engels vs Blanquists 1874

"From Blanqui's assumption, that any revolution may be made by the outbreak of a small revolutionary minority, follows of itself the necessity of a dictatorship after the success of the venture. This is, of course, a **dictatorship, not of the entire revolutionary class, the proletariat**, but of the small minority that has made the revolution, and who are themselves previously organized under the dictatorship of one or several individuals.||

Engels, The Program of the Blanquist Fugitives from the Paris Commune, (26 June 1874) MECW 24 1989 p.13

#### Locus 9:

"Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the **revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.**"

Marx, Critique of the Gotha Programme, (1875) MECW 24 1989 p.95

### Period III: Engels after Marx

#### Locus 10: Engels to Conrad Schmidt (1890)

"Or why do we fight for the political **dictatorship of the proletariat** if political power is economically impotent? Force (that is state power) is also an economic power.||

Engels, Letter to Conrad Schmidt, (27 October 1890) MECW 49 2001 p.63

#### Locus 11:

"Of late, the Social-Democratic philistine has once more been filled with wholesome terror at the words: Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Well and good, gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

### Locus 12:

"If one thing is certain it is that our party and the working class can only come to power in the form of the democratic republic. This is even the specific form for the **dictatorship of the proletariat**, as the Great French Revolution has already shown "

Engels, Critique of the Erfurt Programme (1891) MECW 27 1990 p.227

In 1893 a young Russian Social-Democratic emigré visited Engels. Plekhanov, the leader and theoretician of the relatively new Russian Marxist group, had given him a letter of recommendation. A third of a century later, A. M. Voden wrote up his memoirs, including his "Talks with Engels." Just why 'dictatorship of the proletariat' came into the conversation is not clear from Voden's account. The two were discussing the relations between Narodniks (Russian Populists) and the Russian Social- Democrats, including Plekhanov's attitude. Voden writes:

"Engels asked how Plekhanov himself stood on the question of the **dictatorship of the proletariat**. I was forced to admit that G. V Plekhanov had repeatedly expressed his conviction to me that when –we come to power, of course **"we" would allow freedom to no one but "ourselves"** ...However, in response to my question who exactly should be taken to be the monopolists of freedom, Plekhanov answered: the working class headed by comrades who correctly understand Marx's teachings and who draw the correct conclusions from those teachings. And in response to my question on what comprises the objective criteria for a correct understanding of Marx's teachings and the correct practical conclusions flowing therefrom, G. V Plekhanov limited himself to the statement that it was all laid out 'clearly enough' it seems in his (Plekhanov's) works."

And what did Engels think of this, when told by Voden? We learn this in Voden's memoirs, which continue as follows:

"After inquiring whether I personally on the other hand was satisfied with such an objective criterion [that is, Plekhanov's], Engels expressed the opinion that the application of that sort of criterion would either lead to the Russian Social-Democracy's turning into a sect with its unavoidable and always undesirable practical consequences, or it would give rise in the Russian Social-Democracy – at least among the emigré Russian Social-Democrats – to a series of splits from which Plekhanov himself would not benefit."

## **Appendix 2: Plekhanov on 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'**

From Hal Draper (1987) *The "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" from Marx to Lenin*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

In just a few years the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party was going to become **the first socialist organization in the world to include the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in its program** – though Marx and Engels had always refused to propose such a step. The term was written into the party program by Plekhanov, who by that time was perhaps the most prestigious theoretician of Marxism outside Germany.)40-41)

"An essential condition for this social revolution is the **dictatorship of the proletariat**, i.e., the conquest by the proletariat of such political power as will enable it to quell all opposition by the exploiters.]"

Plekhanov, Draft Programme of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (1902) in LCW p.51

"If it were necessary for the success of the revolution to restrict the effect of one or another democratic principle, it would be criminal to hesitate at such a restriction.]"

Plekhanov, Speech at 1903 congress in Baron 1963 p.242



The Menshevik party retained 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in its party programme long after the revolution of 1917. (75)

## Appendix 3: Lenin on ‘the dictatorship of the proletariat’

From Hal Draper (1987) *The “Dictatorship of the Proletariat” from Marx to Lenin* New York: Monthly Review Press.

Whoever wants to reach Socialism by a different road, other than that of political democracy, will inevitably arrive at conclusions that are absurd and reactionary both in the economic and the political sense.||

Lenin, *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* (1905) LCW 9 1964 p.29

The proletariat’s struggle against the bourgeoisie, which finds expression in a variety of forms ever richer in content, inevitably becomes a political struggle directed towards the conquest of political power by the proletariat (–the dictatorship of the proletariat||).||

Lenin, Karl Marx (1914) LCW 21 1974 p.71

“Besides, reference to the **dictatorship of the proletariat** contained in the original draft is missing here. Even if this were done accidentally, through an oversight, it is still indubitable that the concept of “dictatorship” is incompatible with positive recognition of outside support for the proletariat. If we really knew positively that the petty bourgeoisie will support the proletariat in the accomplishment of its, the proletariat’s, revolution it would be pointless to speak of a ‘dictatorship’ for we would then be fully guaranteed so overwhelming a majority that we could get on very well without a dictatorship (as The “critics” would have us believe). The recognition of the necessity for the dictatorship of the proletariat is most closely and inseparably bound up with the thesis of the Communist Manifesto that the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class.”

Lenin, *Notes on Plekhanov’s Second Draft Programme* (1902) LCW 6 1964 p.51

“Under the ‘dictatorship’ we shall say about you: there is no point in wasting words where the use of power is required...||

Lenin, *Notes On Plekhanov’s Second Draft Programme* (1902) LCW 6 1964 p.53

It can be only a **dictatorship**, that is, not an organisation of “order”, but an organisation of war. If you are storming a fortress, you cannot discontinue the war even after you have taken the fortress.||

Lenin, *Report on the Question of the Participation of the Social-Democrats in a Provisional Revolutionary Government*, (18 April 1905) LCW 8 p.385

“... the bourgeois conceives dictatorship to mean the annulment of all the liberties and guarantees of democracy, tyranny of every kind, and every sort of abuse of power in the personal interests of a dictator.”

Lenin, *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, (June-July 1905) LCW 9 1962 p.131

“Why “dictatorship” Why “force”? Is it necessary for a vast mass to use force against a handful? Can tens and hundreds of millions be dictators over a thousand or ten thousand?

This question is usually put by people who for the first time hear the term dictatorship used in what to them is a new connotation. People are accustomed to see only a police authority and only a police dictatorship. The idea that there can be government without any police, or that dictatorship need not be a police dictatorship, seems strange to them.||

Lenin, *The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers’ Party*, (24-28 March 1906) LCW 10 1965 p.245

[?Lenin, *A Contribution To The History Of The Question Of The Dictatorship*, (20 October 1920) LCW 31 1965 340-

“.. that dictatorship means unlimited power based on force, and not on law. In civil war, any victorious power can only be a dictatorship. The point is, however, that there is the dictatorship of a minority over the majority, the dictatorship of a handful of police officials over the people; and there is the **dictatorship of the overwhelming majority of the people** over a handful of tyrants, robbers and usurpers of people's power.

Lenin, The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers' Party, (24-28 March 1906) LCW 10 1965 p.216

The scientific term “dictatorship” means nothing more nor less than authority untrammelled by any laws, absolutely unrestricted by any rules whatever, and based directly on force. The term -dictatorship|| has no other meaning but this — mark this well, Cadet gentlemen.

Lenin, The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers' Party, (24-28 March 1906) LCW 10 1965 p.246

Draper: “This definition can only be called a **theoretical disaster, first-class...**” (90)

“[Lenin] repeatedly referred to the ‘Latin’ origin of the term ‘dictatorship’ – yet did not appear to have an inkling of what the Latin (Roman) meaning really was... his definition of ‘dictatorship’ had nothing in common with any other conception of the term held by socialists or... with any conception of the workers’ state held by Marxists.” (91)

“That is why **the dictatorship is exercised**, not by the whole people, but **by the revolutionary people** who, however, do not shun the whole people, who explain to all the people the motives of their actions in all their details, and who willingly enlist the whole people not only in -administering|| the state, but in governing it too, and indeed in organising the state.

“Thus our simple analogy contains all the elements of the scientific concept -dictatorship of the revolutionary people||, and also of the concept -military and police dictatorship||. We can now pass from this simple analogy, which even a learned Cadet professor can grasp, to the more complex developments of social life.”

Lenin, The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers' Party, (24-28 March 1906) LCW 10 1965 p.247

Draper: “Thus the entire concept of a class dictatorship, whether of one or two classes, has been argued away... [replaced by] a dictatorship wielded by revolutionary activists... everyone else (with the possible later exception of Luxemburg) assumed that the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ would be exercised in practice as a ‘dictatorship of the party’. They assumed it, but Lenin characteristically had to develop a reasoned basis for the idea. (92-93\_

“... socialism can be implemented only through the **dictatorship of the proletariat**, which combines violence against the bourgeoisie, i.e., the minority of the population, with full development of democracy, i.e., the genuinely equal and genuinely universal participation of the entire mass of the population in all state affairs and in all the complex problems of abolishing capitalism.”

Lenin, Reply to P. Kievsky, (August-September 1916) LCW 23 1964 p.25

“For socialism is impossible without democracy because: (1) the proletariat cannot perform the socialist revolution unless it prepares for it by the struggle for democracy; (2) victorious socialism cannot consolidate its victory and bring humanity to the withering away of the state without implementing full democracy.”

Lenin, *A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism*, (August-October 1916) LCW 23 1964 p.74

“What is this dual power? Alongside the Provisional Government, the government of bourgeoisie, another government has arisen, so far weak and incipient, but undoubtedly a government that actually exists and is growing—the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies.

What is the class composition of this other government? It consists of the proletariat and the peasants (in soldiers’ uniforms). What is the political nature of this government? It is a **revolutionary dictatorship**, i.e., a power directly based on revolutionary seizure, on the direct initiative of the people from below, and not on a law enacted by a centralised state power.”

Lenin, The Dual Power, (9 April 1917) LCW 24 1964 p.38

Draper continues “*State and Revolution...* suggests that Lenin was rethinking his understanding of ‘dictatorship’

along with the rest of the subject. Conclusions cannot be too sweeping for two reasons: (1) The 'dictatorship of the proletariat' was not the question central to this work. The focus was on what Lenin called 'smashing' the old state apparatus and inaugurating the process of 'withering away' by a unique type of state (or nonstate). At no point did Lenin undertake a special exposition on 'dictatorship of the proletariat'; (2) The work was unfinished..." (96-97)

"After reviving the 'no law' definition of 'dictatorship' all through the first part of 1917, Lenin failed to mention it once in *State and Revolution*..." (97)

"The most remarkable characteristic of *State and Revolution*... was the emphasis in this work – and only here – of the immediacy of the 'withering away' pattern." (97)

"While the revolution in Germany is still slow in –coming forth||, our task is to study the state capitalism of the Germans, to spare no effort in copying it and **not shrink from adopting dictatorial methods** to hasten the copying of it."

Lenin, "Left-Wing" Childishness, (April 1918) LCW 27 1972 p.340

"The chief thing that stands to our credit during this past year is that we have translated these words from abstruse Latin into plain Russian. During this past year the working class has not been engaged in idle philosophising, but in the practical work of creating and exercising a **proletarian dictatorship**..."

Lenin, *Speech at a Ceremonial Meeting Of The All-Russia Central And Moscow Trade Union Councils*, (6 November 1918) LCW 28 1974 p.132

The important thing for us is that **Cheka is directly exercising the dictatorship of the proletariat**, and in that respect its services are invaluable. There is no way of emancipating the people except by forcibly suppressing the exploiters. That is what Cheka is doing, and therein lies its service to the proletariat.||

Lenin, *Speech At A Rally And Concert For The All-Russia Extraordinary Commission Staff*, (7 November 1918) LCW 28 1974 p.110

Draper continues "In hindsight, the important step taken by Lenin's *Anti-Kautsky* was its implicit repudiation of the idea that the proletarian or socialist revolution was a revolution of the majority of the people, as the Communist Manifesto had emphasised. It was only implicit because Lenin did not actually assert the repudiation here.".(134)

Kautsky, with the learned air of a most learned armchair fool, or with the innocent air of a ten-year-old schoolgirl, asks: Why do we need a dictatorship when we have a majority? And Marx and Engels explain: —to break down the resistance of the bourgeoisie...||

Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, (October—November 1918) LCW 28 1974 p.252

Draper continues "Lenin 'forgot' that Marx and all Marxists had always insisted that this was precisely the respect in which a workers' state was basically different from all previous ruling-class states." (135)

"In these circumstances, in an epoch of desperately acute war, when history presents the question of whether age-old and thousand-year-old privileges are to be or not to be at such a time to talk about majority and minority, about pure democracy, about dictatorship being unnecessary and about equality between the exploiter and the exploited! What infinite stupidity and abysmal philistinism are needed for this!"

Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, (October—November 1918) LCW 28 1974 p.254

"12. Decision by majority.. Its conditions; real equality (culture). real freedom. Cf. press, assembly, etc..."

25. Two Internationals. **Dictatorship of the revolutionary elements of the class.** One country and the whole world."

Lenin, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, (September-October 1919) LCW 30 1965 p.99, p.103

\* \* \* \*

Neil Harding, *Leninism* (1996)

"Either the dictatorship (i.e., the iron rule) of the landowners and capitalists, or the dictatorship of the working class. There is no middle course... There is no middle course anywhere in the world, nor can there be."

Lenin, Letter To The Workers And Peasants Apropos Of The Victory Over Kolchak, (24 August 1919) LCW 29 1972 p.559

"The history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries demonstrated, even before the war, what this celebrated "pure democracy" really is under capitalism. Marxists have always maintained that the more developed, the "purer" democracy is, the more naked, acute and merciless the class struggle becomes, and the "purer" the capitalist oppression and bourgeois dictatorship."

Lenin, First Congress of the Communist International, (2-6 March 1919) LCW 28 1974 p.461

"The first and main lesson is that this beginning must be given every assistance. **The word "commune" is being handled much too freely.** Any kind of enterprise started by Communists or with their participation is very often at once declared to be a -commune||, it being not infrequently forgotten that this very honourable title must be won by prolonged and persistent effort, by practical achievement in genuine communist development... **"It would be a good thing to eliminate the word "commune" from common use,** to prohibit every Tom, Dick and Harry from grabbing at it, or to allow this title to be borne only by genuine communes...||

Lenin, *A Great Beginning Heroism Of The Workers In The Rear "Communist subbotniks"* (28 June 1919) LCW 29 1972 p.431

**"But the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be exercised through an organisation embracing the whole of that class,** because in all capitalist countries (and not only over here, in one of the most backward) the proletariat is still so divided, so degraded, and so corrupted in parts (by imperialism in some countries) that an organisation taking in the whole proletariat cannot directly exercise proletarian dictatorship. **It can be exercised only by a vanguard** that has absorbed the revolutionary energy of the class."

Lenin, *The Trade Unions, The Present Situation and Trotsky's Mistakes*, (30 December 1920) LCW 32 1965 p.21

"The scientific term 'dictatorship' means nothing more nor less than authority **untrammelled by any laws**, absolutely unrestricted by any rules whatever, and based directly on force. The term 'dictatorship' has no other meaning but this—mark this well, Cadet gentlemen.||

Lenin, *A Contribution To The History Of The Question Of The Dictatorship*, (20 October 1920) LCW 31 1965 p.353 [Originally Lenin, *The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers' Party*, (24-28 March 1906) LCW 10 1965 p.246]

"We do not believe in 'absolutes'. We laugh at —pure democracy"

Lenin, *A Letter To G. Myasnikov*, (5 August 1921) LCW 32 1965 p.504

"They fail to understand that when history places the dictatorship of the proletariat on the order of the day it is not voting, but civil war that decides all serious political problems."

Lenin, *The Tasks of the Third International*, (14 July 1919) LCW 29 1972 p.510

## Appendix 4: Luxemburg on 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'

From Hal Draper, 1987. *The "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" from Marx to Lenin*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

"Rosa Luxemburg consistently and without exception used the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in the manner of Marx and Engels – the only one to do so consistently in our entire account." (58-59)

"The first act of the socialist transformation must therefore be the conquest of political power by the working class and the establishment of the **dictatorship of the proletariat**, which is absolutely necessary for effecting transitional measures.||

Luxemburg, (1903) in Draper 1987 p.60

"Toward the conquest of political power in the state, toward the introduction of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and toward the realisation of socialism."

Luxemburg, *What do we want* (1905) in Draper 1987 p.61

"And therefore in a period of open political popular struggles in Germany, the last historically necessary goal can only be the dictatorship of the proletariat."

Luxemburg, *The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions* (1906) in Draper 1987 p.61

**"The basic error of the Lenin-Trotsky theory is that they too, just like Kautsky, oppose dictatorship to democracy.**

"Dictatorship or democracy" is the way the question is put by Bolsheviks and Kautsky alike. The latter naturally decides in favour of -democracy that is, of bourgeois democracy, precisely because he opposes it to the alternative of the socialist revolution. Lenin and Trotsky, on the other hand, decide in favour of dictatorship in contradistinction to democracy, and thereby, in favour of the dictatorship of a handful of persons, that is, in favour of dictatorship on the bourgeois model. They are two opposite poles, both alike being far removed from a genuine socialist policy. The proletariat, when it seizes power, can never follow the good advice of Kautsky, given on the pretext of the –unripeness of the country,|| the advice being to renounce socialist revolution and devote itself to democracy. It cannot follow this advice without betraying thereby itself, the International, and the revolution. It should and must at once undertake socialist measures in the most energetic, unyielding and unhesitant fashion, in other words, exercise a dictatorship, but a dictatorship of the class, not of a party or of a clique – dictatorship of the class, that means in the broadest possible form on the basis of the most active, unlimited participation of the mass of the people, of unlimited democracy.

Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution* (1918) 1961 p.76

"Yes, dictatorship! But this dictatorship consists in the manner of applying democracy, not in its elimination, but in energetic, resolute attacks upon the well-entrenched rights and economic relationships of bourgeois society, without which a socialist transformation cannot be accomplished. But this dictatorship must be the work of the class and not of a little leading minority in the name of the class ..."

Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution* (1918) 1961 p.77

"For the dictatorship of the proletariat is democracy in a socialist sense. It is not a matter of bombs, coups d'état, riots or 'anarchy' as the agents of capitalist profit dishonestly make out; rather it is the use of all the means of political power to realize socialism, to expropriate the capitalist class – in the interests and through the will of the revolutionary majority of the proletariat, that is, in the spirit of socialist democracy.||

Luxemburg, *The National Assembly* (20 November 1918) in Rosa Luxemburg: *Selected Political Writings*, edited and introduced by Robert Looker, 1972 p.265

