



V. I. LENIN

STATE AND
REVOLUTION

ANNOTATED AND INTRODUCED
BY TODD CHRETIEN

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For Isabela

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A Note on the Translation and Footnotes

The first edition of *State and Revolution* was published in Russian in 1918, with a second edition in 1919. The work was translated into English and used by the American Communist Party for membership education as early as 1921. This edition follows that printed in Lenin's *Collected Works*, volume 25, published by Progress Publishers in Moscow. I have made minor grammatical changes to the text to conform to modern American usage, which I have noted only in the cases where there is any possible change in meaning.

The text itself was downloaded from the Marxist Internet Archive; I made any necessary corrections from there. Many thanks to Zodiac and Brian Baggins for transcribing the work into the archive. In the version printed in the *Collected Works*, the editors sometimes included Lenin's commentary within the text of large block quotes from other authors. I have disaggregated Lenin's commentary from these quotes when this makes things easier for the reader. Sometimes Lenin cites page numbers for citations he uses in the text. I have placed those citations in the footnotes, but also cited more accessible versions in English.

Where possible, I refer readers to Robert C. Tucker's *Marx-Engels Reader* because it is widely available. There are sometimes small differences between the translations in Tucker and those used by Lenin, but these are minor and do not alter the meaning of any quotations. For citations not listed in Tucker, I have cited the *Marx-Engels Collected Works* published by Progress Publishers and International Publishers. Most works cited are also readily available at the Marxist Internet Archive, although I have decided not to include URLs in the footnotes. There is one exception: I have cited URLs from the Marxist Internet Archive in chapter VI for works by Pannekoek and Kautsky not available in print.

The British historian Robert Service published a newer translation of *The State and Revolution* with Penguin in 1991. If there are passages in the version here that are unclear, I refer the reader to the page number in Service's translation for comparison.

Lenin makes reference to many historical figures, dates, and events that would have been perfectly obvious to the informed political readers of his day. I have inserted historical footnotes and compiled a biographical glossary, which I hope will be helpful to the contemporary reader. I have also added brief explanatory footnotes where I feel the text requires them.

Acknowledgments

Several people deserve thanks for their collaboration on this project. Anthony Arnove first suggested the project several years ago and Paul D'Amato read early drafts, proffering helpful comments and direction. Ahmed Shawki offered keen editorial guidance with respect to how to historicize Lenin's text and what lessons to draw from it for today's world. Rachel Cohen and the crack production team at Haymarket Books once again demonstrated their unrivaled combination of political commitment and professional standards. Dana Frank taught me how to translate between the immediate concerns of an organizer and the related, yet distinct, tasks of a writer. I owe a special debt to Jessie Muldoon, whose profound grasp of Lenin's politics prompted untold hours of insightful questions and creative exchanges; without her intellectual and moral support, this project would never have seen the light of day. Finally, Lenin argues that, after a long struggle, society may someday operate on the "copybook maxims" we all learned in elementary school—share with others, wait your turn, help your neighbor, and clean up after yourself. My faith in the potential of Lenin's radically humanist prediction rests on the example my father set in his own life's gracious commitment to these basic ideas. I dedicate my part in this work to his memory.

Introduction

A Beginner's Guide to *State and Revolution*

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin worked out his views with respect to the problem of state power in *The State and Revolution: The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution*, developing it as a guide to action for the Bolshevik Party in the course of the 1917 October Revolution. But in July of that year, things seemed much less certain to Lenin. After a partial uprising of workers and sailors in Saint Petersburg, Lenin and many other leading Bolsheviks were locked up or driven underground by their erstwhile allies, the leaders of the Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary parties. “*Entre nous*,” Lenin wrote to Lev Kamenev, his longtime friend and political collaborator, “if they do me in, please publish my notebook, ‘Marxism and the State.’”¹ As it turned out, it was not until after the revolution that Lenin was finally able to publish *State and Revolution*, but the book gives an excellent window into how Lenin believed the working class could reorganize society if only it could take power in its own name.

Lenin’s contribution holds valuable lessons today in a world wracked by economic crisis, ecological destruction, deadly militarism, and social oppression, especially in places such as Greece, Venezuela, and Egypt, where the question of who holds state power arises as an immediate question. But *State and Revolution* was a product of its time, written to respond to certain questions while leaving others to the side. In fact, Lenin was never able to finish the second half of the book, which he intended to be a case study of how Marx and Engels’s analysis of the state operated

1. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 36 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 454.

in the context of the Russian Revolution itself. Thus, if Lenin's short book remains today a necessary component in the development of revolutionary theory, its insights will have to be studied in light of the world as it exists today.

One difficulty that arises in translating Lenin into the twenty-first century is the great chasm separating his intellectual and political world from our own; the book assumes a certain level of familiarity with both Marx and Engels's writings and the history of the socialist movement in the decades leading up to World War I. This introduction aims to make Lenin more accessible to a new generation of readers. I have also inserted explanatory footnotes in the text of the book itself where needed, to provide background or to make his train of thought more easily understood. But even accounting for these challenges, Lenin's keen wit and calculated anger jump off the page. Whatever difficulties new readers might encounter with the details of *State and Revolution*, they are sure to come away with a sharper sense of both the strength and the vulnerabilities of the state machines we are all up against.

Lenin's Motivation

Until World War I, Lenin never directly challenged what he would come to regard as a wrongheaded understanding of Marx and Engels's theory of the difference between capitalist and working-class states. That is, while Lenin expected that the Russian tsar and the absolutist state would have to be overthrown by revolutionary force, he did not clearly map out what he expected to happen in those countries where capitalism had developed a democratic (or at least partially democratic) state, such as Britain, France, Germany, and the United States. He did not have a clear theory of capitalist states in general and how to view them in the process of working-class revolution. Unlike moderate socialist thinkers who came to stress the potential for workers to take over the existing bourgeois states peacefully via national elections and then gradually legislate socialist reforms, Lenin, from his early days, put the emphasis on why the class struggle and the transition from capitalism

to socialism would be anything but smooth. Speaking of the state, Lenin writes in 1897,

Even in England we see that powerful social groups support the privileged position of the bureaucracy and hinder the complete democratization of that institution. Why? Because it is in the interests of the proletariat alone to democratize it *completely*; the most progressive strata of the bourgeoisie defend certain prerogatives of the bureaucracy and are opposed to the election of all officials, opposed to the complete abolition of electoral qualifications, opposed to making officials directly responsible to the people, etc., because these strata realize that the proletariat will take advantage of such complete democratization in order to use it *against* the bourgeoisie. This is the case in Russia, too.²

Here Lenin makes it clear that he did not believe the bourgeoisie would simply abide by the results of democratic elections, peacefully submitting to its own expropriation. He even hints at an analysis of the capitalist state, even a *democratic* capitalist state, which recognizes that the state contains within itself complex layers of self-defense that are not reducible to the persons or political parties sitting at its head. This speaks to Lenin's revolutionary instinct and an important partial insight, but until his studies in the winter of 1917, he did not see through what had become by then the (distorted) commonsense understanding of "the Marxist theory of the state and the tasks of the proletariat in the revolution," as he would emphasize in his own subtitle to *State and Revolution*.

The first Bolshevik to criticize this fuzzy treatment of the state was Lenin's close collaborator Nikolai Bukharin. In an article completed in July 1916 entitled "Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State," Bukharin demonstrates how existing states are intimately tied to the capitalist class:

To support the contemporary state means to support militarism. In our day the historical task is not to worry about further development of the productive forces (they are perfectly adequate for the realization

2. Thanks to August Nimtz for pointing out this quote in his *Lenin's Electoral Strategy from Marx and Engels Through the Revolution of 1905: The Ballot, the Streets—or Both* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 50.

of socialism), but to prepare a universal attack upon the ruling gangsters. In the growing revolutionary struggle, the proletariat destroys the state organization of the bourgeoisie, takes over its material framework, and creates its own temporary organization of state power. Having beaten back every counterattack of the reaction and cleared the way for the free development of socialist humanity, the proletariat, in the final analysis, abolishes its own dictatorship as well, once and for all driving an aspen stake. . . .³

Here Bukharin writes that the capitalist state (even when formally democratic) *cannot* be reshaped for the purposes of workers' revolution. It must first be "destroyed" in order for workers to then construct a "temporary organization of state power," a "dictatorship" of workers against capitalists, which will in turn be abolished in favor of the "free development of socialist humanity." As we will see, this is the basic dynamic at the heart of *State and Revolution*, but at the time Lenin rejected Bukharin's arguments, refusing to publish his article in a Bolshevik journal. He even claimed that Bukharin had succumbed to "semi-anarchist ideas."⁴ Lenin singled him out in an article from December 1916, just weeks before he began his own study on Marx's attitude toward the capitalist state, writing:

Socialists are in favor of utilizing 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 [Bukharin's pen name] 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.⁵

3. Nikolai Bukharin, "Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State," ed. Richard B. Day (Moscow: 1925), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/bukharin/works/1915/state.htm>. The manuscript breaks off in the middle of this sentence.

4. Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 17–18.

5. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 23 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 163–66. Emphasis added.

As we shall see, this idea that the “state should be used” is very similar to the formulation that Lenin would savage in *State and Revolution*. The fact that this dispute between the two close allies almost led to a breakdown in their political and personal relationship only goes to show how seriously Lenin took theoretical matters and how committed he was to this point.⁶ Near the end of this essay Lenin writes, “We hope to return to this very important subject in a separate article.”⁷ However, as historian Marian Sawer points out,

It is necessary constantly to remind oneself that this notebook [Lenin kept his research notes in a blue notebook] was written in Zurich to settle a theoretical point with Bukharin and the Left, and although it provided Lenin with his revolutionary program in March and April it in fact preceded the collapse of Tsarism and the inauguration of the revolution. . . .

But more importantly, and here Lenin was going beyond what either Bukharin or the German Left had to offer at this time, Lenin already in these January/February notes began identifying the soviets created in the 1905 revolution with the new form of state which the proletariat would introduce. In one jump Lenin had come to understand Marx and Engels’s injunctions about destroying the existing, innately oppressive structures of power and their identification of the Paris Commune as an attempt to smash these structures of power, and had himself identified the soviets as structurally akin to the Paris Commune.⁸

Although he doesn’t credit him in *State and Revolution*, upon Bukharin’s return to Russia from exile in May 1917, Lenin reportedly asked Nadezhda Krupskaya, his wife and political partner, to pass along the message to Bukharin that Lenin “no longer has any disagreements with you on the question of the state.”⁹ Before summarizing the impact

6. For more on this see Donny Gluckstein, *The Tragedy of Bukharin* (London: Pluto Press, 1994) and Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*.

7. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 23, 166.

8. Marian Sawer, “The Genesis of the State and Revolution,” *Socialist Register* 14 (1977): 217–18.

9. Gluckstein, *Tragedy of Bukharin*, 10.

of this theory on the revolution itself, we should examine chapter by chapter the context in which Lenin was writing, his methodological approach, and, finally, his arguments.

Preface: "Kautskyism" as Context

Lenin asserts in his preface to *State and Revolution* that Karl Kautsky, the leading theoretician of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), was the main representative of a distortion of Marx's theory within the Europe-wide coalition of socialist parties called the Second International. This distortion helped sap their collective ability to oppose World War I, as each national party lined up behind its own government in the mutual slaughter. Since much of *State and Revolution* consists of a running polemic against Kautsky and the leadership of the SPD, it is necessary to know a little about both.¹⁰

Because they were well-known leaders in the failed revolution of 1848, the German government never allowed either Marx or Engels to return to Germany to organize politically; they were forced to function as exiled advisors to their supporters back home. After many years of patient, semilegal organizing, in 1875 Marx and Engels's collaborators inside Germany merged with the more moderate followers of socialist iconoclast Ferdinand Lassalle, who had died in a duel some years before. Their united organization eventually emerged as the SPD. Marx and Engels went along with the unity plans in order to found a genuinely powerful organization, but they worried that the "Marxists" were moving too far to the right to accommodate their new allies. These negotiations were complicated by the fact that German state censorship forced the SPD to speak obliquely in its public press. That meant that debates about revolutionary principles and theory were often carried out in private meetings or in letters, and were often inaccessible to the majority of the party membership.

10. Two excellent sources on the history of the SPD are Carl E. Schorske, *German Social Democracy: 1905–1917* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983) and Pierre Broué, *The German Revolution: 1917–1923* (Haymarket Books: Chicago, 2006).

Other factors compounded this lack of ideological clarity. The German economy boomed after the 1870–71 war with France and grew powerfully for forty years, creating ever-larger numbers of urban workers and a steady increase in trade-union and SPD membership. Strikes were rare, however, as German bosses often chose to raise wages and tolerate unions in exchange for labor peace and steady profits. The government followed suit, lifting a set of so-called Anti-Socialist Laws against the SPD in 1890. The socialists grew, winning almost a third of the seats in Germany's parliament (which held only limited powers under the rule of the Prussian emperor) in the years before World War I. This success gave rise to a political trend that more and more openly argued that perhaps Marx and Engels had been wrong about the need for a revolution in Germany. The two exiles attacked this view, warning against what they believed to be a growing opportunism within the SPD and even threatening to split from the SPD if the opportunist leaders whom they were criticizing were not expelled. However, while they did their best to prod their supporters into action against the right wing of the party, Marx and Engels's critiques of the party's opportunism were generally not known publicly.

Upon Engels's death in 1895 (Marx had died in 1883), Eduard Bernstein, who had been his close collaborator and the editor of the SPD's illegal newspaper during the years of the Anti-Socialist Laws, dropped a bombshell on the party, effectively arguing that Marx and Engels's views on socialism (and especially revolution as a means to achieve it) were outmoded and that the SPD should instead simply focus on reforming capitalism bit by bit. He expounded his ideas in a series of articles that became a book called *Evolutionary Socialism*.¹¹ In the fight that followed, Rosa Luxemburg, the Polish-born leader of the left wing of the SPD, championed the idea of working-class revolution, as did Kautsky. However, while both supported Marx's call for revolution, each developed very different notions of how that revolution would come about. Luxemburg supported SPD participation in elections, but she also believed that genuine socialism—the self-emancipation of the working class, as Marx famously defined it—would

11. Eduard Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961).

come through mass struggle, general strikes, and uprisings, as she wrote in her widely read book *The Mass Strike* in 1906.

Kautsky, like Luxemburg, supported workers taking extraparliamentary action in certain circumstances, but he developed a highly specific, fixed notion of what a revolution would mean. In 1909 he explained these ideas in a controversial book *The Road to Power*, which, it has to be said, so frightened the German party leadership at the time that they tried to prevent its publication because they believed it was *too* revolutionary. In it, Kautsky argued that revolutionary action might be necessary (and this is what enraged the right wing of the SPD leadership), but it was a dangerous proposition at best and should be avoided if possible (and this is what worried Luxemburg and other leftists). The overriding goal was “the gaining of a dominant position for the Reichstag [that is, the parliament] not only over the imperial government [the monarchy], but also over the individual states, these are the special tasks of the German proletariat.”¹² He added, “It cannot win these battles, cannot reach the above mentioned goals of democracy and abolition of militarism, *without itself attaining . . . a dominant position in the state.*”¹³ Compare this passage to the previous quote, where Lenin writes that “the state should be used,” to see how influential Kautsky remained for the author of *State and Revolution* before World War I. It is true that Kautsky recognized that the bourgeoisie might try to prevent the SPD from gaining dominance, and if so, that it would be necessary to use force against them—but he hoped it wouldn’t be.

Kautsky’s preferred road to power collapsed in the chaos of World War I as the German ruling class militarized the nation, banned freedom of expression, and imprisoned its opponents or sent them to the front. While Kautsky personally opposed the war, he did not support Luxemburg’s revolutionary left wing in the SPD. This was enough to draw Lenin’s ire, but Lenin came to believe that Kautsky was not simply betraying his previously held revolutionary beliefs. Rather, Lenin now—

12. Karl Kautsky, *The Road to Power*, trans. Raymond Mayor, ed. John H. Kautsky (Berkeley, CA: Center for Socialist History, 2007), 83.

13. *Ibid.*, 85. Emphasis added.

retroactively—detected a certain ambiguity at the heart of Kautsky’s pre-war theory that had only become clearly manifested under wartime conditions. This ambiguity was all the more damaging because, during times of peace, Kautsky had appeared to be Marx and Engels’s most faithful disciple; he was known as the “Pope of Marxism.” Disabusing his audience of the fallacies of “Kautskyism” and restoring what he believed to be Marx and Engels’s historical-materialist analysis and revolutionary theory were Lenin’s chief aims in *State and Revolution*. This accounts for the heat generated in the text.

Lenin’s Methodology: Reestablishing Marx

Early in chapter 1, Lenin apologizes to his readers for using “long quotations [that] will render the text cumbersome and not help at all make it popular reading.” Doing so is necessary, he says, in order to “*re-establish* what Marx really taught on the subject of the state.”¹⁴ Lenin painstakingly tracked down every reference to the state he could find in the works of Marx and Engels. Yet, as socialist writer Hal Draper has noted, Lenin only had access to a partial record, as many of their writings were not yet published or inaccessible under wartime conditions. Lenin’s warning to read carefully is therefore legitimate, and readers will do well to pay attention to what he is quoting and the context in which it was written. This is especially important as, in the original text, it is very difficult to keep track of which works he is citing—something I have tried to correct by adding reference notes to all quotes in this edition of *State and Revolution*. Also, Lenin often includes his own paraphrases within block quotes from authors he is citing and refers to quotes that are either located in previous chapters or in ones yet to come without clearly signaling his references—another practice which I have tried to straighten out or flag in this edition. Worse, Lenin at times will attribute a quote to Marx or Engels (and then repeat it many times as such) when in fact it is really his own paraphrase. The most famous of these is Lenin’s phrase “special

14. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 25 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 391.

bodies of armed men,” which he seems to attribute to Engels, using it a half a dozen times in chapter 1. Of course, much of this may be excused given the conditions under which he was writing; I don't believe that any of it alters his meaning substantially.

Methodologically, there are both great strengths and potential weaknesses to Lenin's stated purpose of “re-establishing” Marx and Engels's original position. The strength is that he does, I believe, definitively demonstrate that Kautsky and the SPD leadership really *were* distorting Marx and Engels to suit their own ends. The potential weaknesses are that a) Lenin is only right if Marx and Engels are right and b) Lenin sometimes doesn't clearly distinguish Marx and Engels's views from his own original insights. On another note, for those not accustomed to Lenin's style, it is worth keeping in mind that *State and Revolution* is a polemic written in the midst of battle, generally aimed at destroying the arguments of opponents whom Lenin believed were personally responsible for the imprisonment, torture, and exile of their former comrades and who, despite the label of “socialist,” were in fact doing everything in their power to sabotage the very real prospects of workers' power created by revolt against the war.

What follows are brief summaries of the main points of Lenin's chapters, including refreshers on the political figures, texts, and situations he invokes to buttress his arguments. I hope this will assist readers in keeping up with the flow of Lenin's argument.

Chapter 1: Class Society and the State

In chapter 1, Lenin uses Engels's two best-known and widely available books: *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) and *Anti-Dühring* (1877) to back up his interpretation of both Marx's and Engels's general views with respect to the state. Engels's propositions follow Lenin's four chapter subheadings and do a very efficient job of outlining the heart of his argument; the rest of the book fills out these concepts and criticizes defects Lenin finds in Marx's would-be Social Democratic defenders as well as his anarchist and reformist detractors. His decision to use these

two books is significant. Beginning with texts dating well into Marx and Engels's mature years as political figures and insisting that they represent the *revolutionary* views of both co-thinkers, Lenin seeks to cut the ground from beneath Bernstein and Kautsky, who are then arguing various versions of a "things have changed" interpretation of the same works. And by relying on popular books, instead of private circulars or letters, Lenin hopes to win over a wide layer of socialists who are familiar with the words but had been taught to read them through pale, rose-tinted glasses instead of the fiery crimson shades Marx and Engels had intended.

In brief, here is the argument, as recapitulated by Lenin:

1. The state arises when people transition from communal, hunter-gatherer forms of living into societies with the economic and technical capacity to create a surplus, thereby giving rise to the possibility of private property, hostile classes, "haves and have-nots."
2. In order to guard their privileges, the "haves" must organize what Lenin calls "special bodies of armed men," that is, police and prisons; this set of institutions is based on violence and force, which constitute the essence of the state.
3. The state is thus *not* a neutral body standing above society that may be used by any group or class in society for its own purposes; instead, it is historically and structurally designed to defend the ruling class. It is their instrument for guaranteeing the exploitation of the oppressed class or classes in any given period.
4. The oppressed class must overthrow this state institution and the ruling class in whose interest it operates, and be prepared to use any means necessary, including violence and force, to do so. In modern times, this means the workers must overthrow the capitalists; if the workers can accomplish this, they will, in turn, organize their own revolutionary state to suppress their former oppressors. But since the workers are the overwhelming majority and since capitalism has created the technical capacity to create more than enough to meet everyone's needs, the whole historic *necessity* of a state, of dividing society into haves and

have-nots, will begin to dissolve under socialism. Eventually the state itself, even the revolutionary workers' state, will *wither away* and humanity will "put the whole machinery of state where it will then belong: into a museum of antiquities," as Engels quips in the *Origin*.

As will become clear as you read chapter 1, Lenin argues that these propositions were distorted by reformists in order to "blunt" Marx and Engels's views.¹⁵ However, after their deaths, Marx and Engels were held in such high esteem that even reformist socialist leaders often tried to hold to the letter, while doing damage to the spirit, of their works. One instance of how Lenin straightens out these sort of errors (and you will find him doing so many more times in the text) is with respect to the expectation that the state will wither away. As we have seen, Marx and Engels argued that this process could only begin *after* the capitalist state is overthrown and replaced with a workers' state. The *workers' state*, not the capitalist state, is what they assumed would wither away. The reformist leaders came to quote Marx and Engels about the state withering away in such a way as to imply that the *capitalist* state could wither away, if only socialists could win enough seats in parliament. Lenin writes, "To prune Marxism to such an extent means reducing it to opportunism, for this 'interpretation' only leaves a vague notion of a slow, even gradual, change, of absence of leaps and storms, of absence of revolution."¹⁶

Having established the basic outline of Marx and Engels's theory of revolution and the state, Lenin next reviews how their views were shaped by the two greatest working-class upheavals of the nineteenth century: the revolutions of 1848 and the Paris Commune.

Chapter 2: The Experience of 1848-1851

In chapter 2, Lenin highlights three significant conclusions which represent changes in how Marx and Engels's think about working-class revolution

15. *Ibid.*, 390.

16. *Ibid.*, 401.

and the state. The first change appears between Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847) and *The Communist Manifesto* (1848). In the former, Marx simply states that the working class, in one way or another, "will substitute for the old bourgeois society an association which will preclude classes and their antagonism, and there will be no more political power proper." This statement does not offer any suggestion as to how this "substitution" will take place. One year later, Marx makes a move upon which Lenin places great emphasis, writing in the *Manifesto* that the working class can only come to power by the "violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie . . . to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy."¹⁷ Here, the form of the "substitution" becomes much sharper; Marx explicitly argues that a mass revolutionary upheaval is needed to break the power of the ruling class. But what is the relationship between the capitalist state and the revolution? Marx and Engels found out the hard way.

In 1848, revolutions and uprisings spread across Europe: King Louis Philippe of France abdicated and fled the country, English workers organized by the Chartists mobilized to demand labor rights and the vote, and the Prussian king, Frederick William IV, was forced to take steps toward ceding power to democratic institutions. Marx and Engels returned to Germany from exile to participate as practical organizers and leaders, Marx as the editor of a revolutionary newspaper and Engels as an erstwhile officer in a rebel guerilla unit. In the end, the old order survived the blows, and Marx and Engels ended up back in England, along with a wave of refugees. Summing up the experiences of the defeated French Revolution, Marx wrote *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), emphasizing the growing power of the capitalist state as "an appalling parasitic body, which enmeshes the body of French society and chokes all its pores."¹⁸ What does this mean for the tasks of the proletarian revolution? In other words, *how* must the old order be overthrown?

Here is Marx's second big conclusion: the revolution will have as its central task the breakup of the capitalist state—whereas up to that point

17. *Ibid.*, 406.

18. *Ibid.*, 410.

in history, “*all revolutions perfected this state machine instead of smashing it.*”¹⁹ Lenin returns to this point again and again throughout the rest of *State and Revolution*, ridiculing the “Kautskyite opportunism now prevailing in official Social Democracy,”²⁰ which shelved Marx’s belief that the working class could only make its revolution by smashing the state because it was capitalism’s most powerful self-defense institution.

Marx’s third conclusion is, for Lenin, his most important; it has become by far his most controversial. Having risen up in revolution and smashed the capitalist state, with what sort of social organization will the workers replace it? Marx answers: the dictatorship of the proletariat. Marx does not use this phrase in the *Communist Manifesto*; instead, he and Engels call for “raising the proletariat to the position of ruling class.” Marx only adopts the term as a contrast to the vision of the great mid-nineteenth-century French socialist leader August Blanqui of a “revolutionary dictatorship.” Blanqui was a tremendous force on the French left, greatly feared by the ruling class and greatly admired, despite sharp political disagreements, by Marx. As Hal Draper explains,

In Blanqui’s view, the desired “revolutionary dictatorship” would not be “of the proletariat,” in any sense of the last word. Blanqui made no hypocritical noises about implementing the rule of the masses—who, after all, would have to go through a long weaning process before their societal corruption could be burnt out of them. In the immediate sense, the operational sense, the dictatorship would be the rule of the conspiratorial band.²¹

In other words, Marx first uses the term *dictatorship of the proletariat* in order to distinguish his advocacy of the rule of the *working* class over the *capitalist* class, as opposed to Blanqui’s notion of the need for a revolutionary *elite* over all of society. Marx was not proposing a dictatorship in today’s commonly understood sense of the word, as a ruthless and repressive

19. *Ibid.*, 411.

20. *Ibid.*, 412. Marx’s Emphasis.

21. Hal Draper, *Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution, vol. IV: The “Dictatorship of the Proletariat”* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986), 38.

elite standing over the working class, but rather as an emergency government, a revolutionary state based on the active participation of the mass of the working class in alliance with all other oppressed sections of society.

Lenin quotes Marx writing to his fellow German exile Joseph Weydemeyer in 1852 using the terminology in this way, saying that his only truly original contribution to revolutionary theory was to argue: “(1) that the *existence of classes* is bound up with *particular, historical phases in the development of production . . .* (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the *dictatorship of the proletariat*, [and] (3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the *abolition of all classes* and to a *classless society*.”²² Although Marx is not speaking directly of the capitalist state in this passage, the parallel with Engels’s formulations, as constructed in chapter 1 of *State and Revolution*, are clear.

Now we can clearly see Marx’s triple leap, which Lenin reconstructs in this chapter. Marx first jumps from the need to “substitute” a classless society in place of capitalism to an assertion that only a working-class revolution can accomplish this; second, he jumps from the abstract necessity of this revolution to its specific task of smashing the capitalist state; third, he points out the general form of revolutionary social organization that must replace the broken capitalist state: the dictatorship of the proletariat. For Lenin, this entire process must be understood. “A Marxist is one who *extends* the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*.”²³ In other words, Lenin believes that it is all well and good to support the class struggle of workers against the capitalists, but if one does not support the workers *winning* that struggle, defeating the capitalists, and organizing a revolutionary government, then that is *not* Marxism, it is what he calls opportunism. This is precisely what he lays at Kautsky’s door at the end of chapter 2, where he added a brief section in the 1919 edition in response to Kautsky sharp rebuke of Bolshevik practices, titled *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (1918).

22. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 25, 416.

23. *Ibid.*, 417.

Chapter 3: The Experience of the Paris Commune of 1871

For almost twenty years after the defeat of the 1848 revolutions, Marx and Engels wrote very little on the question of the state. They returned to it in 1871 in the wake of the Paris Commune, when they made the only substantial change to the *Manifesto* they ever thought necessary. In the preface to the 1872 edition, they wrote 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.”²⁴ What happened during the Commune that was so important as to warrant this change to the *Manifesto*? As Marx wrote in *The Civil War in France* (1871), the Commune 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 labor could be accomplished.”²⁵ In other words, following from chapter 2, it was Marx’s final “leap,” whereby he moved from seeing an abstract necessity for some hazy form of the dictatorship of the proletariat (or its synonym, a *revolutionary workers’ state*), to its concrete form: the Paris Commune.

But what was the Commune? Lenin does an excellent job of describing the political conclusions which Marx draws in *The Civil War*, but it is worth pausing here to emphasize the impact the Commune had on both working-class revolutionaries and capitalists alike. If the Russian and Chinese revolutions and their aftermath dominated the politics of the twentieth century, the Commune stood for almost fifty years as the most inspiring socialist experiment or the most terrifying spasm of chaos imaginable, depending on one’s point of view.²⁶

In September 1870, the self-declared emperor of France, Louis Bonaparte (nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte), and his army were captured by the Prussians in a disastrous battle at Sedan. With the emperor gone, the French

24. Ibid., 419.

25. Ibid., 436.

26. See Donny Gluckstein, *The Paris Commune: A Revolution in Democracy* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011).

National Assembly government sought peace with Germany and promised to implement democratic reforms, but also sought to keep economic power in the hands of the landlords and capitalists who had launched the war in the first place. As the Germans laid siege to Paris throughout the fall of 1870 and into the spring of 1871, the economy collapsed and the Parisian National Guard radicalized. In January 1871, mass protests forced the National Assembly out of Paris and it sought refuge in the old royal palace at Versailles. On March 18, the French government tried to seize cannons in the hands of the Parisian workers, prompting a rebellion of the National Guard, which promptly handed power over to an improvised, democratically elected citywide government, the Paris Commune.

Marx hailed the revolt as an example of genuine workers' revolution. Factories that had been closed by their owners were seized and reopened as workers' cooperatives, with wages paid by the Commune. Elected officials received wages no greater than regular workers and rents were abolished for the duration of the siege. The separation of church and state was declared and, as proof of the Commune's commitment to international proletarian solidarity, a German worker was chosen as the Minister of Labor, even as German troops surrounded the city. Unfortunately, in an equally illuminating display of international bourgeois solidarity, German chancellor Otto von Bismarck freed captive French troops and placed them under the command of the government at Versailles. They were granted safe passage to march across German lines in order to invade Paris and massacre the Commune's defenders. In the bloodbath that followed, French troops murdered thirty thousand *communards*.

It is no exaggeration to say that Lenin envisioned the Russian Revolution as the Paris Commune played out on a grander scale; this time, he was determined it would turn out differently. Recovering the lessons of the Commune lies at the heart of *State and Revolution*. As Lenin writes, "The conclusions drawn from the observation of the last great revolution which Marx lived through were forgotten just when the time for the next great proletarian revolution had arrived."²⁷

27. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 25, 436.

The most important of these conclusions, in addition to the reforms listed above, gets to the very nature of a genuinely revolutionary workers' state. Having smashed the old state machine—in this case, by driving the central French government and its army beyond the gates of Paris—only now could the working class begin to remake society in its own interests and build a new sort of state, a commune-type state, that could protect and organize those interests. Lenin writes, quoting Marx:

The Commune . . . appears to have replaced the smashed state machine “only” by fuller democracy: abolition of the standing army; all officials to be elected and subject to recall. But as a matter of fact this “only” signifies a gigantic replacement of certain institutions by other institutions of a fundamentally different type. This is exactly a case of “quantity being transformed into quality”: democracy, introduced as fully and consistently as is at all conceivable, is transformed from bourgeois into proletarian democracy; from the state (= a special force for the suppression of a particular class) into something which is no longer a state proper.

In this passage, Lenin elegantly draws out the line which Marx connects between the fight for democracy under capitalism and that struggle's relationship with a socialist state. French workers did not have to even be fully conscious that they were organizing something entirely new for it to represent a sharp break with the past. The radical reforms they created transgressed the capitalist state's boundaries, even if they used elements of that now-shattered state to construct an entirely different entity. For instance, Marx explains that the police force was “stripped of its political attributes,” but it was not entirely abolished all at once. Instead the police were transformed into a “responsible and revocable instrument of the Commune” and the extreme democracy upon which its authority rested.²⁸

Even forced to defend themselves against an impending counterrevolution, the invasion of Paris by the national government's army, the nature of this defense and the necessary suppression of the old ruling class was entirely different than in the past. Instead of small groups of “special bodies of armed men” bullying the vast majority of the population in the

28. *Ibid.*, 424.

interest of the ruling elite, now the tables are turned and the revolutionary state, the dictatorship of the proletariat, becomes simply a democratic “instrument” in the hands of the working-class population. As the *specialization* of force, politics, and power is taken out of the hands of a privileged minority of the population and transferred to the vast majority, the state, as it has been conceived of since the rise of class society thousands of years ago and as described by Engels in chapter 1, begins to die, to wither away. Writing in 1891, in a new preface to Marx’s *Civil War* calculated to infuriate SPD moderates, Engels drove home this point: “Of late, the Social-Democratic philistine has once more been filled with wholesome terror at the phrase: 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.”

This conclusion also takes aim at trends of anarchism inspired by both Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Mikhail Bakunin.²⁹ Lenin writes that while Marx agreed with them on the need to smash the state (although Proudhon, especially, was not always very clear on this and neither man consistently advocated the self-emancipation of the working class), they frankly disagreed about what must replace the defeated capitalist state. Whereas Marx championed the need for the working class and poor peasants to unite in a powerful revolutionary state aimed at, as Lenin put it, “crushing the resistance of the capitalists,”³⁰ Proudhon and Bakunin argued for decentralized structures based on a loosely knit federalist organization. They opposed not only the capitalist state but also the

29. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–65) was an early French critic of capitalism and author of *The Philosophy of Poverty*. He soon clashed with Marx and Engels over economic analysis and political strategy. Proudhon argued that society could be transformed into a loosely federalized conglomeration of rural communities and small workshops based on cooperatives. Mikhail Bakunin (1814–76) was a Russian anarchist and an ideological foe of Marx and Engels who advocated secret plots by an armed minority as a means of sparking revolutions, but criticized the Paris Commune for being overly centralized. He became Marx and Engels’s chief rival in the International Workingmen’s Association, from which he was expelled in 1872.

30. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 25, 434.

dictatorship of the proletariat, as just another authoritarian institution—no matter how democratic it was for the oppressed and no matter how necessary to defend the revolution. While Lenin does not spend a great deal of space dealing with anarchism with regard to the Paris commune (concentrating most of his fire on Kautsky's reformist timidity), the political point is central to his argument.

Chapter 4: Supplementary Explanations by Engels

In Chapter 4, Lenin turns his attention to precisely these inadequacies in anarchist theories of the state and revolution while showing how Kautsky and official Social Democracy sought to use those shortcomings as a screen to shield their own betrayal of Marx's theory of working-class revolution. This chapter is quite challenging, as it refers to a whole series of little-known events and controversies in SPD history, but Lenin's points are simple enough to grasp once we understand the radical distinction drawn above between a capitalist state and a working-class state—and the necessity of revolution that lies between them.

Lenin states that it was “becoming increasingly common with the social-chauvinists”—that is, prowar, nationalistic socialists—“to accuse the internationalists”—revolutionary, antiwar socialists—“of anarchism.”³¹ Why? Because Lenin and his comrades, according to Kautsky and company, preached the “abolition of the state.” In fact, as Lenin demonstrates in previous chapters, many mainstream European socialist leaders had come to see their road to power as running through the capitalist state, not as smashing it by means of revolution. Thus, for them, advocating Marx's stated position about the need to smash the capitalist state constituted anarchism. Eduard Bernstein, to his credit, simply renounced any allegiance to Marx and Engels's revolutionary political strategies and openly adopted a policy of reforming the German state. But others followed a more elusive strategy.

Lenin starts to unwind all this by reviewing articles that Marx and Engels wrote during a controversy with some Italian anarchists in the

31. *Ibid.*, 440.

years after the Paris Commune but that were not published widely in Germany until 1913. Engels chides these anarchists for believing that a revolution against capitalism could immediately abolish all political authority, writing:

Have these gentleman 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. . . . 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?³²

This criticism flows from Marx and Engels's whole argument about the need for a period before the final and complete abolition of class society in which a workers' state, or the dictatorship of the proletariat, will be needed. Lenin explains that Marx and Engels do so because "the anarchist idea of revolution is muddled and *non-revolutionary*. . . . It is precisely the revolution in its rise and development, with its specific tasks in relation to violence, authority, power, the state, that anarchists refuse to see." This ought not to be surprising for anyone familiar with Marx and Engels's published works during these years. However, as SPD leaders came to link their strategies ever more closely to the body of the German capitalist state and their positions within that state, they came to use these arguments against the anarchists in the most peculiar fashion. "The usual criticism of anarchism by present-day Social Democrats has boiled down to the purest philistine banality," writes Lenin. "We recognize the state, whereas the anarchists do not! Naturally, such banality cannot but repel workers who are at all capable of thinking and revolutionary-minded."³³

Lenin finds more evidence of this dynamic at work in critiques Engels offered of both the 1875 Gotha SPD party program and its revision

32. Ibid., 443.

33. Ibid.

in Erfurt in 1891. In each case, Engels is concerned to emphasize his hostility to any tendency for socialists to accept the capitalist state as an appropriate mechanism for socialist transformation. Writing in 1875 on behalf of himself and Marx, he states, “We would therefore propose replacing *state* everywhere by *Gemeinwesen*, a good old German word which can very well take the place of the French word *commune*.”³⁴ Sixteen years later in 1891, Engels again warned party leaders not to pass over the idea of smashing the state. Given that the SPD had only recently been legalized, Engels recognized that it was still strictly forbidden to openly call for the overthrow of the Prussian king or to advocate for a democratic republic. “Nevertheless,” he argues,

somehow or other, the thing has to be attacked. How necessary this is is shown precisely at the present time by opportunism, which is gaining ground in a large section of the Social Democratic press. Fearing a renewal of the Anti-Socialist Law, or recalling all manner of overhasty pronouncements made during the reign of that law, they [the opportunists] now want the Party to find the present legal order in Germany adequate for putting through all Party demands by peaceful means.³⁵

Since Engels died in 1895, Lenin rightly calls this essay the “last word of Marxism on the question under consideration.”³⁶ Here he emphasizes that 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.”³⁷ Designed to cut against the same opportunistic coming-to-terms with the existing German state, Engels made no friends in the SPD bureaucracy with these remarks.

34. *Ibid.*, 445.

35. *Ibid.*, 449.

36. *Ibid.*, 454.

37. *Ibid.*, 458.

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

Chapter 5 is in many ways the most remarkable section of the book. Basing himself on Marx's 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Lenin works Marx's critical notes on the unification program between his supporters and those of Ferdinand Lassalle into a clearly spelled-out framework for the transition between capitalism and communism. He begins by repeating the dynamic with which we are now familiar: a successful workers' revolution replaces the hostile capitalist state with its own workers state, which then withers away. Clearly delineating the forms of democracy inherent in both state forms is crucial, so Lenin sets out to explain the severe restrictions placed upon it under capitalism. "Freedom in capitalist society," he argues, "always remains approximately the same as in the ancient Greek republics: freedom for the slave-owners." His description of these limits rings true today, especially in the United States, writing that "Marx grasped this *essence* of capitalist democracy . . . the oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representative of the oppressing class shall represent and repress them in parliament!"³⁸

Thus, if democratic reforms can be won under capitalism, at least temporarily, the ruling class's domination of the state and its legal system, its access to vast fortunes to buy and sell politicians, and the fact that it can resort to its monopoly over the use of force (the police, army, jails, etc.) if democracy begins to threaten its privileges, all draw a very sharp limit to how far working-class movements for reform can progress before running into the question of state power. If workers can break through this repressive shell, then and only then, Lenin argues, can they create a new state based on their own class power that will represent "an immense expansion of democracy which *for the first time* becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the rich."³⁹

Yet smashing the capitalist state is just the first step. While a successful revolution must defend itself against capitalist restoration in an immediate

38. *Ibid.*, 466.

39. *Ibid.*, 466.

sense, a whole period, which may last some years or decades, commences which Lenin calls (following Marx), the “first phase of communism” or, alternatively, *socialism*. Here, the working class and the oppressed democratically decide on economic priorities based on their common ownership or control over the economy. The lingering effects of capitalist inequality are still felt, however, since socialism “has just emerged into the light of day out of the womb of capitalism and . . . is in every respect stamped with the birthmarks of the old society.” Lenin then shows how Marx believes that “equal rights” will govern this society but that rights are still, in fact, a sign of inequality and of capitalism’s narrowing down of human capacity.

This may seem strange at first. But compare how we think about breathing air versus getting a job. Because air (at least for the time being) is free and available without restrictions to all, we do not conceive of taking each breath as a right. However, since jobs are scarce, unemployment is high, and people of color, women, and LGBTQ people face discrimination, we still have to speak of fighting for our rights to get a job. So long as there are shortages and inequalities under socialism inherited from capitalism, we will still have to think of jobs, health care, education, etc., as rights: that is, as things to which economic reality restricts our free access and which we must therefore distribute as equally as possible, according to how we conceive of an individual or group having a right to them. “The first phase of communism,” Lenin writes, “therefore, cannot yet provide justice and equality: differences, and unjust differences, in wealth will persist.” The injustice of the means of production being privately owned can be surmounted in this period, but society would still not be able to eliminate “the other injustice, which consists in the distribution of consumer goods . . . according to need.”⁴⁰

Only under *communism*, or the “higher phase of communism,” can a truly human society finally take root. The expropriation of the means of production—that is, placing the economy under the democratic control of the working class—will allow “the productive forces to develop to a tremendous extent.” This in turn will permit ending the “antithesis

40. Ibid., 471.

between mental and physical labor,” one of the “principal sources of modern *social* inequality.”⁴¹ In other words, humanity will achieve full liberation not based solely on the equal distribution of the current resources but on revolutionizing the economy by abolishing the age-old oppression of the working majority by the exploiting minority. In such a society, the state, even the revolutionary workers’ state, withers away because there are no ex-capitalists to suppress, no food shortages to police, and no systematic motivation for one part of society to attempt to lord over another. What then will guide such a society? Lenin argues:

Only habit can, and undoubtedly will, have such an effect; for there are millions of times that we see around us how easily people become accustomed to observing the necessary rules of social intercourse when there is no exploitation, when there is nothing that rouses indignation, nothing that calls forth protest and revolt and creates the need for suppression.⁴²

It is worth pondering this statement carefully. It is a radical vision of society in which all vestiges of *state authority* vanish, replaced by cooperation, common courtesy, and habit. It is all premised on the idea that, once liberated from exploitation and oppression in a society based on the pursuit of satisfying psychological, emotional, artistic, and social desires instead of the dull pursuit of profit, humanity can restore what Marx once called our *species-being*, or essence, and enter a golden age of creativity. This expectation is not based on a utopian desire that people will simply be nicer to each other in the future, but on the premise that placing social cooperation at the heart of a technologically advanced society free from class rule will remove the greatest sources of human conflict (hunger, want, unemployment, restrictions on access to education, health care, art, etc.), thereby providing the *material* basis for this development. In short, even the conception of rights will be overcome as abundance and cooperation allow humanity to conceive of access to education, health care, meaningful work, art, music, and more just as we today conceive of breathing air: as something that just comes naturally.

41. *Ibid.*, 473.

42. *Ibid.*, 467.

Chapter 6: The Vulgarization of Marxism

Shifting gears, in chapter 6, Lenin employs 20/20 hindsight to explain why Kautsky was never really as revolutionary as he seemed before World War I, even if Lenin did not then notice his deficiencies. He does so by tracing Kautsky's tendency to defend Marx and Engels's commitment to revolution without ever quite committing himself to the central idea that the capitalist state must be smashed. I have outlined aspects of this above, so I will simply comment on two of Lenin's examples here.

In his *Evolutionary Socialism*, Bernstein junks most of Marx and Engels's economic and political positions, advocating in their place a gradualist path to socialism that would eliminate any need for revolutionary upheavals, which he dismisses as outmoded. But as he does so, he seeks to portray himself as simply taking the next logical step implied in their lives' work. He goes so far as to even quote Marx and Engels's 1872 preface revision to the *Manifesto*, where they state that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes." We have seen that by this Marx meant that it was necessary to smash the state machinery and replace it with the dictatorship of the proletariat. Incredibly, Bernstein draws exactly the opposite conclusion, writing that "in all advanced countries we see the privileges of the capitalist bourgeoisie yielding step by step to democratic organizations."⁴³ Kautsky attacks Bernstein's book on many counts, but on the topic of how Marx envisions breaking up the capitalist state he says only that "we can safely leave the solution to the problem of the proletarian dictatorship to the future." Lenin exclaims, and you can really feel how angry he is in this chapter, that "this is not a polemic *against* Bernstein, but, in essence, a *concession* to him."⁴⁴ Why? Because, Lenin explains,

from 1852 to 1891, or for forty years, Marx and Engels taught the proletariat that it must smash the state machine. Yet in 1899, Kautsky, confronted with the complete betrayal of Marxism by the opportunists

43. Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism*, XXVI.

44. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 25, 483.

[Bernstein] on this point, fraudulently substituted for the question whether it is necessary to smash this machine the question of the concrete forms in which it is to be smashed.⁴⁵

As Lenin traces Kautsky's career, he argues that his best work against the opportunists is his book *The Road to Power* (1909), but even here Kautsky emphasizes the need to win positions within the capitalist state (as noted above). And when directly challenged on this question by Dutch revolutionary Anton Pannekoek in an exchange of articles in 1912, Kautsky makes his strategic orientation on transforming the capitalist state from within, *as opposed to* a strategy aimed at smashing it, explicit. Pannekoek states that "the struggle of the proletariat is not merely a struggle against the bourgeoisie *for* state power, but a struggle *against* state power."⁴⁶ Pannekoek then continues on to paraphrase, roughly, the dynamic we are now accustomed to in *State and Revolution*. But this is how Kautsky responds, writing that the object of the mass strike

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 [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.⁴⁷

One can agree with Kautsky or not, but Lenin's contention that Kautsky was developing ideas very different than those Marx and Engels held with regard to the state seems clear.

Events overcame Lenin in August of 1917 and he was never able to conclude chapter 7, which he titled "The Experience of the Revolutions

45. Ibid., 484.

46. Ibid., 488.

47. Ibid., 494.

of 1905 and 1917.” As he wrote in the postscript when the book was published a few weeks after the October Revolution on November 30, 1917, “It is more pleasant and useful to undertake ‘the experience of revolution’ than to write about it.”⁴⁸ However, as I stated above, Lenin’s thinking in *State and Revolution* became flesh in the course of 1917; thus, it is now necessary to briefly examine the path of the Russian Revolution itself.

The Experience of the Russian Revolution

In the days after the 1917 February Revolution overthrew the tsar, Lenin denounced the power grab by a hastily convened Provisional Government comprised of various remnants of the old order and a smattering of liberals and reformist socialists, arguing that even if individual socialist politicians were to rise within it, it “cannot lead the people out of the imperialist war and guarantee peace”⁴⁹ because it “represents the capitalists and landlords and because it is tied to the English and French capitalists.”⁵⁰ On March 7, he first formulated an idea that was to guide Bolshevik practice until the October Revolution, namely that “there has arisen the chief, unofficial, as yet undeveloped and comparatively weak *workers’ government*, which expresses the interests of the proletariat and of the entire poor section of the urban and rural population. This is the *Soviet of Workers’ Deputies* in Petrograd.”⁵¹ From this point on, Lenin explained the conflict in Russia between the workers’, peasants’, and soldiers’ soviets and the Provisional Government as a historical parallel to the struggle between the Paris Commune and the National Assembly at Versailles, even calling Alexander Kerensky, leader of the Provisional Government, “the Russian Louis Blanc” after the French reformist socialist who supported the crushing of the Commune.⁵² These two competing state forms based themselves on dif-

48. *Ibid.*, 497.

49. Lenin, “Draft Theses,” *Collected Works*, vol. 23, 290.

50. *Ibid.*, 288.

51. Lenin, “Letters from Afar, First Letter,” *Collected Works*, vol. 23, 304.

52. Lenin, “Letters from Afar, Second Letter,” *Collected Works*, vol. 23, 316.

ferent classes and could only exist in a temporary condition of what came to be called dual power. Lenin argued to resolve this tension in favor of the working classes, raising his famous slogan, "All Power to the Soviets."

By the fall of 1917, the Provisional Government was clearly losing the battle as more and more workers and dozens of regiments of soldiers swore their allegiance to the soviets. The Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets assembled on October 25 and 26 with a large Bolshevik and Left Socialist Revolutionary majority to hear the news that Kerensky had fled Saint Petersburg in the wake of an uprising of workers and soldiers. If the bourgeoisie had won the battle of dual power in 1871, this time the workers resolved it in their favor. The Congress then voted to appoint a Bolshevik government with Lenin and Leon Trotsky at the head of it. Lenin wrote and read out the first decrees of the new workers' government, translating the ideas detailed in *State and Revolution* into practice.⁵³

Yet within ten years, Stalin had risen to power on the back of an all-powerful bureaucracy. What had gone wrong? Did Stalinism negate Lenin's theory? This is not the place for an in-depth analysis of the early years of the Russian Revolution, but with respect to the topic at hand, the Marxist theory of the state, Lenin's core ideas were proven right, even if only in a limited manner.

The workers' state began as a multiparty democracy for the working class, soldiers, and poor peasants along the lines of the Paris Commune, while the old ruling class was excluded from power. It was, as Lenin put it, "an immense expansion of democracy . . . democracy for the poor, for the people, not for the rich." It set itself four main tasks: ending the war, establishing workers' control in the factories, distributing the land to the peasants, *and* surviving the anticipated counterrevolution. The Bolsheviks made good on their word to bring about a rapid conclusion to the war, signing an armistice with Germany three months after taking power. Far from dictating to all other parties how to make the revolution, the Bolsheviks adopted the Left Socialist Revolutionaries' program for land reform, essentially sanctioning the land seizures then being carried out

53. Lenin, "Second Congress of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies," *Collected Works*, vol. 26 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 247–48.

directly by the poor and middling peasants. Workers joined unions in droves and asserted their power in the factories, driving out managers who refused to submit to democratic control.

All this confirmed Marx and Lenin's prognosis that a revolutionary workers' state would immediately begin to wither away *in the sense that institutions of violence aimed at coercing the majority in the interest of the minority were destroyed or dispersed*. The old state was replaced by the direct participation of the working population in both the suppression of the old exploiters and in the first steps toward reorganizing the economy and society as a whole. The old police forces disappeared. Some individual police went over to the people's side; more of them, especially the officers, retreated behind the reactionaries' lines to join the counterrevolution. The old military and police forces were initially replaced by workers' militias with elected officers. All the old forms of tsarist labor control vanished, racist laws targeting Jews and other national minorities were wiped out, women won the right to vote, abortion was legalized, and homosexuality was decriminalized. Students and teachers took control of their schools from the old administrations, the censorship of literature was ended, and music and artistic expression flourished. All of this added up to a great empowerment of ordinary people and a great assault on class and bureaucratic privilege.

Nonetheless, even as the revolution made progress in fulfilling its first three promises (and many more besides), the fourth, *self-defense*, quickly placed severe limits on this process. While workers across Europe responded enthusiastically to the October Revolution, capitalism in Western Europe withstood the onslaught. The final collapse of the German Revolution in 1923 left Russia isolated and unable to rebuild from the terrible destruction of World War I.⁵⁴ By 1919 the population of Saint Petersburg had been reduced to less than a million people, compared to the prewar count of two and a half million. Making matters worse, the Allied powers funded a long and bitter counterrevolutionary civil war led by the so-called Whites, leaving millions more dead from fighting and famine.

54. For a general discussion of the conditions of the Russian Civil War and the Bolsheviks' response, see John Rees, *In Defense of October* (London: Bookmarks, 1997).

The trauma of these years broke the Russian working class. By 1921, Lenin would go so far as to argue that the working class, “owing to the war and to the desperate poverty and ruin, has become declassed, i.e., dislodged from its class groove, and has ceased to exist as a proletariat.”⁵⁵ The withering away of the state had *reversed*. In place of local working-class militias organizing themselves, the Bolsheviks were forced to professionalize the Red Army. In place of vibrant democracy and frequent elections, famine and unemployment discouraged political participation. In place of a multiparty state with competing parties, the other political parties turned on the Bolsheviks and were in turn banned under the exigencies of civil war. The material conditions for a healthy workers’ state were destroyed. Antidemocratic measures initially justified as wartime necessities mutated into virtues as the revolutionaries grimly hung on for dear life.

From the ashes of the revolution, Josef Stalin built a new bureaucracy. He carried out a counterrevolution that destroyed the last vestiges of workers’ power and replaced the revolutionary workers’ state that Lenin had outlined in *State and Revolution* with a state whose sole aim was to increase the exploitation of the Russian working class in order to compete militarily with Russia’s rivals in Western Europe, thereby re-imposing the logic of exploitation. Far from “withering away,” Stalin’s monstrous state developed more and more grotesque features. In order to accomplish this task, by the mid-1930s, Stalin had killed or exiled virtually every member of the 1917 Bolshevik leadership aside from Lenin, who only escaped this fate by suffering a debilitating stroke in 1922 and dying in January 1924. In place of a dictatorship *of* the proletariat, Stalin organized a dictatorship *over* the proletariat.

Conclusion: Coming Back Around Again

State and Revolution provides a framework for understanding the power of capitalist states as well as a strategic orientation on the necessity of breaking free of their limits. But to do so, we must do for Lenin what

55. Lenin, “The New Economic Policy and the Tasks of the Political Education Departments,” *Collected Works*, vol. 33 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 60–79.

he sought to do for Marx; that is, *reestablish* an accurate understanding of his ideas. In the broadest terms, Lenin warns of two equally harmful mistakes. First, the social-democratic notion that “ready-made state machines” can be taken over from capitalism more or less intact and used to redistribute wealth, eradicate racism, and save the planet are all dangerous illusions. Searching in vain for a peaceful path to socialism, Salvador Allende and thousands of Chilean workers lost their lives to General Augusto Pinochet’s death squads in 1973. And the military coup in Egypt in July 2013 demonstrated that generals will not respect any election or popular upheaval that threatens their control of the so-called “deep state” and the economic fortunes it defends. Lenin overwhelmingly concentrates his fire against this naive hope that the rulers will respect democracy. However, he also warns that the anarchist assumption that the struggle to defend a successful revolution and the vastly complex transition from capitalism to socialism (and eventually to communism) can be secured without a new sort of state fit to those tasks, based on the democratic power of the working class, is wishful thinking. Of course, these poles only mark the theoretical perimeters; the whole art of politics consists in knowing how to operate on the field whose boundaries they mark.

State and Revolution does not provide ready-made answers to all the questions that confound the struggle for social change today. For instance, Lenin focuses his study on institutions of state coercion and violence and the need to disperse those entities through mass action, but only addresses in passing the power of modern capitalist states’ economic, ideological, and cultural arms, to name a few. Of course, he could only glimpse the barest outlines of the tremendous growth of the state today and its insertion into ever-broader areas of society—for example, the provision of public education and Social Security and the vast growth of the civil-service workforce and bureaucracy. These transformations, and a whole host of historical experience since Lenin’s day, have produced a rich debate about how to understand state power.

In the immediate aftermath of the Russian Revolution a global organization of revolutionaries, the Communist International, took up the

question of how to confront the more firmly rooted Western European states, debating, for instance, whether or not there could be temporary, halfway steps between a capitalist state and a workers' state in the so-called "workers' government debates" that centered around Germany in 1921 and 1922. The Italian communist leader Antonio Gramsci, from inside the cell where the fascists had caged him, greatly expanded upon Lenin's narrow focus on state power as consisting of "special bodies of armed men" by introducing the concept of hegemony, as well as the distinction between the "war of position" and the "war of maneuver" for the working class. The development of the Stalinist Popular Front against fascism in the 1930s, in which communist parties pledged loyal opposition to liberal ruling-class allies, raised the question of state power and revolution, especially during the Spanish Civil War. And, of course, Stalin's rise to power and the subsequent spread of copycat regimes in Eastern Europe posed the question of how to understand states that shared all the attributes of the repressive apparatuses found in the West, yet declared themselves to be workers' or socialist states.

The wave of decolonization struggles in Africa, India, China, Cuba, Vietnam, and elsewhere after World War II as well as working-class and social rebellions in France, Italy, Portugal, Chile, and Nicaragua in the 1960s and 1970s all revitalized this debate. Today, the global economic crisis, increasing inter-imperialist rivalries, and the revolutionary processes developing as this is being written in Egypt, Venezuela, and Greece draw our attention once again to state power. Over the last fifty years, theorists such as Hal Draper, Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, Nicolas Poulantzas, Ralph Miliband, Vivek Chibber, George Ciccariello-Maher, and others have returned to Lenin time and again, either to build on his main conclusions or to modify or overturn them.

Alongside these long-running international debates, there has been an explosion in research by scholars such as Angela Davis, Michael Omi, Howard Winant, Mae Ngai, Justin Akers-Chacón, Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Kelly Lytle Hernandez, Chris Williams, Margot Canaday, and Chandan Reddy, to name just a few, exploring how the American state has shaped, among other things, race and racism, immigration and the

border, markets, the environment, and gender and sexuality. On top of all this, an intensifying attack on the public sector, from teachers to transportation workers, means that the class struggle is taking center stage within the bounds of the state itself, or at least at its outer edges. Decades of war, bailouts for the banks, police repression of Occupy and other social movements, and the growth of what Michelle Alexander calls the New Jim Crow, have all pushed activists to seek out the roots of the institutions of power that suffocate our lives.

Whatever else has changed, the state remains the guardian of a system that imprisons the vast majority of the world's population in back-breaking and degrading poverty while a tiny minority concentrates political, military, and economic power in its grasp. It is no good to simply repeat the truism that "conditions are different" in order to dismiss the relevance of the ideas of those who have come before us. A successful strategy for building a better world must be based on organization and action, but it must also be based on historical knowledge, political principles, and revolutionary theory. Lenin's ideas provide irreplaceable building blocks for understanding the power of the states we all live under today, as well as a set of concrete ideas about how to overcome these "perfected machines," as Marx called them. We ignore them at our own peril.

The State and Revolution

The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution

Printed according to the pamphlet text published by Kommunist Publishers in 1919 and verified with the manuscript and the 1918 edition.

Preface to the First Edition

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 hinterlands¹—are becoming military convict prisons for the workers.

The unprecedented horrors and miseries of the protracted war are making the people's position unbearable and increasing their anger. The world proletarian revolution is clearly maturing. The question of its relation to the state is acquiring practical importance.

The elements of opportunism that accumulated over the decades of comparatively peaceful development have given rise to the trend of social chauvinism which dominates the official socialist parties throughout the world. This trend—socialism in words and chauvinism² in deeds (Plekhanov, Potresov, Breshkovskaya, Rubanovich, and, in a slightly veiled form, Tsereteli, Chernov, and company in Russia; Scheidemann, Legien, David, and others in Germany; Renaudel, Guesde, and Vandervelde in France and Belgium; Hyndman and the Fabians in England, etc., etc.)³—is conspicuous for the base, servile adaptation of the “leaders

1. “The situation at home—away from the front”: according to Robert Service's 1991 translation. V. I. Lenin, *State and Revolution*, trans. and ed. Robert Service (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 3. See “A Note on Translation and Annotation.”

2. That is, support for one's own state's nationalism or patriotism.

3. This list of names represents many of the best-known leaders of the Second International, the pre-war international coalition of (mainly) European socialist parties, who supported their own governments during WWI. See the glossary for details.

of socialism” to the interests not only of “their” national bourgeoisie but of “their” state, for the majority of the so-called Great Powers have long been exploiting and enslaving a whole number of small and weak nations. And the imperialist war is a war for the division and redivision of this kind of booty. The struggle to free the working people from the influence of the bourgeoisie in general, and of the imperialist bourgeoisie in particular, is impossible without a struggle against opportunist prejudices concerning the “state.”

First of all, we examine Marx and Engels’s theory of the state, and dwell in particular detail on those aspects of this theory which are ignored or have been distorted by the opportunists. Then we deal specially with the one who is chiefly responsible for these distortions, Karl Kautsky, the best-known leader of the Second International (1889–1914),⁴ which has met with such miserable bankruptcy in the present war. Last, we sum up the main results of the experience of the Russian revolutions of 1905 and particularly of 1917. Apparently, the latter is now (early August 1917) completing the first stage of its development, but this revolution as a whole can only be understood as a link in a chain of socialist proletarian revolutions being caused by the imperialist war. The question of the relation of the socialist proletarian revolution to the state, therefore, is not only acquiring practical political importance, but also raises 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.

The Author
August 1917

4. Lenin dates the Second International from its founding in 1889 to 1914, the date he considers its death because of its leadership supporting the First World War. However, the Second International lived on after the founding of the pro-Bolshevik Third International in 1919, and continues to function to this day.

Preface to the Second Edition

The present, second edition is published virtually unaltered, except that section 3 has been added to chapter 2.

The Author

Moscow

December 17, 1918

Chapter 1

Class Society and the State

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

What is now happening to Marx's theory has, in the course of history, happened repeatedly to the theories of revolutionary thinkers and leaders of oppressed classes fighting for emancipation. During the lifetimes 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 deaths attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonize them, so to speak, 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 vulgarizing it. Today, the bourgeoisie and the opportunists within the labor movement concur in this doctoring of Marxism. They omit, obscure, or distort the revolutionary side of this theory, its revolutionary soul. They push to the foreground and extoll what is or seems acceptable to the bourgeoisie. All the social chauvinists are now "Marxists" (don't laugh!). And more and more frequently German bourgeois scholars, only yesterday specialists in the annihilation of Marxism, are speaking of the "national-German" Marx, who, they claim, educated the labor unions which are so splendidly organized for the purpose of waging a predatory war!

In these circumstances, in view of the unprecedentedly widespread distortion of Marxism, our prime task is to *re-establish* what Marx really taught on the subject of the state. This will necessitate a number of long quotations from the works of Marx and Engels themselves. Of course, long quotations will render the text cumbersome and not help at all to make it popular reading, but we cannot possibly dispense with them. All, or at any rate all the most essential passages, in the works of Marx and Engels on the subject of the state must by all means be quoted as fully as possible so that the reader may form an independent opinion of the totality of the views of the founders of scientific socialism and of the evolution of those views, so that their distortion by the “Kautskyism”¹ now prevailing may be documentarily proved and clearly demonstrated.

Let us begin with the most popular of Engels’s works, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, the sixth edition of which was published in Stuttgart as far back as 1884.² We shall have to translate the quotations from the German originals, as the Russian translations, while very numerous, are for the most part either incomplete or very unsatisfactory.

Summing up his historical analysis, Engels says:

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.³

1. See the introduction to this edition for a discussion of Kautsky and Kautskyism.

2. In both the *Collected Works* and Robert Service versions, 1894 is taken from Lenin, but Engels published *Origin* in 1884. I have corrected the date in the text here.

3. The page references noted as Lenin’s, here and throughout, are in Lenin’s original text from the German version cited. Here Lenin cites pages 177–78 of the sixth German

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.

It is on this most important and fundamental point that the distortion of Marxism, proceeding along two main lines, begins.

On the one hand, the bourgeois, and particularly the petit-bourgeois, ideologists, compelled under the weight of indisputable historical facts to admit that the state only exists where there are class antagonisms and a class struggle, “correct” Marx in such a way as to make it appear that the state is an organ for the *reconciliation* of classes. According to Marx, the state could neither have arisen nor maintained itself had it been possible to reconcile classes. From what the petit-bourgeois and philistine professors and publicists say, with quite frequent and benevolent references to Marx, it appears that the state does reconcile classes. 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” that legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between classes. In the opinion of the petit-bourgeois politicians, however, order means the reconciliation of classes and not the oppression of one class by another; to alleviate the conflict means reconciling classes and not depriving the oppressed classes of definite means and methods of struggle to overthrow the oppressors.

For instance, when, in the revolution of 1917, the question of the significance and role of the state arose in all its magnitude as a practical question demanding immediate action and, moreover, action on a mass scale, as all the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks descended at once to the petit-bourgeois theory that the “state” “reconciles” classes. Innumerable

edition. Available in a slightly different translation in Robert Tucker, ed., *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 752.

resolutions and articles by politicians of both these parties are thoroughly saturated with this petit-bourgeois and philistine “reconciliation” theory. That the state is an organ of the rule of a definite class that *cannot* be reconciled with its antipode (the class opposite to it) is something the petit-bourgeois democrats will never be able to understand. Their attitude to the state is one of the most striking manifestations of the fact that our Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks⁴ are not socialists at all (a point we Bolsheviks have always maintained), but petit-bourgeois democrats using near-socialist phraseology.⁵

On the other hand, the “Kautskyite” distortion of Marxism is far more subtle. “Theoretically,” it is not denied that the state is an organ of class rule or that class antagonisms are irreconcilable. But what is overlooked or glossed over is this: if the state is the product of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms, if it is a power standing *above* society and “*alienating itself more and more* from it,” it is clear that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution, *but also without the destruction* of the apparatus of state power, which was created by the ruling class and which is the embodiment of this “alienation.” As we shall see later, Marx very explicitly drew this theoretically self-evident conclusion on the strength of a concrete historical analysis of the tasks of the revolution. And—as we shall show in detail further on—it is this conclusion that Kautsky has “forgotten” and distorted.

4. The Socialist Revolutionary and Menshevik parties were parties that contained both reformist and revolutionary wings, all of whom opposed the tsar and advocated democratic reforms for peasants, students, and workers. However, the central leadership of both of these parties opposed the October Revolution. Their moderation led to splits in both parties with the bulk of their rank and file and much of their activist base, forming a temporary alliance with the Bolsheviks or at least maintaining passive support for them in order to overthrow the Provisional Government.

5. Throughout the book, Lenin frequently uses the terms “petit-bourgeois” and “philistine” (referring to a biblical tribe to which nineteenth-century German writers ascribed anti-intellectual traits) to refer in a derogatory manner to political trends among democrats or socialists whom he believed sometimes used revolutionary phrases but either wanted to simply reform capitalism or had no real strategy to confront it effectively.

2. Special Bodies of Armed Men, Prisons, Etc.

Engels continues:

As distinct from the old gentile [tribal or clan] order,⁶ the state, first, divides its subjects *according to territory*. . . .

This division seems “natural” to us, but it costs a prolonged struggle against the old organization according to generations or tribes. . . .

The second distinguishing feature is the establishment of a *public power* which no longer directly coincides with the population organizing itself as an armed force. This special, public power is necessary because a self-acting armed organization of the population⁷ 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 society knew nothing.⁸

Engels elucidates the concept of the “power” that is called the state, a power that arose from society but places itself above it and alienates itself more and more from it. What does this power mainly consist of? It consists of special bodies of armed men having prisons, etc., at their command.

We are justified in speaking of special bodies of armed men⁹ because the public power that is an attribute of every state “does not directly coincide” with the armed population, with its “self-acting armed organization.”

Like all great revolutionary thinkers, Engels tries to draw the attention of the class-conscious workers to what prevailing philistinism regards as least worthy of attention, as the most habitual thing, hallowed by prejudices that are not only deep-rooted but, one might say, petrified. A standing army and police are the chief instruments of state power. But how can it be otherwise?

6. That is, pre-class societies.

7. This does not mean that all people walk around armed all the time, simply that no special group has a monopoly on access to weapons and the right to carry or use them.

8. Engels, *Origin of the Family*, 752–53.

9. Lenin consistently uses the phrase “special bodies of armed men” and writes as if it is a quote taken directly from Engels, but it is really a combination of the phrases quoted above from Engels.

From the viewpoint of the vast majority of Europeans of the end of the nineteenth century, whom Engels was addressing and who had not gone through or closely observed a single great revolution, it could not have been otherwise. They could not understand at all what a “self-acting armed organization of the population” was. When asked why it became necessary to have special bodies of armed men placed above society and alienating themselves from it (police and a standing army), the Western European and Russian philistines are inclined to utter a few phrases borrowed from Spencer or Mikhailovsky¹⁰ to refer to the growing complexity of social life, the differentiation of functions, and so on.

Such a reference seems “scientific” and effectively lulls the ordinary person to sleep by obscuring the important and basic fact, namely, the split of society into irreconcilable antagonistic classes.

Were it not for this split, the “self-acting armed organization of the population” would differ from the primitive organization of a stick-wielding herd of monkeys, or of primitive men, or of men united in clans, by its complexity, its high technical level, and so on. But such an organization would still be possible.

It is impossible because civilized society is split into antagonistic and, moreover, irreconcilably antagonistic classes whose “self-acting” arming would lead to an armed struggle between them.¹¹ A state arises, a special power is created, special bodies of armed men, and every revolution, by destroying the state apparatus, shows us the naked class struggle, clearly shows us how the ruling class strives to restore the special bodies of armed men that serve *it* and how the oppressed class strives to create a new organization of this kind, capable of serving the exploited instead of the exploiters.

In the above argument, Engels raises theoretically the very same question which every great revolution raises before us in practice, palpably and, what is more, on a scale of mass action, namely, the question of the relationship between “special” bodies of armed men and the “self-

10. Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), nineteenth-century English philosopher and sociologist who coined the term “survival of the fittest.” Nikolai Konstantinovich Mikhailovsky (1842–1904), Russian populist and sociologist.

11. An obvious example is that slave owners could not permit slaves access to weapons.

acting armed organization of the population.” We shall see how this question is specifically illustrated by the experience of the European and Russian revolutions.¹²

But to return to Engels’s exposition.

He points out that sometimes—in certain parts of North America, for example—this public power is weak (he has in mind a rare exception in capitalist society, and those parts of North America in its pre-imperialist days where the free colonists predominated), but that, generally speaking, it grows stronger:

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.¹³

This was written not later than the early nineties of the last century, Engel’s last preface being dated June 16, 1891. The turn toward imperialism—meaning the complete domination of the trusts, the omnipotence of the big banks, a grand-scale colonial policy, and so forth—was only just beginning in France and was even weaker in North America and in Germany. Since then “rivalry in conquest” has taken a gigantic stride, all the more because by the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century the world had been completely divided up among these “rivals in conquest,” i.e., among the predatory Great Powers. Since then, military and naval armaments have grown fantastically and the predatory war of 1914 to 1917 for the domination of the world by Britain or Germany, for the division of the spoils, has brought the “swallowing” of all the forces of society by the rapacious state power close to complete catastrophe.

Engels could, as early as 1891, point to “rivalry in conquest” as one of the most important distinguishing features of the foreign policy of the Great Powers, while the social-chauvinist scoundrels have, ever since

12. In fact, Lenin was never able to include this section in his book.

13. Engels, *Origin of the Family*, 753.

1914 when this rivalry, many times intensified, gave rise to an imperialist war, been covering up the defense of the predatory interests of “their own” bourgeoisie with phrases about “defense of the fatherland,” “defense of the republic and the revolution,” etc.!

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

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

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 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 civilized state may well envy the elder of a clan the “unrestrained respect” of society.

The question of the privileged position of the officials as organs of state power is raised here. The main point indicated is: what is it that places them *above* society? We shall see how this theoretical question was answered in practice by the Paris Commune in 1871 and how it was obscured from a reactionary standpoint by Kautsky in 1912.

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-labor 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.¹⁴

Such were the absolute monarchies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Bonapartism of the First and Second Empires in France, and the Bismarck regime in Germany.

Such, we may add, is the Kerensky government in republican Russia since it began to persecute the revolutionary proletariat, at a moment when, owing to the leadership of the petit-bourgeois democrats, the Soviets have *already* become impotent, while the bourgeoisie is not yet strong enough simply to disperse them.¹⁵

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); second, by means of an “alliance of the government and the Stock Exchange” (France and America).¹⁶

At present, imperialism and the domination of the banks have “developed” into an exceptional art both these methods of upholding and giving effect to the omnipotence of wealth in democratic republics of all descriptions. Since, for instance, in the very first months of the Russian democratic republic, one might say during the honeymoon of the “socialist” SRs and Mensheviks joined in wedlock to the bourgeoisie, in the coalition government Mr. Palchinsky¹⁷ obstructed every measure intended for curbing the capitalists and their marauding practices, their plundering of the state by means of war contracts; and since later on Mr. Palchinsky, upon resigning from the Cabinet (and being, of course, replaced by another quite similar

14. Engels, *Origin of the Family*, 753.

15. This assessment of the Soviets' weakness turned out, of course, to be incorrect, as the October Revolution demonstrated several months after this was written. See the introduction.

16. Engels, *Origin of the Family*, 754.

17. Peter Palchinsky, (1875–1929), aligned with the SR party, was exiled to Siberia after the 1905 revolution. A member of the Provisional Government, he opposed the Bolsheviks, but later worked for the Soviet government in the 1920s before being executed by Stalin in 1929.

Palchinsky), was “rewarded” by the capitalists with a lucrative job with a salary of 120,000 rubles per annum—what would you call that? Direct or indirect bribery? An alliance of the government and the syndicates, or “merely” friendly relations? What role do the Chernovs, Tseretelis, Avksentyevs, and Skobelevs play?¹⁸ Are they the “direct” or only the indirect allies of the millionaire treasury-looters?

The reason why the omnipotence of “wealth” is more *certain* in a democratic republic is that it does not depend on defects in the political machinery or on the faulty political shell of capitalism. A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism and, therefore, once capital has gained possession of this very best shell (through the Palchinskys, Chernovs, Tseretelis, and company), it establishes its power so securely, so firmly that *no* change of persons, institutions, or parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic can shake it.

We must also note that Engels is most explicit in calling universal suffrage an instrument of bourgeois rule. Universal suffrage, he says, obviously taking account of the long experience of German Social-Democracy, is “the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more in the present-day state.”¹⁹

The petit-bourgeois democrats, such as our Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks and also their twin brothers, all the social chauvinists and opportunists of Western Europe, expect just this “more” from universal suffrage. They themselves share, and instill in the minds of the people, the false notion that universal suffrage “in the *present-day* state” is really capable of revealing the will of the majority of the working people and of securing its realization.

Here we can only indicate this false notion, only point out that Engels’s perfectly clear, precise, and concrete statement is distorted at every

18. Members of the Provisional Government: Victor Chernov, SR, Minister of Agriculture; Irakli Tsereteli, Menshevik, Minister of Post and Telegraph; Nikolai Avksentyev, SR, Minister of Internal Affairs; Matvey Skobelev, Menshevik, Minister of Labor.

19. Engels, *Origin of the Family*, 755. Here Engels is not opposed to universal suffrage; rather, he argues that *even* universal suffrage does not mean real political equality for the working class because the capitalists use their wealth to dominate the state.

step in the propaganda and agitation of the “official” (i.e., opportunist) socialist parties. A detailed exposure of the utter falsity of this notion, which Engels brushes aside here, is given in our further account of the views of Marx and Engels on the “*present-day*” state.

Engels gives a general summary of his views in the most popular of his works in the following words:

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 reorganize 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.²⁰

We do not often come across this passage in the propaganda and agitation literature of the present-day Social Democrats. Even when we do come across it, it is mostly quoted in the same manner as one bows before an icon, i.e., it is done to show official respect for Engels and no attempt is made to gauge the breadth and depth of the revolution that this relegating of “the whole machinery of state to a museum of antiquities” implies. In most cases we do not even find an understanding of what Engels calls the state machine.

4. The “Withering Away” of the State, and Violent Revolution

Engel’s words regarding the “withering away” of the state are so widely known, they are so often quoted, and they so clearly reveal the essence of the customary adaptation of Marxism to opportunism that we must

20. Engels, *Origin of the Family*, 755.

deal with them in detail. We shall quote the whole argument from which they are taken.

The proletariat seizes 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 organization 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-labor). 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 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. (*Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science [Anti-Dühring]*, 301–303, third German edition)²¹

21. Lenin translates this from the 1878 German version of *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science* cited in the text, but this section is more popularly known as section three from Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880). This passage can

It is safe to say that of this argument of Engels's, which is so remarkably rich in ideas, only one point has become an integral part of socialist thought among modern socialist parties, namely, that according to Marx the state "withers away"—as distinct from the anarchist doctrine of the "abolition" of the state. To prune Marxism to such an extent means reducing it to opportunism, for this "interpretation" only leaves a vague notion of a slow, even, gradual change, of absence of leaps and storms, of absence of revolution. The current, widespread, popular, if one may say so, conception of the "withering away" of the state undoubtedly means obscuring, if not repudiating, revolution.

Such an "interpretation," however, is the crudest distortion of Marxism, advantageous only to the bourgeoisie. In point of theory, it is based on disregard for the most important circumstances and considerations indicated in, say, Engels's "summary" argument we have just quoted in full.

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." It is not considered quite proper to ponder²² over the meaning of this. Generally, it is either ignored altogether or is considered to be something in the nature of a "Hegelian weakness" on Engels's part.²³ 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. According to Engels, the bourgeois state does not "wither away," but is "*abolished*" by

be found in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 713. Eugen Karl Dühring (1833–1921) was a reformist socialist and philosopher who gained a widespread hearing for his ideas in the SPD. Marx and Engels considered him a threat to the revolutionary character of the party.

22. This is Robert Service's translation from V. I. Lenin, *State and Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 17.

23. That is, based on the idealist philosophy of Georg Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), who had a profound impact on both Marx and Engels.

the proletariat in the course of the revolution. What withers away after this revolution is the proletarian state or semistate.

Second, 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). This is precisely what is meant by “abolition of the state as state.” This is precisely the “act” of taking possession of the means of production in the name of society. And it is self-evident that *such* a replacement of one (bourgeois) “special force” by another (proletarian) “special force” cannot possibly take place in the form of “withering away.”

Third, in speaking of the state “withering away” and the even more graphic and colorful “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. We all know that the political form of the “state” at that time is the most complete democracy. But it never enters the head of any of the opportunists, who shamelessly distort Marxism, that Engels is consequently speaking here of *democracy* “dying down of itself” or “withering away.” This seems very strange at first sight. But it is “incomprehensible” only to those who have not thought about democracy *also* being a state and, consequently, also disappearing when the state disappears. Revolution alone can “abolish” the bourgeois state. The state in general, i.e., the most complete democracy, can only “wither away.”

Fourth, 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. In doing this, Engels puts in the forefront that conclusion, drawn from the proposition that “the state withers away,” which is directed against the opportunists.

One can wager that out of every ten thousand people who have read or heard about the “withering away” of the state, 9,990 are completely unaware or do not remember that Engels directed his conclusions from

that proposition *not* against the anarchists *alone*. And of the remaining ten, probably nine do not know the meaning of a “free people’s state” or why an attack on this slogan means an attack on opportunists. This is how history is written! This is how a great revolutionary teaching is imperceptibly falsified and adapted to prevailing philistinism. The conclusion directed against the anarchists has been repeated thousands of times; it has been vulgarized and rammed into people’s heads in the shallowest form and has acquired the strength of a prejudice, whereas the conclusion directed against the opportunists has been obscured and “forgotten!”

The “free people’s state” was a program demand and a catchword current among the German Social Democrats in the 1870s. This catchword is devoid of all political content except that it describes the concept of democracy in a pompous philistine fashion. Insofar as it hinted in a legally permissible manner at a democratic republic, Engels was prepared to “justify” its use “for a time” from an agitational point of view. But it was an opportunist catchword, for it amounted to something more than prettifying bourgeois democracy and was also a failure to understand the socialist criticism of the state in general. We are in favor 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.²⁴

Fifth, 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’s historical analysis of its role becomes a veritable panegyric on violent revolution. This “no one remembers.” It is rare in modern socialist parties to talk or even think about the

24. See Marx and Engels, *Critique of the Gotha Program*, 1875, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Tucker, ed., 537–38. This phrase, “a free people’s state,” was one of the programmatic concessions granted to Lassalle’s supporters by Marx’s supporters at the 1875 unity congress. See the introduction for more on this.

significance of this idea, and it plays no part whatever in their daily propaganda and agitation among the people. And yet it is inseparably bound up with the “withering away” of the state into one harmonious whole.

Here is Engels’s argument:

That force, however, plays yet another role [other than that of a diabolical power]²⁵ 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, fossilized 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 demoralizes, he says, the person who uses it. And this in spite of the immense moral and spiritual impetus which has been given by every victorious revolution! 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.²⁶ 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!²⁷

How can this panegyric²⁸ on violent revolution, which Engels insistently brought to the attention of the German Social Democrats between 1878 and 1894, i.e., right up to the time of his death, be combined with the theory of the “withering away” of the state to form a single theory?

Usually the two are combined by means of eclecticism, by an unprincipled or sophistic selection made arbitrarily (or to please the powers

25. Lenin’s interjection.

26. The Thirty Years’ War (1618–48) was a long series of conflicts that did great damage to Germany’s economy and left it divided into more than 200 mini-states, subject to the growing power of centralized France.

27. Lenin cites Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, third German edition, 193, part II, end of chapter IV. Engels, *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), 220.

28. Homage or celebration.

that be) of first one, then another argument, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, if not more, it is the idea of the “withering away” that is placed in the forefront. Dialectics are replaced by eclecticism²⁹—this is the most usual, the most widespread practice to be met with in present-day official Social-Democratic literature in relation to Marxism. This sort of substitution is, of course, nothing new; it was observed even in the history of classical Greek philosophy. In falsifying Marxism in opportunist fashion, the substitution of eclecticism for dialectics is the easiest way of deceiving the people. It gives an illusory satisfaction; it seems to take into account all sides of the process, all trends of development, all the conflicting influences, and so forth, whereas in reality it provides no integral and revolutionary conception of the process of social development at all.

We have already said above, and shall show more fully later, that Marx and Engels’s theory of the inevitability of a violent revolution refers to the bourgeois state. The latter *cannot* be superseded by the proletarian state (the dictatorship of the proletariat) through the process of “withering away” but, as a general rule, only through a violent revolution. The panegyric Engels sang in its honor, and which fully corresponds to Marx’s repeated statements (see the concluding passages of *The Poverty of Philosophy*³⁰ and *The Communist Manifesto*, with their proud and open proclamation of the inevitability of a violent revolution; see what Marx wrote nearly thirty years later, in criticizing the Gotha Program of 1875, when he mercilessly castigated the opportunist character of that program)—this panegyric is by no means a mere “impulse,” a mere declamation, or a polemical sally. The necessity of systematically imbuing the masses with *this* and precisely this view of violent revolution lies at the root of the *entire* theory of Marx and Engels. The betrayal of their theory by the now prevailing social-chauvinist and Kautskyite trends expresses itself strikingly in both these trends ignoring *such* propaganda and agitation.

29. That is, Marx’s views of history and class struggle are replaced by a hodgepodge of ideas from varying philosophies and political theories.

30. Book by Marx in 1847 dedicated to criticizing the ideas of French anarchist thinker Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.

The suppression 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.”

A detailed and concrete elaboration of these views was given by Marx and Engels when they studied each particular revolutionary situation, when they analyzed the lessons of the experience of each particular revolution. We shall now pass to this, undoubtedly the most important part of their theory.

Chapter 2

The Experience of 1848–51

1. The Eve of Revolution

The first works of mature Marxism—*The Poverty of Philosophy* and *The Communist Manifesto*—appeared just on the eve of the revolution of 1848. For this reason, in addition to presenting the general principles of Marxism, they reflect to a certain degree the concrete revolutionary situation of the time. It will therefore be more expedient, perhaps, to examine what the authors of these works said about the state immediately before they drew conclusions from the experience of the years 1848–51.

In *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx wrote:

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 political power is precisely the official expression of class antagonism in bourgeois society.¹

It is instructive to compare this general exposition of the idea of the state disappearing after the abolition of classes with the exposition contained in *The Communist Manifesto*, written by Marx and Engels a few months later—in November 1847, to be exact:

1. Lenin cites the 1885 German edition, 182. Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 218–19. Originally published in 1847.

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.²

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 centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible.³

Here we have a formulation of one of the most remarkable and most important ideas of Marxism on the subject of the state, namely, the idea of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” (as Marx and Engels began to call it after the Paris Commune)⁴ and, also, a highly interesting definition of the state, which is also one of the “forgotten words” of Marxism: *“the state, i.e., the proletariat organized as the ruling class.”*

This definition of the state has never been explained in the prevailing propaganda and agitation literature of the official Social Democratic parties. More than that, it has been deliberately ignored, for it is absolutely irreconcilable with reformism and is a slap in the face to the common opportunist prejudices and philistine illusions about the “peaceful development of democracy.”

The proletariat needs the state—this is repeated by all the oppor-

2. Lenin cites the 7th German edition (1906), 31. Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 482–83. Originally published in 1848, although Lenin is right about the rough date for when they wrote this passage. Service translates this as “where the proletariat establishes its rule through the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie.” Service, *State and Revolution*, 22.

3. Lenin cites the 7th German edition (1906), 37. Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, 490.

4. Although, as noted in the introduction, Marx did use the phrase in *The Class Struggle in France* (1850) and in his “Letter to Kugelmann” (1852). Emphasis Lenin’s.

tunists, social chauvinists, and Kautskyites, who assure us that this is what Marx taught. But they *“forget”* to add that, in the first place, according to Marx, the proletariat needs only a state that is withering away, i.e., a state constituted so that it begins to wither away immediately and cannot but wither away. And, second, the working people need a “state, i.e., the proletariat organized as the ruling class.”

The state is a special organization of force: it is an organization 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 exploiting classes need political rule to maintain exploitation, i.e., in the selfish interests of an insignificant minority against the vast majority of all people. 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 slaveowners—the landowners and capitalists.

The petit-bourgeois democrats, those sham socialists who replaced the class struggle with dreams of class harmony, even pictured the socialist transformation in a dreamy fashion—not as the overthrow of the rule of the exploiting class, but as the peaceful submission of the minority to the majority that has become aware of its aims. This petit-bourgeois utopia, which is inseparable from the idea of the state being above classes, led in practice to the betrayal of the interests of the working classes, as was shown, for example, by the history of the French revolutions of 1848 and 1871, and by the experience of “socialist” participation in bourgeois cabinets in Britain, France, Italy, and other countries at the turn of the century.⁵

5. Most famously, French socialist Alexandre Millerand’s participation in the French government in 1899 alongside the Marquis de Gallifet, who was one of the butchers of the Paris Commune. Kautsky vehemently opposed Millerand’s actions at the time.

All his life Marx fought against this petit-bourgeois socialism, now revived in Russia by the Socialist Revolutionary and Menshevik parties. He developed his theory of the class struggle consistently, down to the theory of political power, of the state.

The overthrow of bourgeois rule can be accomplished only by the proletariat, the particular class whose economic conditions of existence prepare it for this task and provide it with the possibility and the power to perform it. While the bourgeoisie break up and disintegrate the peasantry and all the petit-bourgeois groups, they weld together, unite, and organize the proletariat. Only the proletariat—by virtue of the economic role it plays in large-scale production—is capable of being the leader of all the working and exploited people whom the bourgeoisie exploit, oppress, and crush, often not less but more than they do the proletarians, but who are incapable of waging an *independent* struggle for their emancipation.

The theory of class struggle, applied by Marx to the question of the state and the socialist revolution, leads as a matter of course to the recognition of the political rule of the proletariat, of its dictatorship, i.e., of undivided power directly backed by the armed force of the people. The overthrow of the bourgeoisie can be achieved only by the proletariat becoming the *ruling class*, capable of crushing the inevitable and desperate resistance of the bourgeoisie, and of organizing *all* the working and exploited people for the new economic system.

The proletariat needs state power, a centralized organization of force, an organization of violence, both to crush the resistance of the exploiters and to *lead* the enormous mass of the population—the peasants, the petit-bourgeoisie, and semi-proletarians—in the work of organizing a socialist economy.

By educating the workers' party, Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat, capable of assuming power and *leading the whole people* to socialism, of directing and organizing the new system, of being the teacher, the guide, the leader of all the working and exploited people in organizing their social life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie. By contrast, the opportunism now prevailing trains

the members of the workers' party to be the 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.

Marx's theory of "the state, i.e., the proletariat organized as the ruling class," is inseparably bound up with the whole of his doctrine of the revolutionary role of the proletariat in history. The culmination of this rule is the proletarian dictatorship, the political rule of the proletariat.

But since the proletariat needs the state as a *special* form of organization of violence *against* the bourgeoisie, the following conclusion suggests itself: Is it conceivable that such an organization can be created without first abolishing and destroying the state machine created by the bourgeoisie *for themselves*? *The Communist Manifesto* leads straight to this conclusion, and it is of this conclusion that Marx speaks when summing up the experience of the revolution of 1848–51.

2. The Revolution Summed Up

Marx sums up his conclusions from the revolution of 1848–51⁶ on the subject of the state which we are concerned with, in the following argument contained in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*:

But the revolution is thoroughgoing. It is still journeying through purgatory. It does its work methodically. By December 2, 1851 [the day of Louis Bonaparte's *coup d'état*], 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*

6. Democratic, antimonarchical revolutions arose all over Europe in 1848 and, although they were generally defeated, the revolutions featured the first widespread participation of the urban proletariat. Marx and Engels returned from exile to play leading roles as organizers and journalists in Germany, only to be forced into exile again.

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 organization, 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.⁷

The first French Revolution developed centralization, “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 centralization 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.⁸

In this remarkable argument, Marxism takes a tremendous step forward compared with *The Communist Manifesto*. In the latter, the question of the state is still treated in an extremely abstract manner, in the most general terms and expressions. In the above-quoted passage, the question is treated in a concrete manner and the conclusion is extremely precise, definite, practical, and palpable: all previous revolutions perfected the state machine, whereas it must be broken, smashed.

7. Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire*, in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 606. Emphasis Lenin's.

8. Emphasis Lenin's. Lenin cites *Eighteenth Brumaire*, 4th edition (Hamburg: 1907), 98–99. Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire*, in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 607. Originally published in 1852. The “18th Brumaire” was a date on the new calendar used during the French Revolution. Napoleon, Louis Bonaparte's uncle, carried out his coup on the 18th of Brumaire in 1799—November 9 by the current calendar.

This conclusion is the chief and fundamental point in the Marxist theory of the state. And it is precisely this fundamental point which has been completely *ignored* by the dominant, official Social Democratic parties and, indeed, *distorted* (as we shall see later) by the foremost theoretician of the Second International, Karl Kautsky.

The *Communist Manifesto* gives a general summary of history that compels us to regard the state as the organ of class rule and leads us to the inevitable conclusion that the proletariat cannot overthrow the bourgeoisie without first winning political power, without attaining political supremacy, without transforming the state into the “proletariat organized as the ruling class,” and that this proletarian state will begin to wither away immediately after its victory because the state is unnecessary and cannot exist in a society in which there are no class antagonisms. The question as to how, from the point of view of historical development, the replacement of the bourgeois by the proletarian state is to take place is not raised here.

This is the question Marx raises and answers in 1852. True to his philosophy of dialectical materialism, Marx takes as his basis the historical experience of the great years of revolution, 1848 to 1851. Here, as everywhere else, his theory is a *summing up of experience*, illuminated by a profound philosophical conception of the world and a rich knowledge of history.

The problem of the state is put specifically: How did the bourgeois state, the state machine necessary for the rule of the bourgeoisie, come into being historically? What changes did it undergo, what evolution did it perform in the course of bourgeois revolutions and in the face of the independent actions of the oppressed classes? What are the tasks of the proletariat in relation to this state machine?

The centralized state power that is peculiar to bourgeois society came into being in the period of the fall of absolutism.⁹ Two institutions most characteristic of this state machine are the bureaucracy and the standing army. In their works, Marx and Engels repeatedly show that the bourgeoisie

9. The centralized European monarchies of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries.

are connected with these institutions by thousands of threads. Every worker's experience illustrates this connection in an extremely graphic and impressive manner. From its own bitter experience, the working class learns to recognize this connection. That is why it so easily grasps and so firmly learns the doctrine that shows the inevitability of this connection, a doctrine that the petit-bourgeois democrats either ignorantly and flippantly deny or, still more flippantly, admit "in general" while forgetting to draw appropriate practical conclusions.

The bureaucracy and the standing army are a "parasite" on the body of bourgeois society—a parasite created by the internal antagonisms that rend that society, but a parasite that "chokes" all its vital pores. The Kautskyite opportunism now prevailing in official Social Democracy considers the view that the state is a *parasitic organism* to be the peculiar and exclusive attribute of anarchism. It goes without saying that this distortion of Marxism is of vast advantage to those philistines who have reduced socialism to the unheard-of disgrace of justifying and prettifying the imperialist war by applying to it the concept of "defense of the fatherland," but it is unquestionably a distortion, nevertheless.

The development, perfection, and strengthening of the bureaucratic and military apparatus proceeded during all the numerous bourgeois revolutions that Europe has witnessed since the fall of feudalism.¹⁰ In particular, it is the petit-bourgeois who are attracted to the side of the big bourgeoisie and are largely subordinated to them through this apparatus, which provides the upper sections of the peasants, small artisans, tradesmen, and the like with comparatively comfortable, quiet, and respectable jobs raising the holders *above* the people. Consider what happened in Russia during the six months following February 27, 1917. The official posts that formerly were given by preference to the Black Hundreds¹¹ have now become the spoils of

10. That is, the replacement of the economic dominance and political power of the European landed aristocracy with that of the urban capitalist class in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

11. Extreme reactionary monarchist gangs organized to carry out extrajudicial attacks on political opponents and ethnic minorities, especially Jews.

the Cadets,¹² Mensheviks, and Social Revolutionaries. Nobody has really thought of introducing any serious reforms. Every effort has been made to put them off “until the Constituent Assembly¹³ meets,” and to steadily put off its convocation until after the war! But there has been no delay, no waiting for the Constituent Assembly, in the matter of dividing the spoils of getting the lucrative jobs of ministers, deputy ministers, governors-general, etc., etc.! The game of combinations that has been played in forming the government has been, in essence, only an expression of this division and redivision of the “spoils” that has been going on above and below, throughout the country, in every department of central and local government. The six months between February 27 and August 27, 1917, can be summed up, objectively summed up beyond all dispute, as follows: reforms shelved, distribution of official jobs accomplished, and “mistakes” in the distribution corrected by a few redistributions.

But the more the bureaucratic apparatus is “redistributed” among the various bourgeois and petit-bourgeois parties (among the Cadets, Socialist Revolutionaries, and Mensheviks, in the case of Russia), the more keenly aware the oppressed classes, and the proletariat at their head, become of their irreconcilable hostility to the *whole* of bourgeois society. Hence the need for all bourgeois parties, even the most democratic and “revolutionary-democratic” among them, to intensify repressive measures against the revolutionary proletariat and to strengthen the apparatus of coercion, that is, the state machine. This course of events compels the revolution “*to concentrate all its forces of destruction*” against the state power and to set itself the aim not of improving the state machine but of *smashing and destroying* it.

It was not logical reasoning but actual developments, the actual experience of 1848–51, that led to the matter being presented in this way. The

12. A Russian liberal party that favored constitutional monarchy.

13. A proposed Russian national congress or assembly elected by universal suffrage that was supposed to have been convened after the February Revolution, but was not elected until after the October Revolution, at which time it was dispersed by the Bolsheviks on the grounds that the soviets were more democratic.

extent to which Marx held strictly to the solid ground of historical experience can be seen from the fact that, 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.

Here the question may arise: is it correct to generalize the experience, observations, and conclusions of Marx, to apply them to a field that is wider than the history of France during the three years from 1848 to 1851? Before proceeding to deal with this question, let us recall a remark Engels made and then examine the facts. In his introduction to the third edition of the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, Engels wrote:

France is the country where, more than anywhere else, the historical class struggles were each time fought out to a finish, and where, consequently, the changing political forms within which they move and in which their results are summarized have been stamped in the sharpest outlines. The center of feudalism in the Middle Ages, the model country, since the Renaissance, of a unified monarchy based on social estates, France demolished feudalism in the Great Revolution and established the rule of the bourgeoisie in a classical purity unequalled by any other European land. And the struggle of the upward-striving proletariat against the ruling bourgeoisie appeared here in an acute form unknown elsewhere.¹⁴

The last remark is out of date insomuch as since 1871 there has been a lull in the revolutionary struggle of the French proletariat, although, long as this lull may be, it does not at all preclude the possibility that in the coming proletarian revolution France may show herself to be the classic country of the class struggle fought to the finish.

Let us, however, cast a general glance over the history of the advanced countries at the turn of the century. We shall see that the same process went on more slowly, in more varied forms, in a much wider

14. Lenin cites *Eighteenth Brumaire*, 4th ed. (1907), 4. Engels, “Preface to the Third Edition,” in Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire*, in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 26 (New York: International Publishers, 1990), 302.

field: on the one hand, the development of “parliamentary power” both in the republican countries (France, America, Switzerland), and in the monarchies (Britain, Germany to a certain extent, Italy, the Scandinavian countries, etc.); on the other hand, a struggle for power among the various bourgeois and petit-bourgeois parties that distributed and redistributed the “spoils” of office, with the foundations of bourgeois society unchanged; and, finally, the perfection and consolidation of the “executive power,” of its bureaucratic and military apparatus.

There is not the slightest doubt that these features are common to the whole of the modern evolution of all capitalist states in general. In the three years from 1848 to 1851, France displayed in a swift, sharp, concentrated form the very same processes of development that are peculiar to the whole capitalist world.

Imperialism—the era of bank capital, of gigantic capitalist monopolies, of the development of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism—has clearly shown an unprecedented growth in its bureaucratic and military apparatus in connection with the intensification of repressive measures against the proletariat, both in the monarchical and in the freest republican countries.

World history is now undoubtedly leading, on an incomparably larger scale than in 1852, to the “concentration of all the forces” of the proletarian revolution on the “destruction” of the state machine.

What the proletariat will put in its place is suggested by the highly instructive material furnished by the Paris Commune.

3. The Presentation of the Question by Marx in 1852¹⁵

In 1907, Mehring,¹⁶ in the magazine *Neue Zeit*,¹⁷ published extracts from

15. This section was first included in the second edition of *State and Revolution*, issued in 1919.

16. Franz Mehring (1846–1919) was a leading left-wing intellectual within the SPD, close to Rosa Luxemburg. He published a well-known biography of Marx in 1918. Mehring supported the Bolshevik Revolution and became one of the central founders of the German Communist Party in 1919.

17. Lenin cites vol. XXV, 2, 164. *Neue Zeit* was a German socialist newspaper edited by Karl Kautsky until World War I, when he was removed as editor for his antiwar views.

Marx's letter to Weydemeyer dated March 5, 1852. This letter, among other things, contains the following remarkable observation:

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*; (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*.¹⁸

In these words, Marx succeeded in expressing with striking clarity, first, the chief and radical difference between his theory and that of the foremost and most profound thinkers of the bourgeoisie, and, second, the essence of his theory of the state.

It is often said and written that the main point in Marx's theory is the class struggle. But this is wrong. And this wrong notion very often results in an opportunist distortion of Marxism and its falsification in a spirit acceptable to the bourgeoisie. For the theory of the class struggle was created *not* by Marx, *but* by the bourgeoisie *before* Marx, and, generally speaking, it is *acceptable* to the bourgeoisie. Those who recognize *only* the class struggle are not yet Marxists; they may be found to be still within the bounds of bourgeois thinking and bourgeois politics. To confine Marxism to the theory of the class struggle means curtailing Marxism, distorting it, reducing it to something acceptable to the bourgeoisie. A Marxist is one who *extends* the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. That is what constitutes the most profound distinction between the Marxist and the ordinary small (as well as big) bourgeois. This is the touchstone on which the *real* understanding and recognition of Marxism should be tested. And it is not surprising that when the history of Europe brought the working class

18. Marx to Joseph Weydemeyer, March 5, 1852. In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 220.

face to face with this question as a *practical* issue, not only all the opportunists and reformists but all the Kautskyites (people who vacillate between reformism and Marxism) proved to be miserable philistines and petit-bourgeois democrats *repudiating* the dictatorship of the proletariat. Kautsky's pamphlet *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, published in August 1918, that is to say long after the first edition of the present book, is a perfect example of petit-bourgeois distortion of Marxism and base renunciation of it *in deeds* while hypocritically recognizing it in words (see my pamphlet *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, Petrograd and Moscow, 1918).¹⁹

Opportunism today, as represented by its principal spokesman, the ex-Marxist Karl Kautsky, fits in completely with Marx's characterization of the *bourgeois* position quoted above, for this opportunism limits recognition of the class struggle to the sphere of bourgeois relations. (Within this sphere, within its framework, not a single educated liberal will refuse to recognize the class struggle "in principle"!) Opportunism *does not extend* recognition of the class struggle to the cardinal point, to the period of *transition* from capitalism to communism, of the *overthrow* and the complete *abolition* of the bourgeoisie. In reality, this period inevitably is a period of an unprecedentedly violent class struggle in unprecedentedly acute forms, and, consequently, during this period the state must inevitably be a state that is democratic *in a new way* (for the proletariat and the propertyless in general) and dictatorial *in a new way* (against the bourgeoisie).

Furthermore, the essence of Marx's theory of the state has been mastered only by those who realize 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. Bourgeois states are most varied in form, but their essence is the same: all these

19. Lenin cites *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (Petrograd and Moscow: 1918). Kautsky's pamphlet is available in the Marxists Internet Archive (www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1918/dictprole/), as is Lenin's. Lenin's is also available in his *Collected Works*, vol. 28.

states, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the *dictatorship of the bourgeoisie*. The transition from capitalism to communism is certainly bound to yield a tremendous abundance and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same: *the dictatorship of the proletariat*.²⁰

20. Lenin does not mean that only workers will enjoy democratic rights after the revolution. As he says in the previous paragraph, the revolution will organize a “state that is democratic in a new way (for the proletariat and the propertyless in general).” Here *propertyless* refers to the means of production, not personal belongings. But how does this square with his contention that only a “single class” can rule? From its position as “ruling class,” the proletariat will be free to make compromises with other oppressed classes and groups (oppressed national groups, students, soldiers, intellectuals, farmers, family businesses, etc.), extending to them much greater democratic participation than they enjoyed under the previous capitalist state, as the Soviet state did for soldiers and poor peasants. The working class, just as the bourgeoisie does today, will simply reserve the right to conduct a struggle to defend the new society, including the power to limit the political rights of those individuals, groups, and/or classes who wish to overturn a workers’ state—in much the same way, for example, that Confederate generals were not permitted to vote or hold office after the American Civil War, during the Radical Reconstruction period. More on this in chapter 5.

Chapter 3

The Experience of the Paris Commune of 1871: Marx's Analysis

1. What Made the Communards' Attempt Heroic?

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. But when, in March 1871, a decisive battle was *forced* upon the workers and they accepted it, when the uprising had become a fact, Marx greeted the proletarian revolution with the greatest enthusiasm, in spite of unfavorable auguries. Marx did not persist in the pedantic attitude of condemning an “untimely” movement as did the ill-famed Russian renegade from Marxism, Plekhanov, who in November 1905 wrote encouragingly about the workers’ and peasants’ struggle but after December 1905 cried, in liberal fashion, “They should not have taken up arms.”¹

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

1. In reference to the Moscow uprising of 1905 when workers took up arms and fought an urban guerrilla war against the tsar's troops until they were put down after much bloodshed. Georgi Plekhanov (1856–1918), brilliant writer and founder of Russian Marxism. He maintained an on-again, off-again alliance with Lenin and the Bolsheviks up until the failed 1905 Revolution. Afterwards, he drifted steadily to the right. He was a strong supporter of Russia in World War I.

a historic experience of enormous importance, a certain advance of the world proletarian revolution, a practical step that was more important than hundreds of programs and arguments. Marx endeavored to analyze this experiment, to draw tactical lessons from it and reexamine his theory in the light of it.

The only “correction” Marx thought it necessary to make to the *Communist Manifesto* he made on the basis of the revolutionary experience of the Paris Communards.

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 Friedrich Engels, say that the program 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.”²

The authors took the words that are in quotation marks in this passage from Marx’s book, *The Civil War in France*.³

Thus, Marx and Engels regarded one principal and fundamental lesson of the Paris Commune as being of such enormous importance that they introduced it as an important correction into the *Communist Manifesto*.

Most characteristically, it is this important correction that has been distorted by the opportunists, and its meaning probably is not known to nine-tenths, if not ninety-nine in a hundred, of the readers of the *Communist Manifesto*. We shall deal with this distortion more fully further on, in a chapter devoted specially to distortions.⁴ Here it will be sufficient to note that the current vulgar “interpretation” of Marx’s famous statement just quoted is that Marx here allegedly emphasizes the idea of slow development in contradistinction to the seizure of power, and so on.

2. Marx and Engels, *Preface to the 1872 Edition of the Communist Manifesto*, in *Marx-Engels Reader*, 470.

3. Marx’s book on the Paris Commune, first published 1871.

4. Chapter 6.

As a matter of fact, *the exact opposite is the case*. Marx's idea is that the working class must break up, smash, the "ready-made state machinery" and not confine itself merely to laying hold of it.

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.⁵

The words "to smash the bureaucratic-military machine" briefly express the principal lesson of Marxism regarding the tasks of the proletariat during a revolution in relation to the state. And this is the lesson that has been not only completely ignored but positively distorted by the prevailing Kautskyite "interpretation" of Marxism!

As for Marx's reference to the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, we have quoted the relevant passage in full above.

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."⁶

5. Lenin cites *Neue Zeit*, vol. XX, 1 (1901–1902), 709. Marx, "Letter to Kugelmann," April 17, 1871, Marx and Engels Collected Works, vol. 44, p. 131. Lenin notes: "The letters of Marx to Kugelmann have appeared in Russian in no less than two editions, one of which I edited and supplied with a preface" (Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 12, 104–12).

6. Here, Marx was contrasting the relatively small official state bureaucracy in Great Britain as compared to France under Louis Napoleon; however, this comparison falls apart if one includes Britain's enormous colonial apparatus.

Today, in 1917, at the time of the first great imperialist war, this restriction made by Marx is no longer valid. Both Britain and America, the biggest and the last representatives—in the whole world—of Anglo-Saxon “liberty,” in the sense that they had no militarist cliques and bureaucracy, have completely sunk into the all-European filthy, bloody morass of bureaucratic-military institutions that subordinate everything to themselves and suppress everything. Today, in Britain and America too, “the precondition for every real people’s revolution” is the *smashing*, the destruction of the “ready-made state machinery” (made and brought up to “European,” or general imperialist, perfection in those countries in the years from 1914 to 1917).⁷

Second, 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.” This idea of a “people’s” revolution seems strange coming from Marx, so that the Russian Plekhanovites and Mensheviks, those followers of Struve⁸ who wish to be regarded as Marxists, might possibly declare such an expression to be a “slip of the pen” on Marx’s part. They have reduced Marxism to such a state of wretchedly liberal distortion that nothing exists for them beyond the antithesis between bourgeois revolution and proletarian revolution, and even this antithesis they interpret in an utterly lifeless way.

If we take the revolutions of the twentieth century as examples we shall, of course, have to admit that the Portuguese⁹ and the Turkish¹⁰ rev-

7. Again, Lenin is defending Marx’s idea that the “state machine” was relatively weak in both Britain and America in the nineteenth century (because the industrial capitalists took direct charge of the national economies). Although there were certainly variations in the *form* these states took, as mentioned above, the British colonial state and the American system (with its vast slave system and conquest of the entire continent) seem prime candidates for Marx’s analysis of the state.

8. Peter Struve (1870–1944), an important theorist in the 1890s Russian socialist movement, joined the Menshevik faction in 1903 and in 1905 helped found the liberal Cadet Party, which was hostile to the 1917 Bolshevik revolution.

9. In 1910 a revolt in the army overthrew the Portuguese king and established a parliamentary republic.

10. The Young Turk Revolution in 1908 restored the parliament, which had been disbanded by the Ottoman sultan.

olutions are both bourgeois revolutions. Neither of them, however, is a “people’s” revolution, since in neither does the mass of the people, their vast majority, come out actively, independently, with their own economic and political demands to any noticeable degree. By contrast, although the Russian bourgeois revolution of 1905–07 displayed no such “brilliant” successes as at the time fell to the Portuguese and Turkish revolutions,¹¹ it was undoubtedly a “real people’s” revolution since the mass of the people, their majority, the very lowest social groups, crushed by oppression and exploitation, rose independently and stamped on the entire course of the revolution the imprint of *their* own demands, *their* attempt to build in their own way a new society in place of the old society that was being destroyed.

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, it 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.

As is well known, the Paris Commune was actually working its way toward such an alliance, although it did not reach its goal owing to a number of circumstances, internal and external.

Consequently, in speaking of a “real people’s revolution,” Marx, without in the least discounting the special features of the petit-bourgeoisie (he spoke a great deal and often about them), took strict account of the actual balance of class forces in most of the continental countries of Europe in 1871. On the other hand, he stated that the “smashing” of the state machine was required by the interests of both the workers and the peasants, that it united them, that it placed before them the

11. That is, the Russian tsar was not overthrown.

common task of removing the “parasite” and of replacing it by something new.

By what exactly?

2. What Is to Replace the Smashed State Machine?

In 1847, in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx’s answer to this question was as yet a purely abstract one; to be exact, it was an answer that indicated the tasks but not the ways of accomplishing them. The answer given in the *Communist Manifesto* was that this machine was to be replaced by “the proletariat organized as the ruling class,” by the “winning of the battle of democracy.”¹²

Marx did not indulge in utopias; he expected the *experience* of the mass movement to provide the reply to the question as to the specific forms this organization of the proletariat as the ruling class would assume and as to the exact manner in which this organization would be combined with the most complete, most consistent “winning of the battle of democracy.”

Marx subjected the experience of the Commune, meager as it was, to the most careful analysis in *The Civil War in France*. Let us quote the most important passages of this work. Originating from the Middle Ages, there developed in the nineteenth century “the centralized state power, with its ubiquitous organs of standing army, police, bureaucracy, clergy, and judicature.”¹³ With the development of class antagonisms between capital and labor,

state power assumed more and more the character of a public force organized 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.¹⁴

12. Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 490.

13. Marx, *Civil War in France*, in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 629.

14. *Ibid.*, 630.

After the revolution of 1848–49, state power became “the national war instrument of capital against labor.”¹⁵ 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.”¹⁶

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.”¹⁷ This demand now figures in the program of every party calling itself socialist. The real worth of their program, however, is best shown by the behavior of our Social Revolutionists and Mensheviks who, right after the revolution of February 27, refused to carry out this demand!

The Commune was formed of the municipal councilors, 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. . . .¹⁸

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

15. *Ibid.*, 630.

16. *Ibid.*, 631.

17. *Ibid.*, 632.

18. Universal male suffrage, that is. Nevertheless, this was a tremendous advance as until then only around 5 percent of the French population had the right to vote.

judicial functionaries lost that sham independence . . . they were thenceforward to be elective, responsible, and revocable.¹⁹

The Commune, therefore, appears to have replaced the smashed state machine “only” by fuller democracy: abolition of the standing army, with all officials to be elected and subject to recall. But as a matter of fact, this “only” signifies a gigantic replacement of certain institutions by other institutions of a fundamentally different type. This is exactly a case of “quantity being transformed into quality”: democracy, introduced as fully and consistently as is at all conceivable, is transformed from bourgeois into proletarian democracy, from the state (which is a special force for the suppression of a particular class) into something which is no longer the state proper.

It is still necessary to suppress the bourgeoisie and crush their resistance. This was particularly necessary for the Commune; one of the reasons for its defeat was that it did not do this with sufficient determination. The organ of suppression, however, is here the majority of the population, not a minority, as was always the case under slavery, serfdom, and wage slavery. And since the majority of the people *itself* suppresses its oppressors, a “special force” for suppression *is no longer necessary!* In this sense, the state *begins to wither away*. Instead of the special institutions of a privileged minority (privileged officialdom, the chiefs of the standing army), the majority itself can directly fulfill all these functions and the more the functions of state power are performed by the people as a whole, the less need there is for the existence of this power.

In this connection, the following measures of the Commune Marx emphasized are particularly noteworthy: the abolition of all representation allowances and of all monetary privileges to officials, and the reduction of the remuneration of *all* servants of the state to the level of “*workmen’s wages*.” This shows more clearly than anything else the *turn* from bourgeois to proletarian democracy, from the democracy of the oppressors to that of the oppressed classes, from the state as a “*special force*” for the suppression of a particular class to the suppression of the oppressors by the

19. Marx, *Civil War in France*, in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 632.

general force of the majority of the people—the workers and the peasants. And it is on this particularly striking point, perhaps the most important as far as the problem of the state is concerned, that the ideas of Marx have been most completely ignored! In popular commentaries, the number of which is legion, this is not mentioned. This is kept silent, as if it were a piece of old-fashioned “naïveté,” just as Christians, after their religion had been given the status of state religion, “forgot” the “naïveté” of primitive Christianity with its democratic, revolutionary spirit.

The reduction of the remuneration of high state officials seems “simply” a demand of naive, primitive democracy. One of the “founders” of modern opportunism, the ex-Social Democrat Eduard Bernstein,²⁰ has more than once repeated the vulgar bourgeois jeers at “primitive” democracy. Like all opportunists, and like the present Kautskyites, he did not understand at all that, first of all, the transition from capitalism to socialism is *impossible* without a certain “reversion” to “primitive” democracy (for how else can the majority, and then the whole population without exception, proceed to discharge state functions?) and that, second, “primitive democracy” based on capitalism and capitalist culture is not the same as primitive democracy in prehistoric or precapitalist times. Capitalist culture has *created* large-scale production, factories, railways, the postal service, telephones, etc., and *on this basis* the great majority of the functions of the old “state power” have become so simplified and can be reduced to such exceedingly simple operations of registration, filing, and checking that they can be easily performed by every literate person, can quite easily be performed for ordinary “workmen’s wages,” and can (and must) be stripped of every shadow of privilege, of every semblance of “official grandeur.”

All officials, without exception, elected and subject to recall *at any time*, their salaries reduced to the level of ordinary “workmen’s wages”—these simple and “self-evident” democratic measures, while completely uniting the interests of the workers and the majority of the peasants, at

20. Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932) led the reformist trend in the German SPD in the 1890s. See the introduction.

the same time serve as a bridge leading from capitalism to socialism. These measures concern the reorganization of the state, the purely political reorganization of society, but of course they acquire their full meaning and significance only in connection with the “expropriation of the expropriators” being either accomplished or in preparation—that is, with the transformation of capitalist private ownership of the means of production into social ownership. Marx wrote:

The Commune made the catchword of all bourgeois revolutions, cheap government, a reality, by abolishing the two greatest sources of expenditure—the army and the officialdom.²¹

From the peasants, as from other sections of the petit-bourgeoisie, only an insignificant few “rise to the top,” “get on in the world” in the bourgeois sense, becoming either well-to-do, bourgeois, or officials in secure and privileged positions. In every capitalist country where there are peasants (as there are in most capitalist countries), the vast majority of them are oppressed by the government and long for its overthrow, for “cheap” government. This can be achieved *only* by the proletariat; by achieving it, the proletariat at the same time takes a step toward the socialist reorganization of the state.

3. Abolition of Parliamentarism

Marx wrote,

The Commune 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 [*ver- und 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.²²

Owing to the prevalence of social chauvinism and opportunism, this remarkable criticism of parliamentarism, made in 1871, also belongs now

21. Marx, *Civil War in France*, in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 634.

22. *Ibid.*, 632–33.

to the “forgotten words” of Marxism. The professional cabinet ministers and parliamentarians, the traitors to the proletariat and the “practical” socialists of our day, have left all criticism of parliamentarism to the anarchists and, on this wonderfully reasonable ground, they denounce *all* criticism of parliamentarism as “anarchism”!! It is not surprising that the proletariat of the “advanced” parliamentary countries, disgusted with such “socialists” as the Scheidemanns, Davids, Legiens, Sembats, Renaudels, Hendersons, Vanderveldes, Staunings, Brantings, Bissolatis, and company,²³ has been with increasing frequency giving its sympathies to anarcho-syndicalism,²⁴ in spite of the fact that the latter is merely the twin brother of opportunism.

For Marx, however, revolutionary dialectics was never the empty fashionable phrase, the toy rattle, that Plekhanov, Kautsky, and others have made of it. Marx knew how to break with anarchism ruthlessly for its inability to make use even of the “pigsty” of bourgeois parliamentarism,²⁵ especially when the situation was obviously not revolutionary, but at the same time he knew how to subject parliamentarism to genuinely revolutionary proletarian criticism.

To decide once every few years which members of the ruling class are 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.

23. Reformist leaders of the Second International who adopted nationalist positions during World War I or who refused to lead actions against their own governments. See the glossary.

24. A theory stressing the need for revolutionary action by working class, as opposed to Proudhonist cooperatives or individualist anarchist theory, but shunning “political” measures such as contesting elections or organizing a political party. This ideology often shares Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin’s objection to Marx’s insistence on need for a postrevolutionary workers’ state. In the United States, anarcho-syndicalism is best exemplified by the Industrial Workers of the World.

25. That is, revolutionaries may run for office under a capitalist government in order to expose exploitation and oppression and to facilitate the education and organization of a revolutionary workers’ movement that aims to overthrow the institutions into which socialist candidates may be elected—all the while maintaining that no number of elected posts within the capitalist state can lead it to change its class nature.

But if we deal with the question of the state, and if we consider parliamentarism as one of the institutions of the state, from the point of view of the tasks of the proletariat in *this* field, what is the way out of parliamentarism? How can it be dispensed with?

Once again, we must say: the lessons of Marx, based on the study of the Commune, have been so completely forgotten that the present-day “Social Democrat” (i.e., present-day traitor to socialism) really cannot understand any criticism of parliamentarism other than anarchist or reactionary criticism.

The way out of parliamentarism is not, of course, abolishing representative institutions and the elective principle, but converting 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.”

“A working, not a parliamentary body”—this is a blow straight from the shoulder at the present-day parliamentarians and parliamentary lapdogs of Social Democracy! Take any parliamentary country, from America to Switzerland, from France to Britain, Norway, and so forth—in these countries the real business of “state” is performed behind the scenes and is carried on by the departments, chancelleries, and general staffs. Parliament is given up to talk for the special purpose of fooling the “common people.” This is so true that even in the Russian republic, a bourgeois-democratic republic, all these sins of parliamentarism came out at once, even before it managed to set up a real parliament. The heroes of rotten philistinism, such as the Skobelevs and Tseretelis, the Chernovs and Avksentyevs,²⁶ have even succeeded in polluting the soviets after the fashion of the most disgusting bourgeois parliamentarism, converting them into mere talking shops. In the soviets, the “socialist” ministers are fooling the credulous rustics with phrasemongering and resolutions. In the government itself a sort of permanent shuffle is going on, in order that, on the one hand, as many Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks

26. Reformist leaders of the Social Revolutionary and Menshevik parties who were elected to high positions in the Soviets before October 1917 and accepted positions in the Provisional Government. (See the glossary.)

as possible may in turn get near the “pie,” the lucrative and honorable posts, and that, on the other hand, the “attention” of the people may be “engaged.” Meanwhile the chancelleries and army staffs “do” the business of “state.”

Dyelo Naroda (The People’s Cause), the organ of the ruling Socialist Revolutionary Party, recently admitted in a leading article—with the matchless frankness of people of “good society,” in which “all” are engaged in political prostitution—that even in the ministries headed by the “socialists” (save the mark!), the whole bureaucratic apparatus is in fact unchanged, working in the old way, and quite “freely” sabotaging revolutionary measures! Even without this admission, does not the actual history of the participation of the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks in the government prove this? It is noteworthy, however, that in the ministerial company of the Cadets, the Chernovs, Rusanovs, Zenzinovs,²⁷ and other editors of *Dyelo Naroda* have so completely lost all sense of shame as to brazenly assert, as if it were a mere trifle,²⁸ that in “their” ministries everything is unchanged!! Revolutionary-democratic phrases to gull the rural Simple Simons and bureaucracy and red tape to “gladden the hearts” of the capitalists—that is the *essence* of the “honest” coalition.²⁹

The Commune substitutes, for the venal and rotten parliamentarism of bourgeois society, institutions in which freedom of opinion and discussion does not degenerate into deception, for the parliamentarians themselves have to work, to execute their own laws, to test the results achieved in reality themselves, and to be directly accountable to their constituents. Representative institutions remain, but there is no parliamentarism here as a special system, as the division of labor 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

27. N. S. Rusanov and Vladimir Zenzinov were important leaders of the SR party’s right wing.

28. The word is Service’s translation, 43.

29. That is, the coalition government—specifically the Provisional Government, where Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks accepted posts alongside figures from the old regime.

parliamentarism if criticism of bourgeois society is not mere words for us, if the desire to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie is our earnest and sincere desire and not a mere “election” cry for catching workers’ votes, as it is with the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, and also the Scheidemanns and Legiens, the Sembats and Vanderveldes.

It is extremely instructive to note that, in speaking of the function of those officials who are necessary for the Commune and for proletarian democracy, Marx compares them to the workers of “every other employer,” that is, of the ordinary capitalist enterprise, with its “workers, foremen, and accountants.”

There is no trace of utopianism in Marx, in the sense that he made up or invented a “new” society. No, he studied the *birth* of the new society *out* of the old and the forms of transition from the latter to the former as a mass proletarian movement, and tried to draw practical lessons from it. He “learned” from the Commune, just as all the great revolutionary thinkers learned unhesitatingly from the experience of great movements of the oppressed classes, and never addressed them with pedantic “homilies” (such as Plekhanov’s “They should not have taken up arms”³⁰ or Tsereteli’s “A class must limit itself”).

Abolishing the bureaucracy at once, everywhere and completely, is out of the question. It is a utopia. But to *smash* 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 a utopia, it is the experience of the Commune, the direct and immediate task of the revolutionary proletariat.

Capitalism simplifies the functions of “state” administration; it makes it possible to cast “bossing” aside and to confine the whole matter to the organization of the proletarians (as the ruling class), which will hire “workers, foremen, and accountants” in the name of the whole of society.

We are not utopians; we do not “dream” of dispensing *at once* with all administration, with all subordination. These anarchist dreams, based

30. Plekhanov’s criticism of working-class insurgents after the failed uprising in Moscow in 1905.

upon incomprehension of the tasks of the proletarian dictatorship, are totally alien to Marxism and, as a matter of fact, serve only to postpone the socialist revolution until people are different. No, we want the socialist revolution with people as they are now, with people who cannot dispense with subordination, control, and “foremen and accountants.”

The subordination, however, must be to the armed vanguard of all the exploited and working people, that is, to the proletariat. A beginning can and must be made at once, overnight, to replace the specific “bossing” of state officials by the simple functions of “foremen and accountants,” functions that are already fully within the ability of the average town dweller and can well be performed for “workmen’s wages.”

We, the workers, shall organize large-scale production on the basis of what capitalism has already created, relying on our own experience as workers, establishing strict, iron discipline backed up by the state power of the armed workers. We shall reduce the role of state officials to that of simply carrying out our instructions as responsible, revocable, modestly paid “foremen and accountants” (of course, with the aid of technicians of all sorts, types, and degrees). This is *our* proletarian task, this is what we can and must *start* with in accomplishing the proletarian revolution. Such a beginning, on the basis of large-scale production, will of itself lead to the gradual “withering away” of all bureaucracy, to the gradual creation of an order—an order without inverted commas, an order bearing no similarity to wage slavery—an order under which the functions of control and accounting, becoming more and more simple, will be performed by each in turn, then become a habit and finally die out as the special functions of a *special* section of the population.

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 organized on the lines of state-*capitalist* monopoly. Imperialism is gradually transforming all trusts into organizations of a similar type, in which, standing over the “common” people, who are overworked and starved, one has the same bourgeois bureaucracy. But the mechanism of social management is here, already at hand. Once we have overthrown the capitalists, crushed the

resistance of these exploiters with the iron hand of the armed workers, and smashed the bureaucratic machinery of the modern state, we shall have a splendidly equipped mechanism, freed from the “parasite,” a mechanism that can very well be set going by the united workers themselves, who will hire technicians, foremen, and accountants and pay them *all*, as indeed *all* “state” officials in general, workmen’s wages. Here is a concrete, practical task that can immediately be fulfilled in relation to all trusts, a task whose fulfillment will rid the working people of exploitation, a task that takes account of what the Commune had already begun to practice (particularly in building up the state).

To organize the *whole* economy along 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. This is what will bring about the abolition of parliamentarism and the preservation of representative institutions. This is what will rid the laboring classes of the bourgeoisie’s prostitution of these institutions.

4. The Organization of National Unity

In a brief sketch of national organization 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.³¹

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 misstated, but were to be transferred to communal, i.e., strictly responsible, officials. National unity was not to be broken, but, on the contrary, organized 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

31. Marx, *Civil War in France*, in *Marx-Engels Reader*, 633.

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.³²

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 Herostratean³³ fame by the renegade Bernstein, *The Premises of Socialism and the Tasks of the Social Democrats*.³⁴ It is in connection with the above passage from Marx that Bernstein wrote that “as far as its political content,” this program

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 “petit-bourgeois” Proudhon [Bernstein places the word “petit-bourgeois” in inverted commas, to make it sound ironical] on these points, their lines of reasoning run as close as could be.³⁵

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 organization as is visualized 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.³⁶

32. Ibid.

33. A reference to Herostratus, who burned the temple at Ephesus in 356 BC in order to become famous. In other words, a person who destroys something beautiful and becomes infamous in doing so.

34. Usually published in English as *Evolutionary Socialism*. Originally published in 1899. See the introduction.

35. Eduard Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 159. The note is Lenin's.

36. Ibid., 159. Lenin cites Eduard Bernstein, *Premises of Socialism and the Tasks of the Social Democrats*, German edition (1899), 134 and 136.

To confuse Marx's view on the "destruction of state power, a parasitic excrescence," with Proudhon's federalism is positively monstrous! But it is no accident, for it never occurs to the opportunist that Marx does not speak here at all about federalism, as opposed to centralism, but about smashing the old, bourgeois state machine that exists in all bourgeois countries.

The only thing that does occur to the opportunist is what he sees around him in an environment of petit-bourgeois philistinism and "reformist" stagnation, namely, only "municipalities"! The opportunist has even grown out of the habit of thinking about proletarian revolution.

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.

The opportunist has so much forgotten how to think in a revolutionary way and to dwell on revolution that he attributes "federalism" to Marx, whom he confuses with the founder of anarchism, Proudhon. As for Kautsky and Plekhanov, who claim to be orthodox Marxists and defenders of the theory of revolutionary Marxism, they are silent on this point! Here is one of the roots of the extreme vulgarization of the views on the difference between Marxism and anarchism, which is characteristic of both the Kautskyites and the opportunists and which we shall discuss again later.

There is not a trace of federalism in Marx's above-quoted observation on the experience of the Commune. Marx agreed with Proudhon on the very point that the opportunist Bernstein did not see. Marx disagreed with Proudhon on the very point on which Bernstein found a similarity between them.

Marx agreed with Proudhon in that they both stood for "smashing" the modern state machine. Neither the opportunists nor the Kautskyites wish to see the similarity of views on this point between Marxism and anarchism (both Proudhon and Bakunin) because this is where they have departed from Marxism.

Marx disagreed both with Proudhon and Bakunin precisely on the question of federalism (not to mention the dictatorship of the prole-

tariat). Federalism as a principle follows logically from petit-bourgeois views of anarchism. Marx was a centralist. There is no departure whatever from centralism in his observations just quoted. Only those who are imbued with the philistine “superstitious belief” in the state can mistake the destruction of the bourgeois state machine for the destruction of centralism!³⁷

Now if the proletariat and the poor peasants take state power into their own hands, organize themselves quite freely in communes, and *unite* the action of all the communes in striking at capital, crushing the resistance of the capitalists, and transferring the privately-owned railways, factories, land, and so on to the *entire* nation, to the whole of society, won't that be centralism? Won't that be the most consistent democratic centralism and, moreover, proletarian centralism?

Bernstein simply cannot conceive of the possibility of voluntary centralism, of the voluntary fusion of the proletarian communes, for the sole purpose of destroying bourgeois rule and the bourgeois state machine. Like all philistines, Bernstein pictures centralism as something which can be imposed and maintained solely from above and solely by the bureaucracy and military clique.

As though foreseeing that his views might be distorted, Marx expressly emphasized that the charge that the Commune had wanted to destroy national unity, to abolish the central authority, was a deliberate fraud. Marx purposely used the words “national unity was . . . to be organized” so as to oppose conscious, democratic, proletarian centralism to bourgeois, military, bureaucratic centralism.

But there are none so deaf as those who will not hear. And the very thing the opportunists of present-day Social Democracy do not want to

37. This discussion of federalism versus centralism in terms of national organization may seem obscure. It might appear that, given the power of the centralized capitalist state, a looser “federal” arrangement might be more democratic. However, by way of example, keep in mind that the slogan of the segregationists in the American South was “states’ rights.” In terms of the Paris Commune, Marx argued that a *voluntary* national unity could be, in fact, more democratic than a patchwork of independent provinces all establishing their own petty regulations.

hear about is the destruction of state power, the amputation of the parasitic excrescence.

5. Abolition of the Parasite State

We have already quoted Marx's words on the subject, and we must now supplement them. He wrote,

It is generally the fate of new historical creations 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 Montesquieu³⁸ and the Girondins³⁹ visualized it). . . as an exaggerated form of the old struggle against over-centralization. . . . 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 a [counterbalance] to state power, now become superfluous.⁴⁰

"Breaking state power," which was a "parasitic excrescence"; its "amputation," its "smashing"; "state power, now become superfluous"—these are the expressions Marx used in regard to the state when appraising and analyzing the experience of the Commune.

38. Charles de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu (1689–1755), a French liberal political philosopher, advocated "separation of powers" in government.

39. A political faction during the French Revolution, named after province of Gironde. The Girondins were overthrown by the more radical Jacobins in 1793.

40. Marx, *Civil War in France*, in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 633–34. Here Lenin changes the order of Marx's original quotation slightly.

All this was written a little less than half a century ago; now one has to engage in excavations, as it were, in order to bring undistorted Marxism to the knowledge of the mass of the people. The conclusions drawn from the observation of the last great revolution through which Marx lived were forgotten just when the time for the next great proletarian revolution has arrived.

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 labor could be accomplished. . . .

Except on this last condition, the Communal Constitution would have been an impossibility and a delusion.⁴¹

The utopians busied themselves with “discovering” political forms under which the socialist transformation of society was to take place. The anarchists dismissed the question of political forms altogether. The opportunists of present-day Social Democracy accepted the bourgeois political forms of the parliamentary-democratic state as the limit which should not be overstepped; they battered their foreheads praying before this “model” and denounced as anarchism every desire to break these forms.

Marx deduced from the whole history of socialism and the political struggle that the state was bound to disappear and that the transitional form of its disappearance (the transition from state to nonstate) would be the “proletariat organized as the ruling class.” Marx did not, however, set out to *discover* the political *forms* of this future stage. He limited himself to carefully observing French history, analyzing it, and drawing the conclusion to which the year 1851 had led: namely, that matters were moving toward the *destruction* of the bourgeois state machine.

41. Marx, *Civil War in France*, in *Marx-Engels Reader*, 634–35. Emphasis Lenin's.

And when the mass revolutionary movement of the proletariat burst forth, Marx, in spite of its failure, in spite of its short life and patent weakness, began to study the forms it had *discovered*.

The Commune is the form “at last discovered” by the proletarian revolution, under which the economic emancipation of labor can take place.

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

We shall see further on that the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, in different circumstances and under different conditions, continue the work of the Commune and confirm Marx’s brilliant historical analysis.

Chapter 4

Continuation: Supplementary Explanations by Engels

Marx stated the fundamentals concerning the significance of the experience of the Commune. Engels returned to the same subject time and again and explained Marx's analysis and conclusions, sometimes elucidating other aspects of the question with such power and vividness that it is necessary to deal specially with his explanations.

1. The Housing Question

In his work *The Housing Question* (1872), Engels was already taking into account the experience of the Commune and dealing several times with the tasks of the revolution in relation to the state. It is interesting to note that the treatment of this specific subject clearly revealed, on the one hand, points of similarity between the proletarian state and the present state—points that warrant speaking of the state in both cases—and, on the other hand, points of difference between them, or the transition to the destruction of the state.

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 leveling 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 organization 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 *shortages*,” 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.¹

The change in the form of state power is not examined here, only the content of its activity. Expropriations and billetings take place by order even of the present state. From the formal point of view, the proletarian state will also “order” the occupation of dwellings and expropriation of houses. But it is clear that the old executive apparatus, the bureaucracy, which is connected with the bourgeoisie, would simply be unfit to carry out the orders of the proletarian state.

It must be pointed out that the “actual seizure” of all the instruments of labor, 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 labor; in the former case, the “working people” remain the collective owners of the houses, factories, and instruments of labor, 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 labor by the working people, therefore, does not at all preclude the retention of rent relations.²

We shall examine the question touched upon in this passage, namely, the economic basis for the withering away of the state, in the next chap-

1. Lenin cites Engels, *The Housing Question*, German edition (1887), 22. See Engels, *The Housing Question*, part 1, *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 23, 330. It is worth noting here that Marx was still alive and collaborating very closely with Engels when Engels wrote this.

2. See Engels, *Housing Question*, part 3, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 23, 386. Lenin cites page 68 in the German edition.

ter. Engels expresses himself most cautiously, saying that the proletarian state would “hardly” permit the use of houses without payment, “at least during a transitional period.” The letting of houses owned by the whole people to individual families presupposes the collection of rent, a certain amount of control, and the employment of some standard in allotting the housing. All this calls for a certain form of state, but it does not at all call for a special military bureaucratic apparatus, with officials occupying especially privileged positions. The transition to a situation in which it will be possible to supply dwellings rent-free depends on the complete “withering away” of the state.

Speaking of the Blanquists’ adoption of the fundamental position of Marxism after the Commune and under the influence of its experience, Engels, in passing, formulates this position as

the 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.³

Addicts of hair-splitting criticism, or bourgeois “exterminators of Marxism,” will perhaps see a contradiction between this *recognition* of the “abolition of the state” and repudiation of this formula as an anarchist one in the above passage from *Anti-Dühring*.⁴ It would not be surprising if the opportunists classed Engels, too, as an “anarchist,” for it is becoming increasingly common with the social chauvinists to accuse the internationalists of anarchism.

Marxism has always taught that with the abolition of classes the state will also be abolished. The well-known passage on the “withering away of the state” in *Anti-Dühring* accuses the anarchists not simply of favoring the abolition of the state but preaching that the state can be abolished “overnight.”

As the now-prevailing “Social-Democratic” doctrine completely distorts the relation of Marxism to anarchism on the question of the

3. *Ibid.*, 370; Lenin cites page 55.

4. Lenin is referring to the quote from *Anti-Dühring* at the beginning of chapter 1, section 4 of *State and Revolution*.

abolition of the state, it will be particularly useful to recall a certain controversy in which Marx and Engels came out against the anarchists.

2. Controversy with the Anarchists

This controversy took place in 1873. Marx and Engels contributed articles against the Proudhonists, “autonomists,” or “anti-authoritarians,” to an Italian socialist journal, and it was not until 1913 that these articles appeared in German in *Neue Zeit*.⁵ Ridiculing the anarchists for their repudiation of politics, Marx wrote:

If the political struggle of the working class assumes revolutionary form, 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.⁶

It was solely against this kind of “abolition” of the state that Marx fought to refute the anarchists! He did not at all oppose the view that the state would disappear when classes disappeared, or that it would be abolished when classes were abolished. What he did oppose was the proposition that the workers should renounce the use of arms, organized violence, *that is, the state*, which is to serve to “crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie.”

To prevent the true meaning of his struggle against anarchism from being distorted, Marx expressly emphasized the “revolutionary and *transient* form” of the state that the proletariat needs. The proletariat needs the state only temporarily. We do not, after all, differ with the anarchists

5. A theoretical journal published by the SPD from 1888 to 1923, edited by Kautsky until 1917.

6. Lenin cites *Neue Zeit* 32, no. 1, 1913–14, 40. See Marx, *Political Indifferentism*, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 23, 393. Here Marx was paraphrasing what he believed to be the arguments of the anarchists, “the apostles of political indifferentism,” as he called them. In other words, the anarchists opposed organizing a political party as well as organizing a revolutionary state, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

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. Marx chooses the sharpest and clearest way of stating his case against the anarchists: After overthrowing the yoke of the capitalists, should the workers “lay down their arms” or use them against the capitalists in order to crush their resistance? But what is the systematic use of arms by one class against another if not a “transient form” of the state?

Let every Social Democrat ask: Is that how I have been posing the question of the state in controversy with the anarchists? Is that how it has been posed by the vast majority of the official socialist parties of the Second International?

Engels expounds the same ideas in much greater detail and still more popularly. First of all he ridicules the muddled ideas of the Proudhonists, who call themselves “anti-authoritarians,” i.e., repudiating all authority, all subordination, all power. Take a factory, a railway, a ship on the high seas, said Engels: is it not clear that not one of these complex technical establishments, based on the use of machinery and the systematic cooperation of many people, could function without a certain amount of subordination and, consequently, without a certain amount of authority or power?

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.⁷

Having thus shown that authority and autonomy are relative terms, that the sphere of their application varies with the various phases of social development, that it is absurd to take them as absolutes, and adding that the sphere of application of machinery and large-scale production is steadily expanding, Engels passes from the general discussion of authority to the question of the state. He writes,

7. Engels, *On Authority*, in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 732.

Had the autonomists contented themselves with saying that the social organization 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 birth 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 cannons, 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.⁸

This argument touches upon questions that should be examined in connection with the relationship between politics and economics during the withering away of the state (the next chapter is devoted to this). These questions are the transformation of public functions from political into simple functions of administration and the "political state." This last term, one particularly liable to misunderstanding, indicates the process of the withering away of the state: at a certain stage of this process, the state that is withering away may be called a nonpolitical state.

8. Lenin cites the same source, page 39. *Ibid.*, 732–33.

Again, the most remarkable thing in Engels's argument is the way he states his case against the anarchists. Social Democrats, claiming to be disciples of Engels, have argued on this subject against the anarchists millions of times since 1873, but they have *not* argued as Marxists could and should. The anarchist idea of abolition of the state is muddled and *nonrevolutionary*—that is how Engels put it. It is precisely the revolution in its rise and development, with its specific tasks in relation to violence, authority, power, and the state, that the anarchists refuse to see.

The usual criticism of anarchism by present-day Social Democrats has boiled down to the purest philistine banality: "We recognize the state, whereas the anarchists do not!" Naturally, such banality cannot but repel workers who are at all capable of thinking and who are revolutionary-minded. What Engels says is different. He stresses that all socialists recognize that the state will disappear as a result of the socialist revolution. He then deals specifically with the question of the revolution—the very question which, as a rule, the Social Democrats evade out of opportunism, leaving it, so to speak, exclusively for the anarchists "to work out." And when dealing with this question, Engels takes the bull by the horns; he asks: should not the Commune have made *more* use of the *revolutionary* power of the *state*, that is, of the proletariat armed and organized as the ruling class?

Prevailing official Social Democracy usually dismissed the question of the concrete tasks of the proletariat in the revolution either with a philistine sneer, or, at best, with the sophistic evasion: "The future will show." And the anarchists were justified in saying about such Social Democrats that they were failing in their task of giving the workers a revolutionary education. Engels draws upon the experience of the last proletarian revolution precisely for the purpose of making a most concrete study of what should be done by the proletariat and in what manner, in relation to both the banks and the state.

3. Letter to Bebel

One of the most, if not *the* most, remarkable observation on the state in the works of Marx and Engels is contained in the following passage in

Engels's letter to Bebel dated March 18–28, 1875.⁹ This letter, we may observe in parenthesis, was, as far as we know, first published by Bebel in the second volume of his memoirs (*Aus meinem Leben*), which appeared in 1911, i.e., thirty-six years after the letter was written and sent.

Engels wrote to Bebel criticizing the same draft of the Gotha Program that Marx criticized in his famous letter to Bracke. Referring specially to the question of the state, Engels said:

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*.¹⁰

It should be borne in mind that this letter refers to the party program that Marx criticized in a letter dated only a few weeks later than the above (Marx's letter is dated May 5, 1875), and that at the time Engels was living with Marx in London. Consequently, when he says "we" in the last

9. August Bebel (1840–1913) was a cabinet maker, a founder of German Social Democracy, and the leader of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). A close confidant of Marx and Engels, he was elected to the Reichstag in 1867, then imprisoned for two years in 1872 for his opposition to the Franco-Prussian War. He wrote many books and articles, including *Women and Socialism* (1879).

10. Lenin cites pages 321–22 of the German original. See Engels, "Letter to Bebel," March 18–28, 1875, *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 45, 60.

sentence, Engels undoubtedly, in his own name as well as Marx's, suggests to the leader of the German workers' party that the word "state" be struck out of the program and replaced by the word "community."

What a howl about "anarchism" would be raised by the leading lights of present-day "Marxism," which has been falsified for the convenience of the opportunists, if such an amendment of the program were suggested to them!

Let them howl. This will earn them the praises of the bourgeoisie.

And we shall go on with our work. In revising the program of our party,¹¹ we must by all means take the advice of Engels and Marx into consideration in order to come nearer the truth, to restore Marxism by ridding it of distortions, to guide the struggle of the working class for its emancipation more correctly. Certainly no one opposed to the advice of Engels and Marx will be found among the Bolsheviks. The only difficulty that may perhaps arise will be in regard to the term. In German there are two words meaning "community," of which Engels used the one that does *not* denote a single community but a totality, a system of communities. In Russian there is no such word, and we may have to choose the French word *commune*, although this also has its drawbacks.

"The Commune was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word"—this is the most theoretically important statement Engels makes. After what has been said above, this statement is perfectly clear. The Commune *was ceasing* to be a state since it had to suppress not the majority of the population but a minority (the exploiters). It had smashed the bourgeois state machine. In place of a *special* coercive force, the population itself came on the scene. All this was a departure from the state in the proper sense of the word. And had the Commune become firmly established, all traces of the state in it would have "withered away" of themselves; it would not have had to "abolish" the institutions of the state—they would have ceased to function as they ceased to have anything to do.

"The 'people's state' has been thrown in our faces by the anarchists." In saying this, Engels above all has in mind Bakunin and his attacks on

11. That is, the Bolshevik Party.

the German Social Democrats. Engels admits that these attacks were justified *insofar* as the “people’s state” was as much an absurdity and as much a departure from socialism as the “free people’s state.” Engels tried to put the struggle of the German Social Democrats against the anarchists on the right lines, to make this struggle correct in principle, to rid it of opportunist prejudices concerning the “state.” Unfortunately, Engels’s letter was pigeonholed for thirty-six years.¹² We shall see further on that, even after this letter was published, Kautsky persisted in virtually the same mistakes against which Engels had warned.

Bebel replied to Engels in a letter dated September 21, 1875, in which he wrote, among other things, that he “fully agreed” with Engels’s opinion of the draft program and that he had reproached Liebknecht for his readiness to make concessions.¹³ But if we take Bebel’s pamphlet, *Our Aims*,¹⁴ we find there views on the state that are absolutely wrong.

The state must . . . be transformed from one based on *class rule* into a *people’s state*.¹⁵

This was printed in the *ninth* (ninth!) edition of Bebel’s pamphlet! It is not surprising that opportunist views on the state, so persistently repeated, were absorbed by the German Social Democrats, especially as Engels’s revolutionary interpretations had been safely pigeonholed and all the conditions of life were such as to “wean” them from revolution for a long time.¹⁶

12. That is, the letter was not brought to the SPD members’ attention.

13. Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826–1900) was a founder of the Social Democratic Workers’ Party of Germany in 1869 and a central leader of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) when it was formed in 1875 by a merger of Liebknecht’s organization with the Lassallean General German Workers’ Association. Lenin cites August Bebel, *Reminiscences*, German edition, vol. II, 334. August Bebel, *Reminiscences*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/bebel/1911/reminiscences/index.htm>.

14. 1869. I could not find a translation in English.

15. Lenin cites a German socialist periodical, *Unsere Ziele* (1886), 14. Not available in English.

16. That is, after 1871, although there was political despite repression, there were relatively few strikes and no uprisings like those in 1848 or afterwards as in France. See the Introduction for more on this.

4. Criticism of the Draft of the Erfurt Program

In analyzing Marxist teachings on the state, the criticism of the draft of the Erfurt Program, sent by Engels to Kautsky on June 29, 1891, and published only ten years later in *Neue Zeit*, cannot be ignored, for it is with the *opportunist* views of the Social Democrats on questions of *state* organization that this criticism is mainly concerned.

We shall note in passing that Engels also makes an exceedingly valuable observation on economic questions that shows how attentively and thoughtfully he watched the various changes occurring in modern capitalism and how for this reason he was able to foresee to a certain extent the tasks of our present imperialist epoch. Here is that observation: referring to the word “planlessness” (*Planlosigkeit*), used in the draft program, as characteristic of capitalism, Engels wrote:

When we pass from joint-stock companies to trusts which assume control over, and monopolize, whole industries, it is not only private production that ceases, but also planlessness.¹⁷

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 emphasized 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 trusts, of course, never provided, do not now provide, and cannot provide complete planning. But however much they do plan, however much the capitalist magnates calculate in advance the volume of production on a national and even on an international scale, and however much they systematically regulate it, we still remain under capitalism—at its new stage, it is true, but still capitalism, without a doubt. The “proximity” of *such* capitalism to socialism should serve genuine representatives of the proletariat as an argument proving the proximity, facility, feasibility, and urgency of the

17. Lenin cites *Neue Zeit*, vol. XX, 1, 1901–1902, 8. See Engels, *A Critique of the Draft Social-Democratic Program of 1891*, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 27, 224.

socialist revolution and not at all as an argument for tolerating the repudiation of such a revolution and the efforts to make capitalism look more attractive, something all reformists are trying to do.

But to return to the question of the state. In his letter Engels makes three particularly valuable suggestions: first, in regard to the republic; second, in regard to the connection between the national question and state organization; and, third, in regard to local self-government.

In regard to the republic, Engels made this the focal point of this criticism of the draft of the Erfurt Program. And when we recall the importance the Erfurt Program acquired for all the Social Democrats of the world and that it became the model for the whole Second International, we may say without exaggeration that Engels thereby criticizes the opportunism of the whole Second International. Engels wrote, "The political demands of the draft have one great fault. *It lacks* precisely what should have been said."¹⁸

Later on, he makes it clear that the German Constitution is, strictly speaking, a copy of the extremely reactionary Constitution of 1850; that the Reichstag is only, as Wilhelm Liebknecht put it, "the fig leaf of absolutism"; and that to wish "to transform all the instruments of labor into common property" on the basis of a constitution that legalizes the existence of petty states and the federation of petty German states is an "obvious absurdity."¹⁹

"To touch on that is dangerous, however," Engels added, knowing only too well that it was legally impossible to include in the program 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 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 over-hasty pronouncements made dur-

18. *Ibid.*, 225. Emphasis Engels's.

19. Engels, *Critique*, 225.

ing 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.²⁰

Engels particularly stressed the fundamental fact that the German Social Democrats were prompted by fear of a renewal of the Anti-Socialist Law, and explicitly described it as opportunism; he declared that precisely because there was no republic and no freedom in Germany, the dreams of a “peaceful” path were perfectly absurd. Engels was careful not to tie his hands. He admitted that in republican or very free countries “one can conceive” (only “conceive”!) of a peaceful development toward socialism, but, he repeated,

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.²¹

The great majority of the official leaders of the German Social Democratic Party, which pigeonholed this advice, have really proved to be a screen for absolutism.

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? . . .

20. Engels, *Critique*, 226. The Anti-Socialist Laws, in force between 1878 and 1890, were directed against the SPD and union organizing, and included press censorship and limits on the right to assemble. Many SPD leaders served time in prison for violating these laws.

21. Engels, *Critique*, 226. Here, Engels is concerned that SPD leaders are not *only* trying to avoid provoking new repressive legislation, but are also arguing that socialism could come to Germany through *even* the reactionary forms of the Prussian government.

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.²²

Engels realized here, in a particularly striking form, the fundamental idea that runs through all of Marx’s works, namely 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. These, too, are “forgotten words” of Marxism for the whole of the Second International, and the fact that they have been forgotten was demonstrated with particular vividness by the history of the Menshevik Party during the first six months of the Russian Revolution of 1917.

On the subject of a federal republic, in connection with the national composition of the population, Engels wrote:

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]?²³ 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

22. *Ibid.*, 226–27.

23. Lenin’s interjection.

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, federalization 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.”²⁴

Far from being indifferent to the forms of state, Engels, on the contrary, tried to analyze the transitional forms with the utmost thoroughness in order to establish, in accordance with the concrete historical peculiarities of each particular case, *from what and to what* the given transitional form is passing.

Approaching the matter from the standpoint of the proletariat and the proletarian revolution, Engels, like Marx, upheld democratic centralism, the republic—one and indivisible. He regarded the federal republic either as an exception and a hindrance to development, or as a transition from a monarchy to a centralized republic, as a “step forward” under certain special conditions. Among these special conditions, he puts the national question to the fore.

24. Engels, *Critique*, 228. Here, Engels is arguing that a centralized republic, as opposed to a looser federation, would be a positive reform in Germany. This section may be confusing for readers unfamiliar with the history of the long democratic struggle in Europe against feudalism, but it is not necessary to completely grasp all of the arguments here to continue reading on to the next section. Liberal, radical, and socialist thinkers of the nineteenth century all advocated replacing the old feudal and feuding local principalities, dominated by local landed aristocrats, with large, unified, and democratic nations as an important reform, especially in Germany and Italy. See my comment in the notes in the previous chapter about segregation in the United States and defense of states' rights.

Although mercilessly criticizing the reactionary nature of small states and the screening of this by the national question in certain concrete cases, Engels, like Marx, never betrayed the slightest desire to brush aside the national question—a desire of which the Dutch and Polish Marxists, who proceed from their perfectly justified opposition to the narrow philistine nationalism of “their” little states, are often guilty.²⁵

Even in regard to Britain, where geographical conditions, a common language, and the history of many centuries would seem to have “put an end” to the national question in the various small divisions of the country—even in regard to that country, Engels reckoned with the plain fact that the national question was not yet a thing of the past, and therefore²⁶ recognized that the establishment of a federal republic would be a “step forward.” Of course, there is not the slightest hint here of Engels abandoning the criticism of the shortcomings of a federal republic or renouncing the most determined advocacy of, and struggle for, a unified and centralized democratic republic.

But Engels did not at all mean democratic centralism in the bureaucratic sense in which the term is used by bourgeois and petit-bourgeois ideologists, the anarchists being among the latter. His idea of centralism did not in the least preclude such broad local self-government as would combine the voluntary defense of the unity of the state by the “communes” and districts, and the complete elimination of all bureaucratic practices and all “ordering” from above. Carrying forward the programmatic views of Marxism on the state, Engels wrote:

So, then, a unified republic—but not in the sense of the present French Republic, which is nothing but the Empire established in 1798 without the Emperor. From 1792 to 1798 each French department, each commune [*Gemeinde*], enjoyed complete self-government on the American model, and this is what we too must have. How self-government is to be organized and how we can manage, without a bureaucracy has been

25. For instance, Rosa Luxemburg argued that socialists should not support Poland's independence from Russian domination on the grounds that only socialism could liberate Poland and that any effort spent fighting for self-determination was a diversion.

26. Service's translation, 65.

shown to us by America and the first French Republic, and is being shown even today by Australia, Canada, and the other English colonies. And a provincial [regional] and communal self-government of this type is far freer than, for instance, Swiss federalism, under which, it is true, the canton is very independent in relation to the Bund [i.e., the federated state as a whole], but is also independent in relation to the district [*Bezirk*] and the commune. The cantonal governments appoint the district governors [*Bezirksstatthalter*] and prefects—which is unknown in English-speaking countries and which we want to abolish here as resolutely in the future as the Prussian Landrate and Regierungsrate.²⁷

That is, commissioners, district police chiefs, governors, and in general all officials appointed from above. Accordingly, Engels proposes the following words for the self-government clause in the program:

Complete self-government for the provinces [*gubernias* or regions], districts and communes through officials elected by universal suffrage. The abolition of all local and provincial authorities appointed by the state.²⁸

I have already had occasion to point out—in *Pravda*,²⁹ which was suppressed by the government of Kerensky and other “socialist” ministers—how on this point (of course, not on this point alone by any means) our pseudo-socialist representatives of pseudo-revolutionary pseudo-democracy have made glaring departures *from democracy*. Naturally, people who have bound themselves by a “coalition” to the imperialist bourgeoisie have remained deaf to this criticism.

27. Regional governments with special privileges vis-à-vis other German provinces.

28. Engels, *Critique*, 228–29. Here Engels is arguing that a unified, centralized republic does not necessarily negate local autonomy. The question of whether a more-centralized form of government should be supported as a progressive democratic reform must be analyzed on a case-by-case basis in the interest of the working class. Here, it is worth noting that Engels’s assertion that the US government (state) was a model of local democracy “without a bureaucracy” does not take into account the structure of the smothering, repressive state apparatus at work in the American South, which was designed to repress the enslaved population.

29. Lenin cites *Pravda* no. 68, May 28, 1917. He wrote several articles in this issue of *Pravda* and it is not clear which specific article he is referring to here, although he does refer to the SRs’ and Mensheviks’ refusal to publicly disclaim Russian annexation of oppressed nations and peoples as result of the war. See Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 24, 527–38.

It is extremely important to note that Engels, armed with facts, disproved by a most precise example the prejudice that is very widespread, particularly among petit-bourgeois democrats, that a federal republic necessarily means a greater amount of freedom than a centralized republic. This is wrong. It is disproved by the facts Engels cites regarding the centralized French Republic of 1792–98 and the federal Swiss Republic. The really democratic centralized republic gave *more* freedom than the federal republic. In other words, the *greatest* amount of local, regional, and other types of freedom³⁰ known in history was accorded by a *centralized* and not a federal republic.

Insufficient attention has been and is being paid in our party propaganda and agitation to this fact, as indeed to the whole question of the federal and centralized republic and local self-government.

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

In his preface to the third edition of *The Civil War in France* (dated March 18, 1891, and originally published in *Neue Zeit*), Engels, in addition to some interesting incidental remarks on questions concerning the attitude toward the state, gave a remarkably vivid summary of the lessons of the Commune. This summary, made more profound by the entire experience of the twenty years that separated the author from the Commune and directed expressly against the “superstitious belief in the state” so widespread in Germany, may justly be called the *last word* of Marxism on the question under consideration.

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.³¹

30. Service's translation, 67.

31. Engels, 1891, “Introduction,” in Marx, *Civil War in France*, in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 620.

This summary of the experience of bourgeois revolutions is as concise as it is expressive. The essence of the matter—among other things, on the question of the state (*is the oppressed class armed?*)—is here remarkably well grasped. It is precisely this essence that is most often evaded both by professors influenced by bourgeois ideology and by petit-bourgeois democrats. In the Russian Revolution of 1917, the honor (Cavaignac³² honor) of blabbing this secret of bourgeois revolutions fell to the Menshevik would-be Marxist Tsereteli. In his “historic” speech of June 11, Tsereteli blurted out that the bourgeoisie were determined to disarm the Petrograd workers—presenting, of course, this decision as his own, and as a necessity for the “state” in general!³³

Tsereteli’s historic speech of June 11 will, of course, serve every historian of the revolution of 1917 as a graphic illustration of how the Social Revolutionary and Menshevik bloc, led by Mr. Tsereteli, deserted to the bourgeoisie *against* the revolutionary proletariat.

Another incidental remark of Engels’s, also connected with the question of the state, deals with religion. It is well known that the German Social Democrats, as they degenerated and became increasingly opportunist, slipped more and more frequently into the philistine misinterpretation of the celebrated formula: “Religion is to be declared a private matter.”³⁴ That is, the formula was twisted to mean that religion was a private matter *even for the party* of the revolutionary proletariat!! Engels vigorously protested. In 1891 he saw only the very feeble beginnings of opportunism in his party and, therefore, he expressed himself with extreme caution:

As almost only workers, or recognized 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

32. Louis-Eugène Cavaignac (1802–57) was a French general who repressed the workers’ uprising in 1848 in Paris.

33. Tsereteli spoke for the SR and Menshevik majority in the Petrograd Soviet, banning a proposed Bolshevik demonstration opposing the Provisional Government’s plans for a new army offensive.

34. Lenin is paraphrasing Engels’s listing of the Commune’s decrees from his 1891 introduction.

to pass solely out of cowardice, but which provided a necessary basis for the free activity of the working class—such as the realization 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.³⁵

Engels deliberately emphasized 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 no-denominational status but renounces the *party* struggle against the opium of religion, which stupefies the people.

The future historian of the German Social Democrats, in tracing the roots of their shameful bankruptcy in 1914, will find a fair amount of interesting material on this question, beginning with the evasive declarations in the articles of the party’s ideological leader, Kautsky, which throw the door wide open to opportunism, and ending with the attitude of the party toward the “*Los-von-Kirche-Bewegung*” (the “Leave-the-Church” movement) in 1913.³⁶

But let us see how, twenty years after the Commune, Engels summed up its lessons for the fighting proletariat.

Here are the lessons to which Engels attached prime importance:

It was precisely the oppressing power of the former centralized 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 recognize that the

35. Engels, “Introduction,” *Civil War in France*, 624.

36. *New York Times*, “German Church’s Losses,” March 29, 1914. The SPD supported the campaign for individuals to leave the official state church. Lenin was critical of this campaign, presumably because he believed the party was uncritical toward some of the religious leaders who opposed the official church but advocated other forms of spirituality that he worried would dilute the atheist principles of the party *as a party*.

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.³⁷

Engels emphasized once again that not only under a monarchy but *also under a democratic republic* the state remains a state, that is, it retains its fundamental distinguishing feature of transforming the officials, the “servants of society,” and its organs into the *masters* of society.

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.³⁸ 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.³⁹

Engels here approached the interesting boundary line at which consistent democracy on the one hand is *transformed* into socialism and, on the other, *demand*s socialism. For, in order to abolish the state, it is necessary to convert the functions of the civil service into the simple operations of control and accounting that are within the scope and ability of the vast majority of the population and, subsequently, of every single individual. If careerism is to be abolished completely, it must be made *impossible* for

37. Engels, “Introduction,” *Civil War in France*, 627.

38. The following is Lenin’s own note in the original text: “Nominally about 2,400 rubles or, according to the present rate of exchange, about 6,000 rubles. The action of those Bolsheviks who propose that a salary of 9,000 rubles be paid to members of municipal councils, for instance, instead of a maximum salary of 6,000 rubles—quite an adequate sum—throughout the state, is inexcusable.”

39. Engels, “Introduction,” *Civil War in France*, 628.

“honorable” though profitless posts in the Civil Service to be used as a springboard to highly lucrative posts in banks or joint-stock companies, as *constantly* happens in all the freest capitalist countries.

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 it is impossible under capitalism and will be superfluous under socialism.⁴⁰ This seemingly clever but actually incorrect statement might be made in regard to any democratic institution, including moderate salaries for officials, because fully consistent democracy is impossible under capitalism, and under socialism all democracy *will wither away*.

This is a sophism, like the old joke about a man becoming bald by losing one more hair.

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. Taken separately, no kind of democracy will bring socialism. But in actual life democracy will never be “taken separately”; it will be “taken together” with other things, it will exert its influence on economic life as well, will stimulate its transformation, and in its turn it will be influenced by economic development and so on. This is the dialectic of living history.

Engels continued:

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 “realization 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, realized. And from this follows a superstitious reverence for the state and everything connected with it, which takes root

40. See above reference to Rosa Luxemburg.

all 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 rubbish of the state.⁴¹

Engels warned the Germans not to forget the principles of socialism with regard to the state in general, in connection with the substitution of a republic for the monarchy. His warnings now read like a veritable lesson to the Tseretelis and Chernovs who, in their “coalition” practice, have revealed a superstitious belief in and a superstitious reverence for the state!

Two more remarks. 1. Engels’s statement that in a democratic republic, “no less” than in a monarchy, the state remains a “machine for the oppression of one class by another” by no means signifies that the *form* of oppression makes no difference to the proletariat, as some anarchists “teach.” A wider, freer, and more open *form* of the class struggle and of class oppression vastly assists the proletariat in its struggle for the abolition of classes in general.

2. Why will only a new generation be able to discard the entire rubbish of the state? This question is bound up with that of overcoming democracy, with which we shall deal now.

41. Engels, “Introduction,” *Civil War in France*, 628–29. Service replaces the phrase “lumber of the state” with “rubbish of the state.” See Service, 71–72.

6. Engels on Overcoming Democracy

Engels came to express his views on this subject when establishing that the term “Social Democrat” was *scientifically* wrong.

In a preface to an edition of his articles of the seventies on various subjects, mostly on “international” questions (*Internationales aus dem Volkstaat*), dated January 3, 1894, that is, written a year and a half before his death, Engels wrote that in all his articles he used the word “Communist” and not “Social Democrat,” because at that time the Proudhonists in France and the Lassalleans in Germany called themselves Social Democrats. Engels continued:

For Marx and myself, it was therefore absolutely impossible to use such a loose term to characterize 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 program 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.⁴²

The dialectician Engels remained true to dialectics to the end of his days. Marx and I, he said, had a splendid, scientifically exact name for the party, but there was no real party, i.e., no mass proletarian party. Now (at the end of the nineteenth century) there was a real party, but its name was scientifically wrong. Never mind, it would “pass muster” so long as the party *developed*, so long as the scientific inaccuracy of the name was not hidden from it and did not hinder its development on the right direction!

Perhaps some wit would console us Bolsheviks in the manner of Engels: we have a real party, it is developing splendidly; even such a meaningless and ugly term as “Bolshevik” will “pass muster,” although it expresses nothing whatever but the purely accidental fact that at the Brussels-London Congress of 1903 we were in the majority.⁴³ Perhaps now that the persecu-

42. Engels, “Preface to the Pamphlet *Internationales aus dem ‘Volkstaat’* (1871–75)” in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 27, 417–18. Emphasis Engels’s; translation notes Lenin’s.

43. “Majority” in Russian is *bolshestvo*, thus the name *Bolshevik*.

tion of our party by republicans and “revolutionary” petit-bourgeois democrats in July and August⁴⁴ has earned the name “Bolshevik” such universal respect, now that, in addition, this persecution marks the tremendous historical progress our party has made in its real development—perhaps now even I might hesitate to insist on the suggestion I made in April to change the name of our party. Perhaps I would propose a “compromise” to my comrades: namely, to call ourselves the Communist Party, but to retain the word “Bolshevik” in brackets.

But the question of the name of the party is incomparably less important than the question of the attitude of the revolutionary proletariat to the state.

In the usual argument about the state, the mistake against which Engels warned and which we have in passing indicated above is made constantly: namely, it is constantly forgotten that the abolition of the state means also the abolition of democracy, that the withering away of the state means the withering away of democracy.

At first sight this assertion seems exceedingly strange and incomprehensible; indeed, someone may even suspect us of expecting the advent of a system of society in which the principle of subordination of the minority to the majority will not be observed—for democracy means the recognition of this very principle.

No, democracy is *not* identical with the subordination of the minority to the majority. Democracy is a *state* that recognizes the subordination of the minority to the majority, that is, an organization for the systematic use of *force* by one class against another, by one section of the population against another.⁴⁵

We set ourselves the ultimate aim of abolishing the state, by which we mean all organized and systematic violence, all use of violence against

44. During the so-called July Days, sailors, soldiers, and sections of the Bolshevik Party threatened a partial uprising in Saint Petersburg. The majority of the Bolshevik central committee opposed it, judging it premature. In the aftermath, many Bolshevik leaders, including Trotsky, were imprisoned and Lenin went into hiding in nearby Finland. It was during his weeks in hiding that he completed *State and Revolution*.

45. Here, Lenin is insisting that *even* the *most* democratic state is still a state; that is, it is a social organization that *compels* individuals to submit to democratic decisions, laws,

people in general. We do not expect the advent of a system of society in which the principle of subordination of the minority to the majority will not be observed. In striving for socialism, however, we are convinced that it will develop into communism and, therefore, that the need for violence against people in general, for the *subordination* of one person to another and of one section of the population to another, will vanish altogether, since people will *become accustomed* to observing the elementary conditions of social life *without violence* and *without subordination*.

In order to emphasize this element of habit, Engels speaks of a new *generation*, “reared in new, free social conditions,” which will “be able to discard the entire rubbish of the state”—of any state, including the democratic-republican state.

In order to explain this, it is necessary to analyze the economic basis of the withering away of the state.

regulations, etc. His argument that democracy, a democratic state, “is not identical with the subordination of the minority to the majority” is easily understood by thinking about everyday life. For instance, a group of friends may make plans (such as choosing a restaurant) in which the minority must go along with the decision of the majority, but there is no question of this being enforced by a state, that is, by “special bodies of armed men.”

Chapter 5

The Economic Basis of the Withering Away of the State

Marx explains this question most thoroughly in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*.¹ The polemical part of this remarkable work, which contains a criticism of Lassalleanism, has, so to speak, overshadowed its positive part, namely the analysis of the connection between the development of communism and the withering away of the state.

1. Marx's Presentation of the Question

From a superficial comparison of Marx's letter to Bracke of May 5, 1875, with Engels's letter to Bebel of March 28, 1875,² which we examined above, it might appear that Marx was much more of a "champion of the state" than Engels and that the difference of opinion between the two writers on the question of the state was very considerable.

Engels suggested to Bebel that all chatter about the state be dropped altogether, and that the word "state" be eliminated from the

1. Lenin cites Marx's letter to Bracke, May 5, 1875, "which was not published until 1891 when it was printed in *Neue Zeit*, vol. IX, 1, and which has appeared in Russian in a special edition." See Marx, "Letter to Bracke," *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 45, 69. Marx attached his critical marginal notes of the Gotha unification congress's party program to this letter. Engels published those notes in 1891 under the title *Critique of the Gotha Program*. See the citation below.

2. See Chapter 4, Section 3, in *State and Revolution*, "Letter to Bebel."

program altogether and the word “community” substituted for it. Engels even declared that the Commune was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word. Yet Marx even spoke of the “future state in communist society,” i.e., he would seem to recognize the need for the state even under communism.

But such a view would be fundamentally wrong. A closer examination shows that Marx’s and Engels’s views on the state and its withering away were completely identical, and that Marx’s expression quoted above refers to the state in the process of *withering away*.

Clearly, there can be no question of specifying the moment of the *future* “withering away,” the more so since it will obviously be a lengthy process. The apparent difference between Marx and Engels is due to the fact that they dealt with different subjects and pursued different aims. Engels set out to show Bebel graphically, sharply, and in broad outline the utter absurdity of the current prejudices concerning the state (shared to no small degree by Lassalle). Marx only touched upon *this* question in passing, being interested in another subject: the *development* of communist society.

The whole theory of Marx is the application of the theory of development—in its most consistent, complete, considered, and pithy form—to modern capitalism. Naturally, Marx was faced with the problem of applying this theory both to the *forthcoming* collapse of capitalism and to the future development of *future* communism.

On the basis of what *facts*, then, can the question of the future development of future communism be dealt with?

On the basis of the fact that it *has its origin* in capitalism, that it develops historically from capitalism, that it is the result of the action of a social force to which capitalism gave birth. There is no trace of an attempt on Marx’s part to make up a utopia, to indulge in idle guesswork about what cannot be known. Marx treated the question of communism in the same way as a naturalist would treat the question of the development of, say, a new biological variety, once he knew that it had originated in such-and-such a way and was changing in such-and-such a definite direction.

To begin with, Marx brushed aside the confusion the Gotha Program brought into the question of the relationship between state and society. He wrote:

“Present-day society” is capitalist society, which exists in all civilized 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 civilized 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. They 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*.³

After thus ridiculing all talk about a “people’s state,” Marx formulated the question and gave warning, as it were, that those seeking a scientific answer to it should use only firmly established scientific data.

The first fact that has been established most accurately by the whole theory of development, by science as a whole—a fact that was ignored by the utopians and is ignored by the present-day opportunists, who are afraid of the socialist revolution—is that, historically, there must undoubtedly be a special stage, or a special phase, of *transition* from capitalism to communism.

3. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*, in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 537–38.

2. The Transition from Capitalism to Communism

Marx continued:

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*.⁴

Marx bases this conclusion on an analysis of the role played by the proletariat in modern capitalist society, on the data concerning the development of this society, and on the irreconcilability of the antagonistic interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

Previously the question was put as follows: to achieve its emancipation, the proletariat must overthrow the bourgeoisie, win political power, and establish its revolutionary dictatorship.

Now the question is put somewhat differently: the transition from capitalist society—which is developing toward communism—to communist society is impossible without a “political transition period,” and the state in this period can only be the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

What, then, is the relation of this dictatorship to democracy?

We have seen that the *Communist Manifesto* simply places side by side the two concepts: “to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class” and “to win the battle of democracy.” On the basis of all that has been said above, it is possible to determine more precisely how democracy changes in the transition from capitalism to communism.

In capitalist society, providing it develops under the most favorable conditions, we have a more or less complete democracy in the democratic republic. But this democracy is always hemmed in by the narrow limits set by capitalist exploitation and consequently always remains, in effect, a democracy for the minority, only for the propertied classes, only for the rich. Freedom in capitalist society always remains about the same as it was in the ancient Greek republics: freedom for the slaveowners. Owing to the conditions of capitalist exploitation, the modern wage

4. *Ibid.*, 538.

slaves are so crushed by want and poverty that “they cannot be bothered with democracy,” “cannot be bothered with politics”; in the ordinary, peaceful course of events, the majority of the population is debarred from participation in public and political life.

The correctness of this statement is perhaps most clearly confirmed by Germany, because constitutional legality steadily endured there for a remarkably long time—nearly half a century (1871–1914)—and during this period the Social Democrats were able to achieve far more than in other countries in the way of “utilizing legality,” and organized a larger proportion of the workers into a political party than anywhere else in the world.

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 fifteen million wage workers! Three million organized in trade unions—out of fifteen million!⁵

Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich—that is the democracy of capitalist society. If we look more closely into the machinery of capitalist democracy, we see everywhere, in the “petty”—supposedly petty—details of suffrage (residential qualifications, exclusion of women, etc.), in the technique of representative institutions, in the actual obstacles to the right of assembly (public buildings are not for “paupers!”), in the purely capitalist organization of the daily press, etc., etc.,—we see restriction after restriction upon democracy. These restrictions, exceptions, exclusions, obstacles for the poor seem slight, especially in the eyes of one who has never known want himself and has never been in close contact with the oppressed classes in their mass life (and nine out of ten, if not ninety-nine out of one hundred, bourgeois publicists and politicians come under this category), but in their sum

5. That is, Lenin is saying that in Germany, even under a democratic regime with the *best* socialist party and biggest trade unions in the world, capitalism is still *so* repressive that most workers are *excluded* from politics. He argues that this is not accidental but results from the limitations of capitalist democracy, which he goes on to elaborate in the next paragraph. Therefore, something *else* is needed to involve the bulk of the working class in politics: revolution.

total these restrictions exclude and squeeze out the poor from politics, from active participation in democracy.

Marx grasped this *essence* of capitalist democracy splendidly when, in analyzing the experience of the Commune, he said that the oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class shall represent and repress them in parliament!

But from this capitalist democracy—which is inevitably narrow and stealthily pushes aside the poor, and is therefore hypocritical and false through and through—forward development does not proceed simply, directly, and smoothly toward “greater and greater democracy,” as the liberal professors and petit-bourgeois opportunists would have us believe. No, forward development, i.e., development toward communism, proceeds through the dictatorship of the proletariat and cannot do otherwise, for the *resistance* of the capitalist exploiters cannot be *broken* by anyone else or in any other way.⁶

And the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, the organization 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. *Simultaneously* with an immense expansion of democracy, which *for the first time* becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the moneybags, the dictatorship of the proletariat imposes a series of restrictions on the freedom of the oppressors, the exploiters, the capitalists. We must suppress them in order to free humanity from wage slavery; their resistance must be crushed by force; it is clear that there is no freedom and no democracy where there is suppression and where there is violence.

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.”⁷

6. That is, in order to really involve the majority of the working population in democratic decision-making, the political power of the rich must be broken.

7. This is a paraphrase of the quote from Engels in the letter to Bebel Lenin quotes in chapter 4, section 3.

Democracy for the vast majority of the people, and suppression by force, i.e., exclusion from democracy, of the exploiters and oppressors of the people—this is the change democracy undergoes during the *transition* from capitalism to communism.

Only in communist society, when the resistance of the capitalists has been completely crushed, when the capitalists have disappeared, when there are no classes (i.e., when there is no distinction between the members of society as regards their relation to the social means of production), *only* then “the state . . . ceases to exist” and “it becomes possible to speak of freedom.” Only then will a truly complete democracy become possible and be realized, a democracy without any exceptions whatsoever. And only then will democracy begin to *wither away* owing to the simple fact that, freed from capitalist slavery, from the untold horrors, savagery, absurdities, and infamies of capitalist exploitation, people will gradually *become accustomed* to observing the elementary rules of social intercourse that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all copybook maxims.⁸ They will become accustomed to observing them without force, without coercion, without subordination, *without the special apparatus* for coercion called the state.

The expression “the state *withers away*” is very well-chosen, for it indicates both the gradual and the spontaneous nature of the process. Only habit can, and undoubtedly will, have such an effect, for we see around us on millions of occasions how readily people become accustomed to observing the necessary rules of social intercourse when there is no exploitation, when there is nothing that arouses indignation, evokes protest and revolt, and creates the need for *suppression*.⁹

And so in capitalist society we have a democracy that is curtailed, wretched, false, a democracy only for the rich, for the minority. The

8. That is, in children’s textbooks.

9. This is worth emphasizing. Communist society will operate through “habit” and “copybook maxims.” Some examples of these “maxims”: do unto others, don’t take more than you need, share with your friends, be kind to strangers, don’t pout if you don’t get your way, everyone gets a turn, and so on. That is, the essential cooperative nature of humanity will be a sufficient guide to social action without the need for an apparatus of coercion.

dictatorship of the proletariat, the period of transition to communism, will for the first time create democracy for the people, for the majority, along with the necessary suppression of the exploiters, the minority. Communism alone is capable of providing really complete democracy, and the more complete it is, the sooner it will become unnecessary and wither away of its own accord.

In other words, under capitalism we have the state in the proper sense of the word, that is, a special machine for the suppression of one class by another, and, what is more, of the majority by the minority. Naturally, to be successful, such an undertaking as the systematic suppression of the exploited majority by the exploiting minority calls for the utmost ferocity and savagery in the matter of suppression; it calls for seas of blood, through which mankind is actually wading its way in slavery, serfdom, and wage labor.

Furthermore, during the *transition* from capitalism to communism, suppression is *still* necessary, but it is now the suppression of the exploiting minority by the exploited majority. A special apparatus, a special machine for suppression, the “state,” is *still* necessary, but this is now a transitional state. It is no longer a state in the proper sense of the word, for the suppression of the minority of exploiters by the majority of the wage slaves of *yesterday* is comparatively so easy, simple, and natural a task that it will entail far less bloodshed than suppressing the risings of slaves, serfs, or wage laborers and it will cost humanity far less. It is also compatible with the extension of democracy to such an overwhelming majority of the population that the need for a *special machine* of suppression will begin to disappear. 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 *organization of the armed people* (such as the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, we would remark, running ahead).¹⁰

10. For example, it would be relatively simple to form unions and win strikes without police loyal to the capitalist state with laws written *in favor* of forming unions. The owners and bosses may not like it, but what could they do without their “special bodies of armed men” to act as their enforcers?

Finally, only communism makes the state absolutely unnecessary, for there is *nobody* to be suppressed—“nobody” in the sense of a class, a systematic struggle against a definite section of the population. We are not utopians and do not in the least deny the possibility and inevitability of excesses on the part of *individual persons*, or the need to stop *such* excesses. In the first place, however, no special machine, no special apparatus of suppression, is needed for this: this will be done by the armed people themselves as simply and as readily as any crowd of civilized people, even in modern society, interferes to put a stop to a scuffle or to prevent a woman from being assaulted. Second, we know that the fundamental social cause of excesses that consist in the violation of the rules of social intercourse is the exploitation of the people: their want and their poverty. With the removal of this chief cause, excesses will inevitably begin to “*wither away*.” We do not know how quickly and in what succession, but we do know they will wither away. With their withering away the state will also *wither away*.¹¹

Without building utopias, Marx defined more fully what can be defined *now* regarding this future, namely the differences between the lower and higher phases (levels, stages) of communist society.

3. The First Phase of Communist Society

In the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Marx goes into detail to disprove Lassalle’s idea that under socialism the worker will receive the “undiminished” or “full product of his labor.” Marx shows that from the whole of the social labor of society there must be deducted a reserve fund, a fund for the expansion of production, a fund for the replacement of the “wear and tear” of machinery, and so on. Then from the means of consumption must be deducted a fund for administrative expenses, schools, hospitals, old people’s homes, and so on.¹²

11. That is, crimes committed by poor and working-class people against other poor and working-class people will “wither away” along with the state because the social conditions (exploitation, oppression, poverty) that create both crime and the state will disappear under communism.

12. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*, in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 528–29.

Instead of Lassalle's hazy, obscure, general phrase ("the full product of his labor to the worker"), Marx makes a sober estimate of exactly how socialist society will have to manage its affairs. Marx proceeds to make a *concrete* analysis of the conditions of life of a society in which there will be no capitalism and says, in analyzing the program of the workers' party:

What we have to deal with here 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.¹³

It is this communist society, which has just emerged into the light of day out of the womb of capitalism and which is in every respect stamped with the birthmarks of the old society, that Marx terms the "first," or lower, phase of communist society.

The means of production are no longer the private property of individuals. The means of production belong to the whole of society. Every member of society, performing a certain part of the socially necessary work, receives a certificate from society to the effect that he has done a certain amount of work. And with this certificate he receives from the public store of consumer goods a corresponding quantity of products. After a deduction is made of the amount of labor that goes to the public fund, every worker, therefore, receives from society as much as he has given to it.¹⁴

"Equality" apparently reigns supreme.

But when Lassalle, having in view such a social order (usually called socialism, but termed by Marx the first phase of communism), says that this is "equitable distribution," that this is "the equal right of all to an equal product of labor," Lassalle is mistaken and Marx exposes the mistake.

"Hence, the equal right," says Marx, in this case *still* certainly conforms to "bourgeois right," which, like all law, *implies inequality*. All law is an application of an *equal* measure to *different* people who in fact are

13. *Ibid.*, 529.

14. Of course, this "certificate" could take the form of any sort of currency.

not alike, not equal to one another. That is why the “equal right” is a violation of equality and an injustice. In fact, everyone having performed as much social labor as another receives an equal share of the social product (after the above-mentioned deductions).

But people are not alike: one is strong, another is weak; one is married, another is not; one has more children, another has fewer, and so on. And the conclusion Marx draws is:

With an equal performance of labor, and hence an equal share in the social consumption fund, one will in fact receive more than another, one will be richer than another, and so on. To avoid all these defects, the right instead of being equal would have to be unequal.¹⁵

The first phase of communism, therefore, cannot yet provide justice and equality; differences, and unjust differences, in wealth will still persist, but the *exploitation* of person by person will have become impossible because it will be impossible to seize *the means of production*—the factories, machines, land, etc.—and make them private property. In smashing Lassalle’s petit-bourgeois, vague phrases about “equality” and “justice” in *general*, Marx shows the *course of development* of communist society, which is *compelled* to abolish at first *only* the “injustice” of the means of production seized by individuals and which is *unable* at once to eliminate the other injustice, which consists in the distribution of consumer goods “according to the amount of labor performed” (and not according to needs).

The vulgar economists, including the bourgeois professors and

15. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program* in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 531. Here Marx is dealing with the fact that, immediately after the revolution, the workers’ state will still have to recognize the inequality inherited from capitalism in the form of access to education and skills. For instance, doctors may still receive a higher wage than janitors and a highly skilled technician may receive more than an unskilled worker or a novice, even though they work for the same amount of time. Of course, even under this “first phase of communism,” the wages of the poorest workers could be greatly increased and allowances can be made for paying more to workers who have more children, either through individual wages or through the social provision of childcare, and so on. Also, political decisions to raise traditionally oppressed groups’ pay substantially, such as women, African Americans, and Latino/as, could be agreed upon as well.

“our” Tugan,¹⁶ constantly reproach the socialists with forgetting the inequality of people and with “dreaming” of eliminating this inequality. Such a reproach, as we see, only proves the extreme ignorance of the bourgeois ideologists.

Marx not only most scrupulously takes account of the inevitable inequality of human beings, but he also takes into account the fact that the mere conversion of the means of production into the common property of the whole society (commonly called “socialism”) *does not remove* the defects of distribution and the inequality of “bourgeois laws” that *continues to prevail* so long as products are divided “according to the amount of labor performed.” Continuing, Marx says:

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.¹⁷

And so, in the first phase of communist society (usually called socialism) “bourgeois law” is *not* abolished in its entirety but only in part, only in proportion to the economic revolution so far attained—that is, only with respect to the means of production. “Bourgeois law” recognizes them as the private property of individuals. Socialism converts them into *common* property. *To that extent*—and to that extent alone—“bourgeois law” disappears.

However, it persists as far as its other part is concerned: it persists in the capacity of regulator (determining factor) of the distribution of products and the allotment of labor among the members of society. The socialist principle “he who does not work shall not eat” is *already* realized; the other socialist principle, “an equal amount of products for an equal amount of labor,” is also *already* realized. But this is not yet communism and it does

16. Mikhail Tugan-Baranovsky (1865–1919), a Russian economist, was a “legal Marxist” (one of a group of writers who were tolerated by the tsar’s censors because of their moderation and highly abstract and technical styles) at the turn of the century before moving to the right.

17. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*, in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 531.

not yet abolish “bourgeois law,” which gives unequal individuals, in return for unequal (really unequal) amounts of labor, equal amounts of products.

This is a “defect,” says Marx, but it is unavoidable in the first phase of communism, for if we are not to indulge in utopianism we must not think that, having overthrown capitalism, people will at once learn to work for society *without any rules of law*. Besides, the abolition of capitalism *does not immediately create* the economic prerequisites for *such* a change.

Now, there are no other rules than those of “bourgeois law.” To this extent, therefore, there still remains the need for a state that, while safeguarding the common ownership of the means of production, would safeguard equality in labor and in the distribution of products.¹⁸

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

But the state has not yet completely withered away, since there still remains the safeguarding of “bourgeois law,” which sanctifies actual inequality. For the state to wither away completely, complete communism is necessary.

4. The Higher Phase of Communist Society

Marx continues:

In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor, and with it also the antithesis between mental and physical labor, has vanished, after labor has become not only a livelihood but life’s prime want,¹⁹ 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

18. That is, the state (“the proletariat organized as the ruling class”) will have a dual role: make sure the capitalists are not able to reconquer their ownership of the means of production, *and* function as the political mechanism through which workers and other oppressed classes use democracy to debate, decide upon, and distribute the fruits of their labor and set minimum-wage rates, benefits, hours, and working conditions, etc. Some of these early decisions will no doubt be very contentious and may well lead to a great deal of debate among workers of various points of view.

19. That is, the cooperative and social nature of human labor will be restored as humanity’s chief expression of its creative potential.

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!²⁰

Only now can we fully appreciate the correctness of Engels's remarks mercilessly ridiculing the absurdity of combining the words "freedom" and "state." So long as the state exists there is no freedom. When there is freedom, there will be no state.

The economic basis for the complete withering away of the state is such a high state of development of communism, at which the antithesis between mental and physical labor disappears, at which there consequently disappears one of the principal sources of modern *social* inequality²¹—a source, moreover, that cannot on any account be removed immediately by the mere conversion of the means of production into public property, by the mere expropriation of the capitalists.

This expropriation will make it *possible* for the productive forces to develop to a tremendous extent. And when we see how incredibly capitalism is already *retarding* this development, when we see how much progress could be achieved on the basis of the level of technique already attained, we are entitled to say with the fullest confidence that the expropriation of the capitalists will inevitably result in an enormous development of the productive forces of human society.²² But how rapidly this

20. *Ibid.*, 531.

21. That is, ending the practice where a tiny percentage of the population is allowed to design, create, think, experiment, etc., while rest are confined to following orders at work and carrying out repetitive and deadening labor. This will be accomplished by a number of measures, including a dramatic expansion of the educational system and a reduction in the workday.

22. Thus, far from Lenin believing that communism would "spread poverty," he followed Marx in arguing that communism would unlock innovation and economic development and permit a dramatic improvement in everyone's standard of living by material, social, and artistic measures, as well as allowing society to develop a healthy and sustainable relationship with the planet. One example of this "retarding" effect today is that pharmaceutical companies hide their research from one another in the pursuit of profit through patents instead of allowing their scientists to cooperate. No doubt this insane application of the "rights of private property" is currently costing hundreds of thousands of lives per year.

development will proceed, how soon it will reach the point of breaking away from the division of labor, of doing away with the antithesis between mental and physical labor, of transforming labor into “life’s prime want”—we do not and *cannot* know.

That is why we are entitled to speak only of the inevitable withering away of the state, emphasizing the protracted nature of this process and its dependence upon the rapidity of development of the *higher phase* of communism, and leaving the question of the time required for, or the concrete forms of, the withering away quite open, because there is *no* material for answering these questions.

The state will be able to wither away completely when society adopts the rule “from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs,” i.e., when people have become so accustomed to observing the fundamental rules of social intercourse and when their labor has become so productive that they will voluntarily work *according to their ability*. “The narrow horizon of bourgeois law,” which compels one to calculate with the heartlessness of a Shylock²³ whether one has not worked half an hour more than anybody else—this narrow horizon will then be left behind. There will then be no need for society, in distributing products, to regulate the quantity to be received by each; each will take freely “according to his needs.”

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, without any control over the labor of the individual citizen, any quantity of truffles, cars, pianos, etc. Even to this day, most bourgeois “savants” confine themselves to sneering in this way, thereby betraying both their ignorance and their selfish defense of capitalism.

Ignorance—for it has never entered the head of any socialist to “promise” that the higher phase of the development of communism will arrive; as for the greatest socialists’ *forecast* that it will arrive, it presupposes *not the present* ordinary run of people who, like the seminary students in

23. The moneylender in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*.

Pomyalovsky's²⁴ stories, are capable of damaging the stocks of public wealth "just for fun" and demanding the impossible.

Until the "higher" phase of communism arrives, the socialists demand the *strictest* control by society *and by the state* over the measure of labor and the measure of consumption, but this control must *start* with the expropriation of the capitalists, with the establishment of workers' control over the capitalists, and must be exercised not by a state of bureaucrats but by a state of *armed workers*.

The selfish defense of capitalism by the bourgeois ideologists (and their hangers-on, like the Tseretelis, Chernovs, and company) consists in that they *substitute* arguing and talk about the distant future for the vital and burning question of present-day politics—namely the expropriation of the capitalists, the conversion of *all* citizens into workers and other employees of *one* huge "syndicate"—the whole state—and the complete subordination of the entire work of this syndicate to a genuinely democratic state, *the state of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*.

In fact, when a learned professor, followed by the philistine, followed in turn by the Tseretelis and Chernovs, talks of wild utopias, of the demagogic promises of the Bolsheviks, of the impossibility of "introducing" socialism, it is the higher stage or phase of communism he has in mind, which no one has ever promised or even thought to "introduce" because, generally speaking, it cannot be "introduced."

And this brings us to the question of the scientific distinction between socialism and communism on which Engels touched in his above-quoted argument about the incorrectness of the name "Social Democrat." Politically, the distinction between the first, or lower, and the higher phase of communism will in time probably be tremendous. But it would be ridiculous to recognize this distinction now, under capitalism, and only individual anarchists, perhaps, could invest it with primary importance (if there still are people among the anarchists who have learned nothing from

24. Nikolay Gerasimovich Pomyalovsky (1835–63), author of *Seminary Sketches*, apparently drank himself to death at an early age.

the “Plekhanov” conversion of the Kropotkins, Grave, Cornelissen,²⁵ and other “stars” of anarchism into social chauvinists or “anarcho-trenchists,” as Ghe,²⁶ one of the few anarchists who have still preserved a sense of humor and a conscience, has put it).

But the scientific distinction between socialism and communism is clear. What is usually called socialism was termed by Marx the “first,” or lower, phase of communist society. Insofar as the means of production becomes *common* property, the word “communism” is also applicable here, providing we do not forget that this is *not* complete communism. The great significance of Marx’s explanations is that here, too, he consistently applies materialist dialectics, the theory of development, and regards communism as something that develops *out* of capitalism. Instead of scholastically invented, “concocted” definitions and fruitless disputes over words (what is socialism? what is communism?), Marx gives an analysis of what might be called the stages of the economic maturity of communism.

In its first phase or stage, communism *cannot* as yet be fully economically mature and entirely free from the traditions or vestiges of capitalism. Hence the interesting phenomenon that communism in its first phase retains “the narrow horizon of *bourgeois* law.” Of course, bourgeois law in regard to the distribution of *consumer* goods inevitably presupposes the existence of the *bourgeois state*, for law is nothing without an apparatus capable of *enforcing* the observance of the rules of law.

It follows that under communism there remains for a time not only bourgeois law but even the bourgeois state, without the bourgeoisie!²⁷

25. Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921), Russian anarchist; Jean Grave (1854–1939), French anarchist; Christiaan Cornelissen (1864–1942), Dutch anarchist. All are mentioned here by Lenin for signing the pro-war *Manifesto of the Sixteen* in 1916, thereby abandoning their revolutionary views.

26. Alexander Ghe and other anarchists, such as Emma Goldman and Errico Malatesta, denounced the signers of the *Manifesto of the Sixteen* as having betrayed anarchist ideas.

27. Lenin does not mean that it is a state in which the bourgeoisie retains political power. However, the new postrevolutionary workers’ state, the dictatorship of the proletariat, must still base itself partially on bourgeois laws because the economy and social *structures* that the working class inherits cannot be transformed overnight. For instance, the workers’ state could decide to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 75 percent in five years’ time.

This may sound like a paradox or simply a dialectical conundrum, of which Marxism is often accused by people who have not taken the slightest trouble to study its extraordinarily profound content.

But in fact, remnants of the old surviving in the new confront us in life at every step, both in nature and in society. Marx did not arbitrarily insert a scrap of “bourgeois” law into communism, but indicated what is economically and politically inevitable in a society emerging *out of the womb* of capitalism.²⁸

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.

Democracy means equality. The great significance of the proletariat’s struggle for equality and of equality as a slogan will be clear if we correctly interpret it as meaning the abolition of *classes*. But democracy means only *formal* equality. And as soon as equality is achieved for all members of society *in relation* to ownership of the means of production, that is, equality of labor and wages, humanity will inevitably be confronted with the question of advancing farther, from formal equality to actual equality, i.e., to the operation of the rule “from each according to his ability, to

However, since the capitalist class bequeathed the workers a nation with hardly any public transportation, and it will require some decades to overcome this problem, the first laws the workers’ state passed would have to do with cutting auto and truck emissions. This would be an important step, but it would still have to accept as an economic reality the transportation of most people and goods over the highway system. For some years, most goods and personal transportation would still be conducted by individual trucks and autos, not via a well-integrated public transportation system. Thus, even the most radical laws passed with respect to vehicle emissions would initially have to be reflections of existing “bourgeois laws.” How quickly this can be changed would depend on the priority assigned to it by the democratic decisions of the majority of workers.

28. Another example: under a workers’ state, domestic violence will be illegal. What sort of punishment and/or psychological treatment is prescribed is another question, but the state (“the working class organized as the ruling class”) will still have an interest in protecting its citizens. However, the fact that there will still be domestic violence in the years after the revolution (because of the damage done to individuals by capitalist society) still means that society is sick and needs coercive laws: bourgeois laws.

each according to his needs.” By what stages, by means of what practical measures humanity will proceed to this supreme aim we do not and cannot know. But it is important to realize how infinitely mendacious is the ordinary bourgeois conception of socialism as something lifeless, rigid, fixed once and for all, whereas in reality *only* socialism will be the beginning of a rapid, genuine, truly mass forward movement, embracing first the *majority* and then the whole of the population in all spheres of public and private life.

Democracy is a form of the state, one of its varieties. Consequently, like every state, it represents on the one hand the organized, systematic use of force against persons;²⁹ on the other hand it signifies the formal recognition of equality of citizens, the equal right of all to determine the structure of and to administer the state. This, in turn, results in the fact that, at a certain stage in the development of democracy, it first welds together the class that wages a revolutionary struggle against capitalism—the proletariat—and enables it to crush, smash to atoms, wipe off the face of the earth the bourgeois, even the republican-bourgeois, state machine, the standing army, the police, and the bureaucracy and to substitute for them a *more* democratic state machine, but a state machine nevertheless, in the shape of armed workers who proceed to form a militia involving the entire population.

Here “quantity turns into quality”: *such* a degree of democracy implies overstepping the boundaries of bourgeois society and beginning its socialist reorganization. If really *all* take part in the administration of the state, capitalism cannot retain its hold. The development of capitalism, in turn, creates the *preconditions* that *enable* really “all” to take part in

29. Or the threat of violence. For example, under the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, capitalism, if you try to form a union the state will protect your boss when he fires you. If you protest and refuse to leave the boss’s office, you will be arrested for trespassing and put in jail. If, under the dictatorship of the proletariat—socialism—your boss (because there will still be bosses immediately after the revolution) tries to fire a Black worker because that boss is a racist, then the workers will fire the boss and expropriate the workplace. If that boss attempts to take action against the workers, he will go to jail or perhaps simply be forced to perform community service, like picking up trash on the side of the highway in an orange jumpsuit, depending on the seriousness of his offense.

the administration of the state. Some of these preconditions are universal literacy, which has already been achieved in a number of the most advanced capitalist countries; then the “training and disciplining” of millions of workers by the huge, complex, socialized apparatus of the postal service, railways, big factories, large-scale commerce, banking, etc., etc.³⁰

Given these *economic* preconditions, it is quite possible, after the overthrow of the capitalists and the bureaucrats, to proceed immediately, overnight, to replace them in the *control* over production and distribution, in the work of *keeping account* of labor and products, by the armed workers, by the whole of the armed population. (The question of control and accounting should not be confused with the question of the scientifically trained staff of engineers, agronomists, and so on. These gentlemen are working today in obedience to the wishes of the capitalists and will work even better tomorrow in obedience to the wishes of the armed workers.)

Accounting and control—that is *mainly* what is needed for the “smooth working,” the proper functioning, of the *first phase* of communist society. *All* citizens are transformed into hired employees of the state, which consists of the armed workers. *All* citizens become employees and workers of a single countrywide state “syndicate.” All that is required is that they should work equally, do their proper share of work, and get equal pay. The accounting and control necessary for this have been *simplified* by capitalism to the utmost and reduced to the extraordinarily simple operations—which any literate person can perform—of supervising and recording, knowing the four rules of arithmetic, and issuing appropriate receipts.³¹

When the *majority* of the people begin to keep such accounts independently everywhere and to exercise such control over the capitalists

30. That is, capitalism has created huge networks of economic cooperation via national and international corporations and public industries and services. The problem is that these entities are privately owned and controlled.

31. Lenin notes: “When the more important functions of the state are reduced to such accounting and control by the workers themselves, it will cease to be a ‘political state’ and ‘public functions lose their political character and become mere administrative functions.’ See chapter 4, section 2 with respect to Engels’s controversy with the anarchists.”

(now converted into employees) and the intellectual gentry who preserve their capitalist habits, this control will really become universal, general, and popular and there will be no getting away from it, “nowhere to go.”

The whole of society will have become a single office and a single factory, with equality of labor and pay.

But this “factory” discipline,³² which the proletariat, after defeating the capitalists, after overthrowing the exploiters, will extend to the whole of society, is by no means our ideal, or our ultimate goal. It is only a necessary *step* for thoroughly cleansing society of all the infamies and abominations of capitalist exploitation *and for further* progress.

From the moment all members of society, or at least the vast majority, have learned to administer the state *themselves*, have taken this work into their own hands, have organized control over the insignificant capitalist minority, over the gentry who wish to preserve their capitalist habits, and over the workers who have been thoroughly corrupted by capitalism—from this moment the need for government of any kind begins to disappear altogether. The more complete the democracy, the nearer the moment when it becomes unnecessary. The more democratic the “state” that consists of the armed workers and is “no longer a state in the proper sense of the word,” the more rapidly *every form* of state begins to wither away.

For when *all* have learned to manage and independently are actually managing social production by themselves, independently keeping accounts, and exercising control over the parasites, the sons of the wealthy, the swindlers, and other “guardians of capitalist traditions,” escape from this popular accounting and control will inevitably become so incredibly difficult, such a rare exception, and probably accompanied by such swift and severe punishment (for the armed workers are practical men and not

32. As fewer and fewer people today in the United States have personal experience in factories, it might be helpful to think about the discipline of a hospital or public school. Under capitalism, working-class people often suffer bad experiences receiving services or working in these institutions. However, the skill, cooperation, and potential good they could provide to the community, if they were not run according to the profit motive or deprived of resources, ought to be obvious.

sentimental intellectuals, and they will 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*.

Then the door will be thrown wide open for the transition from the first phase of communist society to its higher phase, and with it to the complete withering away of the state.

Chapter 6

The Vulgarization of Marxism by the Opportunists

The questions of the relation of the state to the social revolution and of the social revolution to the state, like the question of revolution generally, were given very little attention by the leading theoreticians and publicists of the Second International (1889–1914). But the most characteristic thing about the process of the gradual growth of opportunism that led to the collapse of the Second International in 1914 is the fact that even when these people were squarely faced with this question, they *tried to evade* it or ignored it.

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

To characterize this lamentable process, if only briefly, we shall take the most prominent theoreticians of Marxism: Plekhanov and Kautsky.

1. Plekhanov's Controversy with the Anarchists

Plekhanov wrote a special pamphlet on the relation of anarchism to socialism entitled *Anarchism and Socialism*,¹ which was published in German in 1894.

1. See G. V. Plekhanov, *Anarchism and Socialism*, trans. by Eleanor Marx Aveling (Minneapolis: New Times Socialist Publishing Co., 1895), www.marxists.org/archive/plekhanov/1895/anarch/index.htm.

In treating this subject, Plekhanov contrived to evade completely the most urgent, burning, and politically essential issue in the struggle against anarchism: the relation of the revolution to the state and the question of the state in general! His pamphlet has two distinct parts: one of them is historical and literary and contains valuable material on the history of the ideas of Stirner,² Proudhon, and others; the other is philistine and contains a clumsy dissertation on the theme that an anarchist cannot be distinguished from a bandit.

It is a most amusing combination of subjects and most characteristic of Plekhanov's whole activity on the eve of the revolution and during the revolutionary period in Russia. In fact, in the years 1905 to 1917, Plekhanov revealed himself as a semi-doctrinaire and semi-philistine who, in politics, trailed in the wake of the bourgeoisie.

We have now seen how, in their controversy with the anarchists, Marx and Engels with the utmost thoroughness explained their views on the relation of revolution to the state. In 1891, in his foreword to Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Engels wrote that "we"—that is, Engels and Marx—"were at that time, hardly two years after the Hague Congress of the [First] International, engaged in the most violent struggle against Bakunin and his anarchists."³

The anarchists had tried to claim the Paris Commune as their "own," so to speak, as a collaboration of their doctrine; they completely misunderstood its lessons and Marx's analysis of these lessons. Anarchism has given nothing even approximating true answers to the concrete political questions: Must the old state machine be *smashed*? And *what* should be put in its place?

But to speak of "anarchism and socialism" while completely evading the question of the state and *disregarding* the whole development of Marxism before and after the Commune meant inevitably slipping into opportunism. For what opportunism needs most of all is that the two

2. Max Stirner (1806–56) was a German anarchist.

3. See Engels, "Preface," in Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 27, 93.

questions just mentioned should *not* be raised at all. That *in itself* is a victory for opportunism.

2. Kautsky's Controversy with the Opportunists

Undoubtedly, an immeasurably larger number of Kautsky's works have been translated into Russian than into any other language.⁴ It is not without reason that some German Social Democrats say in jest that Kautsky is read more in Russia than in Germany. (Let us say, in parentheses, that this jest has a far deeper historical meaning than those who first made it suspect. The Russian workers, by making in 1905 an unusually great and unprecedented demand for the best works of Social Democratic literature and editions of these works in quantities unheard of in other countries, rapidly transplanted, so to speak, the enormous experience of a neighboring, more advanced country to the young soil of our proletarian movement.)

Besides his popularization of Marxism, Kautsky is particularly known in our country for his controversy with the opportunists, with Bernstein at their head. One fact, however, is almost unknown, one which cannot be ignored if we set out to investigate how Kautsky drifted into the morass of unbelievably disgraceful confusion and defense of social-chauvinism during the supreme crisis of 1914–15. This fact is as follows: shortly before he came out against the most prominent representatives of opportunism in France (Millerand⁵ and Jaurès⁶) and in Germany (Bernstein), Kautsky betrayed very considerable vacillation. The Marxist *Zarya*,⁷ which was published in Stuttgart in 1901 and 1902 and advocated revolutionary proletarian views, was forced to *enter into controversy* with Kautsky and

4. In fact, Lenin himself translated many of them.

5. Alexandre Millerand (1859–1943) was an opportunist French socialist politician who joined the bourgeois government in 1899, provoking sharp debate in the Second International. He became president of France in 1920.

6. Jean Jaurès (1859–1914) was the centrist leader of the Unified French Socialist Party (SFIO); he was assassinated in 1914 for his opposition to World War I.

7. *Zarya* (Dawn). Lenin contributed articles to this Russian-language publication.

describe as “elastic” the half-hearted, evasive resolution and conciliation toward the opportunists that he proposed at the International Socialist Congress in Paris in 1900.⁸ Kautsky’s letters, published in Germany, reveal no less hesitancy on his part before he took the field against Bernstein.

Of immeasurably greater significance, however, is the fact that in his very controversy with the opportunists, in his formulation of the question and his manner of treating it, we can now see, as we study the *history* of Kautsky’s latest betrayal of Marxism, his systematic deviation toward opportunism precisely on the question of the state.

Let us take Kautsky’s first important work against opportunism, *Bernstein and the Social-Democratic Program*.⁹ Kautsky refutes Bernstein in detail, but here is a characteristic thing.

Bernstein, in his *Premises of Socialism*,¹⁰ of Herostratean fame, accuses Marxism of “Blanquism” (an accusation since repeated thousands of times by the opportunists and liberal bourgeoisie in Russia against the revolutionary Marxists, the Bolsheviks). In this connection Bernstein dwells particularly on Marx’s *The Civil War in France* and tries, quite unsuccessfully, as we have seen, to identify Marx’s views on the lessons of the Commune with those of Proudhon. Bernstein pays particular attention to the conclusion that Marx emphasized in his 1872 preface to the *Communist Manifesto*: namely, that “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes.”¹¹

This statement “pleased” Bernstein so much that he used it no less than three times in his book, interpreting it in the most distorted, opportunist way.

8. This Congress took place in the wake of Millerand’s decision to join the French cabinet in the “Government of Republican Defense.” Kautsky opposed Millerand, but Lenin believed he wavered.

9. Published as *Evolutionary Socialism* in English.

10. See Eduard Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism* (Stuttgart: 1899), www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bernstein/works/1899/evsoc/index.htm

11. Marx and Engels, “Preface to the 1872 Edition of the *Communist Manifesto*,” in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 23, 175.

As we have seen, Marx meant that the working class must *smash, break, shatter* (*sprengung*, explode—the expression used by Engels) the whole state machine. But according to Bernstein, it would appear as though Marx in these words warned the working class *against* excessive revolutionary zeal when seizing power.

A cruder, more hideous distortion of Marx's idea cannot be imagined.

How, then, did Kautsky proceed in his most detailed refutation of Bernsteinism?

He refrained from analyzing the utter distortion of Marxism by opportunism on this point. He cited the above-quoted passage from Engels's preface to Marx's *Civil War* and said that according to Marx the working class cannot *simply* take over the *ready-made* state machinery, but that, generally speaking, it *can* take it over—and that was all. Kautsky did not say a word about the fact that Bernstein attributed to Marx the *very opposite* of Marx's real idea, that since 1852 Marx had formulated the task of the proletarian revolution as being to “smash” the state machine.

The result was that the most essential distinction between Marxism and opportunism on the subject of the tasks of the proletarian revolution was slurred over by Kautsky! “We can quite safely leave the solution of the problems of the proletarian dictatorship of the future,” said Kautsky, writing “*against*” Bernstein.¹²

This is not a polemic *against* Bernstein but, in essence, a *concession* to him, a surrender to opportunism, for at present the opportunists ask nothing better than to “quite safely leave to the future” all fundamental questions of the tasks of the proletarian revolution.

From 1852 to 1891, or for forty years, Marx and Engels taught the proletariat that it must smash the state machine. Yet in 1899 Kautsky, confronted with the opportunists' complete betrayal of Marxism on this point, fraudulently *substituted* for the question of whether it is necessary to smash this machine the question of the concrete forms in which it is to be smashed, and then sought refuge behind the “indisputable” (and barren) philistine truth that concrete forms cannot be known in advance!!

12. Lenin cites page 172 of the German edition.

A gulf separates Marx and Kautsky over their attitude toward the proletarian party's task of training the working class for revolution.

Let us take the next, more mature work by Kautsky, which was also largely devoted to a refutation of opportunist errors. It is his pamphlet *The Social Revolution*.¹³ In this pamphlet, the author chose as his special theme the question of “the proletarian revolution” and “the proletarian regime.” He gives much that is exceedingly valuable, but he avoided the question of the state. Throughout the pamphlet the author speaks of winning 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 program 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, civil war, and the “instruments of the might of the modern large state, its bureaucracy and the army,”¹⁴ 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”¹⁵ for the state.

Kautsky treats the matter as follows: the victorious proletariat “will realize the democratic program,”¹⁶ and he goes on to formulate its clauses. But he does not say a word about the new material provided in 1871 on the subject of the replacement of bourgeois democracy by proletarian

13. See Kautsky, *The Social Revolution*, vols. 1 and 2 (New York: Charles Kerr, 1902), www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1902/socrev/index.htm.

14. Kautsky, *Social Revolution*, vol. 1, part 3, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1902/socrev/pt1-3.htm>. The quote Lenin is here referring to is rendered slightly differently in the translation available at MIA. It reads, “governmental powers of bureaucracy and militarism, which the modern great nations have inherited from absolutism.”

15. Engels, “Introduction,” in Marx, *Civil War in France*, in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 628.

16. Kautsky, *Social Revolution*, vol. 2, part 1, www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1902/socrev/pt2-1.htm.

democracy. Kautsky disposes of the question by using such “impressive-sounding” banalities as:

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.¹⁷

Undoubtedly this “goes without saying,” just as the fact that horses eat oats or the Volga flows into the Caspian. Only it is a pity that an empty and bombastic phrase about “deep-going” struggles is used to *avoid* a question of vital importance to the revolutionary proletariat, namely *what* makes *its* revolution “deep-going” in relation to the state, to democracy, as distinct from previous, nonproletarian revolutions.

By avoiding this question, Kautsky *in practice* makes a concession to opportunism on this most essential point, although *in words* he declares stern war against it and stresses the importance of the “idea of revolution” (how much is this “idea” worth when one is afraid to teach the workers the concrete lessons of revolution?), or says “revolutionary idealism before everything else,” or announces that the English workers are now “hardly more than petit-bourgeois.” Kautsky writes,

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 [??] organization, such as the railways. Here the democratic organization 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.¹⁸

17. Kautsky. *Social Revolution*, vol. 2, part 1, www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1902/socrev/pt2-1.htm#s1.

18. Kautsky, *Social Revolution*, vol. 2, part 1, www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1902/socrev/pt2-1.htm#s4. Lenin’s interjections. The portion quoted before the ellipses seems to be a paraphrase of what is rendered in the MIA translation as: “We have seen how the various forms of property would vary and that there would be national, municipal and

This argument is erroneous; it is a step backward compared with the explanations Marx and Engels gave in the seventies, using the lessons of the Commune as an example.

As far as the supposedly necessary “bureaucratic” organization is concerned, there is no difference whatever between a railway and any other enterprise in large-scale machine industry, any factory, large shop, or large-scale capitalist agricultural enterprise. The technique of all these enterprises makes absolutely imperative the strictest discipline, the utmost precision on the part of all in carrying out their allotted tasks, for otherwise the whole enterprise may come to a stop, or machinery or the finished product may be damaged. In all these enterprises the workers will, of course, “elect delegates who will form *a sort of parliament*.”

The whole point, however, is that this “sort of parliament” will *not* be a parliament in the sense of a bourgeois parliamentary institution. The whole point is that this “sort of parliament” will *not* merely “establish the working regulations and supervise the management of the bureaucratic apparatus,” as Kautsky, whose thinking does not go beyond the bounds of bourgeois parliamentarianism, imagines. In socialist society, the “sort of parliament” consisting of workers’ deputies will, of course, “establish the working regulations and supervise the management” of the “apparatus,” but this apparatus will not be “bureaucratic.” The workers, after winning political power, will smash the old bureaucratic apparatus, shatter it to its very foundations, and raze it to the ground; they will replace it with a new one consisting of the very same workers and other employees, *against* whose transformation into bureaucrats the measures

co-operative property. At the same time, as we saw, private property can still exist in many means of production. Now we see also that the organization of industry takes on manifold forms.” Lenin seems to have placed this before the remainder of the quote, even though it actually immediately follows the quote in Kautsky’s text. The remainder of the quote is rendered slightly differently in the MIA translation as: “There are, for example, industries which cannot be operated without a bureaucratic organization, as for example railroads. The democratic organization can be so formed that the laborers choose delegates, who will constitute a sort of parliament, which will fix the conditions of labor and control the government of the bureaucratic machinery. Other industries can be given over to the direction of the unions, and others again can be operated co-operatively.”

will at once be taken which were specified in detail by Marx and Engels: (1) not only election, but also recall at any time; (2) pay not to exceed that of a worker; (3) immediate introduction of control and supervision by *all*, so that *all* may become “bureaucrats” for a time and that, therefore, *nobody* may be able to become a “bureaucrat.”

Kautsky has not reflected at all on Marx’s words: “The Commune was a working, not parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time.”

Kautsky has not understood at all the difference between bourgeois parliamentarism, which combines democracy (*not for the people*) with bureaucracy (*against the people*), and proletarian democracy, which will take immediate steps to cut bureaucracy down to the roots and which will be able to carry these measures through to the end, to the complete abolition of bureaucracy, to the introduction of complete democracy for the people.

Kautsky here displays the same old “superstitious reverence” for the state and “superstitious belief” in bureaucracy.

Let us now pass to the last and best of Kautsky’s works against the opportunists, his pamphlet *The Road to Power* (which, I believe, has not been published in Russian, for it appeared in 1909, when reaction was at its height in our country).¹⁹ This pamphlet is a big step forward since it does not deal with the revolutionary program in general, as the pamphlet of 1899 against Bernstein did, or with the tasks of the social revolution irrespective of the time of its occurrence, as the 1902 pamphlet *The Social Revolution* did; it deals with the concrete conditions that compel us to recognize that the “era of revolutions” is *setting in*.

The author explicitly points to the aggravation of class antagonisms in general and to imperialism, which plays a particularly important part in this respect. After the “revolutionary period of 1789–1871” in Western Europe, he says, a similar period began in the East in 1905. A world war is approaching with menacing rapidity. “It [the proletariat] can no longer

19. Kautsky, *The Road to Power*, trans. by Raymond Meyer (Berkeley, CA: Center for Socialist History, 2007).

talk of premature revolution.”²⁰ “We have entered a revolutionary period.” The “revolutionary era is beginning.”²¹

These statements are perfectly clear. This pamphlet of Kautsky’s should serve as a measure of comparison of what the German Social Democrats *promised to be* before the imperialist war and the depth of degradation to which they, including Kautsky himself, sank when the war broke out. “The present situation,” Kautsky wrote in the pamphlet under survey, “is fraught with the danger that we [i.e., the German Social Democrats] may easily appear to be more ‘moderate’ than we really are.”²² It turned out that in reality the German Social Democratic Party was much more moderate and opportunist than it appeared to be!

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.

Kautsky, the German Social Democrats’ spokesman, seems to have declared: I abide by revolutionary views (1899), I recognize, above all, the inevitability of the social revolution of the proletariat (1902), I recognize the advent of a new era of revolutions (1909). Still, I am going back on what Marx said as early as 1852, since the question of the tasks of the proletarian revolution in relation to the state is being raised (1912).

It was in this point-blank form that the question was put in Kautsky’s controversy with Pannekoek.

20. Ibid., 98–99.

21. Ibid., 106.

22. Ibid., 51.

3. Kautsky's Controversy with Pannekoek

In opposing Kautsky, Pannekoek²³ came out as one of the representatives of the “Left radical” trend, which included Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Radek,²⁴ and others. Advocating revolutionary tactics, they were united in the conviction that Kautsky was going over to the “center,” which wavered in an unprincipled manner between Marxism and opportunism. This view was proved perfectly correct by the war, when this “centrist” (wrongly called Marxist) trend, or Kautskyism, revealed itself in all its repulsive wretchedness.²⁵

In an article touching on the question of the state, entitled “Mass Action and Revolution,”²⁶ 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.²⁷ In presenting the matter in this way, Pannekoek approached the subject that interests

23. Anton Pannekoek (1873–1960) was a Dutch revolutionary and an early ally of Lenin in opposing the Second International's support for World War I. He was highly influential in the development of the revolutionary tendency in Germany and elsewhere. He opposed the German Communist Party (KPD) and was a founder of the council communism current.

24. Karl Radek (1835–1939), a Polish revolutionary socialist, was active in the German Communist Party as an ally of Lenin. He was killed by Stalin in 1939.

25. It is worth noting that Luxemburg and Radek, as well as other figures on the left of the German SPD, were far more critical of Kautsky than Lenin was until the outbreak of World War I.

26. Lenin cites *Neue Zeit* vol. 30, no. 2, 1912. This article by Pannekoek does not appear to be in print in English. However, after Kautsky responded to his original article, Pannekoek wrote a follow-up article which gives a sense of what he is arguing in the article cited here by Lenin. It is titled “Marxist Theory and Revolutionary Tactics” and appeared in the very next issue of *Die Neue Zeit*; this article is available in English at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/pannekoek/1912/tactics.htm>.

The exchange that Lenin recounts between Pannekoek and Kautsky over the next few pages was conducted in the pages of *Neue Zeit* and is not fully available in English. However, many of the citations used here by Lenin are partially translated and ably analyzed by Massimo L. Salvadori in *Pannekoek and Gorter's Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 1978), 152–69.

27. Lenin cites page 616 in *Neue Zeit*. For Kautsky's description of his own self-defined “passive radicalism” in a 1912 article (“Action by the Masses”), see section 4, “The Contest of Power,” of the article Pannekoek cited in the previous note.

us, namely, the tasks of the proletarian revolution in relation to the state. Pannekoek wrote,

The struggle of the proletariat 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.²⁸

The struggle will cease only when, as the result of it, the state organization is completely destroyed. The organization of the majority will then have demonstrated its superiority by destroying the organization of the ruling minority.²⁹

The formulation in which Pannekoek presented his ideas suffers from serious defects. But its meaning is clear nonetheless, and it is interesting to note *how* Kautsky combated it. Kautsky wrote,

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.³⁰

Although Pannekoek's exposition lacks precision and concreteness—not to speak of other shortcomings of his article which have no bearing on the present subject—Kautsky seized precisely on the point of *principle* raised by Pannekoek, and *on this fundamental* point of *principle* Kautsky completely abandoned the Marxist position and went over wholly to opportunism. His definition of the distinction between the Social Democrats and the anarchists is absolutely wrong; he completely vulgarizes and distorts Marxism.

The distinction between Marxists and the anarchists is this: (1) The former, while aiming at the complete abolition of the state, recognize 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

28. Ibid. Lenin cites page 544 in *Neue Zeit*.

29. Ibid., Lenin cites page 544 in *Neue Zeit*.

30. Ibid., Lenin cites page 724 in *Neue Zeit*.

the state completely overnight, not understanding the conditions under which the state can be abolished. (2) The former recognize that after the proletariat has won political power it must completely destroy the old state machine and replace it with a new one consisting of an organization 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 state power; they reject its revolutionary dictatorship. (3) The former demand that the proletariat be trained for revolution by utilizing the present state.³¹ The anarchists reject this.

In this controversy, it is not Kautsky but Pannekoek who represents Marxism, for it was Marx who taught that the proletariat cannot simply win state power in the sense that the old state apparatus passes into new hands, but must smash this apparatus, must break it and replace it with a new one.

Kautsky abandons Marxism for the opportunist camp, for this destruction of the state machine which is utterly unacceptable to the opportunists, completely disappears from his argument, and leaves a loophole for them in that “conquest” may be interpreted as the simple acquisition of a majority.

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 centralization of power in the hands of the state authority”³² was necessary, and Kautsky triumphantly asks: does Pannekoek want to destroy “centralism?”

This is simply a trick, like Bernstein’s identification of the views of Marxism and Proudhonism on the subject of federalism as against centralism.

31. That is, by taking part in elections, organizing legal trade unions, developing a party press where possible, etc.

32. Marx, “Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League,” in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 509–10.

Kautsky's "quotation" is neither here nor there. Centralism is possible with both the old and the new state machine. If the workers voluntarily unite their armed forces, this will be centralism, but it will be based on the "complete destruction" of the centralized state apparatus—the standing army, the police, and the bureaucracy. Kautsky acts like an outright swindler by evading the perfectly well-known arguments of Marx and Engels on the Commune and plucking out a quotation which has nothing to do with the point at issue. Kautsky continues,

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 program 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*. 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.³⁴

This is an obvious trick. Pannekoek raised the question of *revolution*. Both the title of his article and the passages quoted above clearly indicate this. By skipping to the question of "opposition," Kautsky substitutes the opportunist for the revolutionary point of view. What he says means: at present we are an opposition; what we shall be *after* we have captured power, that we shall see. *Revolution has vanished!* And that is exactly what the opportunists wanted.

The point at issue is neither opposition nor political struggle in general, but *revolution*. Revolution consists in the proletariat *destroying* the "administrative apparatus" and the whole state machine, replacing it with a new one made up of the armed workers. Kautsky displays a "supersti-

34. Lenin cites page 725 in *Neue Zeit*. Interjections by Lenin; emphasis Kautsky's.

tious 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?

The point is not at all whether the “ministries” will remain or whether “committees of specialists” or some other bodies will be set up; that is quite immaterial. The point is whether the old state machine (bound by thousands of threads to the bourgeoisie and permeated through and through with routine and inertia) shall remain, or be *destroyed* and replaced by a *new* one. Revolution consists not in the new class commanding, governing with the aid of the *old* state machine, but in this class *smashing* this machine and commanding, governing, with the aid of a *new* machine. Kautsky slurs over this *basic* idea of Marxism, or he does not understand it at all.

His question about officials clearly shows that he does not understand the lessons of the Commune or the teachings of Marx. “We cannot do without officials even in the party and the trade unions . . .”

We cannot do without officials *under capitalism*, under the *rule of the bourgeoisie*. The proletariat is oppressed, the working people are enslaved by capitalism. Under capitalism, democracy is restricted, cramped, curtailed, mutilated by all the conditions of wage slavery and the poverty and misery of the people. This and this alone is the reason why the functionaries of our political organizations and trade unions are corrupted—or, rather, tend to be corrupted—by the conditions of capitalism and betray a tendency to become bureaucrats, i.e., privileged persons divorced from the people and standing *above* the people.

That is the *essence* of bureaucracy; until the capitalists have been expropriated and the bourgeoisie overthrown, *even* proletarian functionaries will inevitably be “bureaucratized” to a certain extent.

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.”

As a matter of fact, the whole of Kautsky’s argument against Pannekoek, and particularly the former’s wonderful point that we cannot do without officials even in our party and trade union organizations, is merely a repetition of Bernstein’s old “arguments” against Marxism in general. In his renegade book, *Premises of Socialism*, Bernstein combats the ideas of “primitive” democracy, what he calls “doctrinaire democracy”: binding mandates, unpaid officials, impotent central representative bodies, etc. To prove that this “primitive” democracy is unsound, Bernstein refers to the experience of the British trade unions as interpreted by the Webbs.³⁵ Seventy years of development “in absolute freedom,” he says, convinced the trade unions that primitive democracy was useless, and they replaced it by ordinary democracy, i.e., parliamentarism combined with bureaucracy.³⁶

In reality, the trade unions did not develop “in absolute freedom” *but in absolute capitalist slavery*, under which, it goes without saying, a number of concessions to the prevailing evil, violence, falsehood, exclusion of the poor from the affairs of “higher” administration “cannot be done without.” Under socialism much of “primitive” democracy will inevitably be revived, since for the first time in the history of civilized society the *mass* of the 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* that the opportunists fear and do not want to recognize because of their cowardice, because they do not want to break irrevocably with the bourgeoisie, and which the anarchists do not

35. Sydney and Beatrice Webb, *Industrial Democracy* (London: Longmans, Green, 1902). Beatrice Webb (1858–1943) and Sidney Webb (1859–1947) were British aristocrats and leading members of the liberal-reformist Fabian Society, along with George Bernard Shaw.

36. Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism*, 140. Lenin cites page 137 of the German edition.

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 analyzing *what* to put in the place of what has been destroyed, and *how*,” argues the anarchist (the best of the anarchists, of course, not those who, following the Kropotkins³⁷ and company, 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.

Marx teaches us to avoid both errors; he teaches us to act with supreme boldness in destroying the entire old state machine and, at the same time, he teaches us to put the question concretely: the Commune was able in the space of a few weeks to *start* building a *new*, proletarian state machine by introducing such-and-such measures to provide wider democracy and uproot bureaucracy. Let us learn revolutionary boldness from the Communards; let us see in their practical measures the *outline* of really urgent and immediately possible measures and then, *following this road*, we shall achieve the complete destruction of bureaucracy.

The possibility of this destruction is guaranteed by the fact that socialism will shorten the working day, will raise the *people* to a new life, will create such conditions for the *majority* of the population as will enable *everybody*, without exception, to perform “state functions,” and this will lead to the *complete withering away* of every form of state in general.

Kautsky continues,

37. Kropotkin, an anarchist writer and scientist from an aristocratic family, opposed the October Revolution on the grounds that it was authoritarian.

Its object [the object of the mass strike] 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 halfway [*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.³⁸

This is nothing but the purest and most vulgar opportunism: repudiating revolution in deeds while accepting it in words. Kautsky's thoughts go no further than a "government . . . willing to meet the proletariat halfway"—a step backward to philistinism compared with 1847, when the *Communist Manifesto* proclaimed "the organization of the proletariat as the ruling class."

Kautsky will have to achieve his beloved "unity" with the Scheidemanns, Plekhanovs, and Vanderveldes,³⁹ all of whom agree to fight for a government "willing to meet the proletariat halfway."

We, however, shall break with these traitors to socialism and we shall fight for the complete destruction of the old state machine, in order that the armed proletariat itself *may become the government*. These are two vastly different things.

Kautsky will have to enjoy the pleasant company of the Legiens and Davids, Plekhanovs, Potresovs, Tseretelis, and Chernovs,⁴⁰ who are quite willing to work for the "shifting of the balance of forces within the state power," for "winning a majority in parliament" and "raising parliament to the ranks of master of the government." A most worthy object that is

38. Lenin cites pages 726–27 and 732 of *Neue Zeit* for Kautsky's article. Most of this quote is available in Massimo Salvadori, *Karl Kautsky and the Socialist Revolution: 1880–1938* (London: Verso, 1990), 162.

39. German, Russian, and French leaders, respectively, of the Second International who supported their governments in the First World War. See the glossary.

40. More German and Russian leaders of the Second International. See the glossary.

wholly acceptable to the opportunists and that keeps everything within the bounds of the bourgeois parliamentary republic.

We, however, shall break with the opportunists, and the entire class-conscious proletariat will be with us in the fight—not to “shift the balance of forces,” but to *overthrow the bourgeoisie, to destroy* bourgeois parliamentarism, for a democratic republic after the type of the Commune or a republic of Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, for the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

To the right of Kautsky in international socialism there are trends such as *Socialist Monthly*⁴¹ in Germany (Legien, David, Kolb, and many others, including the Scandinavian Stauning and Branting), Jaurès’ followers and Vandervelde in France and Belgium; Turati, Treves, and other right-wingers of the Italian party; the Fabians and “Independents” (the Independent Labor Party, which in fact has always been dependent on the Liberals) in Britain; and the like.⁴² All these gentry, who play a tremendous, very often a predominant role in the parliamentary work and the press of their parties, repudiate outright the dictatorship of the proletariat and pursue a policy of undisguised opportunism. In the eyes of these gentry, the “dictatorship” of the proletariat “contradicts” democracy!! There is really no essential distinction between them and the petit-bourgeois democrats.

Taking this circumstance into consideration, we are justified in drawing the conclusion that the Second International, that is, the overwhelming majority of its official representatives, has completely sunk into opportunism. The experience of the Commune has been not only ignored but distorted. Far from inculcating in the workers’ minds the idea that the time is nearing when they must act to smash the old state machine, replace it with a new one, and in this way make their political rule the foundation for the socialist reorganization of society, they have actually preached to the masses the very opposite and have depicted the “conquest of power” in a way that has left thousands of loopholes for opportunism.

41. A pro-war German SPD publication.

42. Moderate and right-wing trends within the Second International. See the glossary.

The distortion and hushing up of the question of the relation of the proletarian revolution to the state could not but play an immense role at a time when states that possess an expanded military apparatus as a consequence of imperialist rivalry have become military monsters which are exterminating millions of people in order to settle the issue as to whether Britain or Germany—this or that finance capital—is to rule the world.

Chapter 7

The Experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917

The subject indicated in the title of this chapter is so vast that volumes could be written about it. In the present pamphlet we shall have to confine ourselves, naturally, to the most important lessons provided by experience, those bearing directly upon the tasks of the proletariat in the revolution with regard to state power.

[Here the manuscript breaks off.]

Postscript to the First Edition

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. It is more pleasant and useful to go through the “experience of revolution” than to write about it.

The Author

Petrograd

November 30, 1917

Historical and Literary Chronology

1820

Hegel publishes *The Philosophy of Right*.

1847

Marx publishes *The Poverty of Philosophy*.

1848

Marx and Engels publish *The Communist Manifesto*.

1848-49

Revolutions break out in France and Germany, followed by revolts across Europe, including Italy, Hungary, and Poland.

Marx and Engels return to Germany to found the newspaper *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* and actively participate in the revolution until the paper is shut by authorities. Both are exiled.

1850

Marx delivers “Address to the Communist League” in London.

1852

Marx publishes *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

1864

Founding of the International Workingmen's Association—First International.

1870

Lenin born.

1871

Rise and fall of the Paris Commune prompts Marx to write *The Civil War in France*.

1872

Engels publishes *The Housing Question*.

Engels writes *On Authority*.

Marx and Engels issue a new edition of *The Communist Manifesto* in the wake of the Paris Commune.

1875

Merger of the Lasallean General German Workers' Association and the German Social Democratic Workers Party, led by Bebel and Liebknecht, and adoption of joint program at Gotha, Germany.

Marx writes *Critique of the Gotha Program*.

1878

Engels publishes *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*.

German Anti-Socialist Laws passed to repress growth of the Social Democratic Party.

1880

Engels publishes *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*.

1883

Marx dies.

1884

Engels publishes *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*.

1889

Engels presides over the founding of the Second International.

1890

German Anti-Socialist Laws lifted.

1891

German Social Democratic Party (SPD) adopts a new party program at Erfurt, Germany.

Engels writes *Critique of the Erfurt Program*.

Engels republishes Marx's *The Civil War in France* with a new introduction.

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State and Revolution

1894

Plekhanov publishes *Anarchism and Socialism*.

1895

Engels dies.

1899

Berstein publishes *Evolutionary Socialism*, originally titled *The Premises of Socialism and the Tasks of the Social-Democrats*.

Kautsky replies with *Berstein and the Social-Democratic Program* and Luxemburg with *Reform or Revolution*.

1901

Socialist Revolutionary Party formed in Russia.

1902

Kautsky publishes *The Social Revolution*.

1903

Second Congress of Russian Social Democratic Labor Party leads to a split between the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions.

1905

Russian Revolution of 1905.

1908

Young Turk Revolution.

1909

Kautsky writes *The Road to Power*.

1911

Kautsky writes *Action by the Masses*.

1912

Controversy between Pannekoek and Kautsky regarding the state.

1914

World War I breaks out. Majority of Second International socialist parties support their own governments.

1915

Lenin and other left-wing socialists organize an antiwar conference at Zimmerwald, Switzerland.

1917

February Revolution overthrows Tsar Nicholas II. Workers' soviets form across Russia.

Lenin writes *State and Revolution*.

October Revolution overthrows the Provisional Government, placing all power in the soviets.

1918

Lenin publishes *State and Revolution*.

Kautsky publishes *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*.

Lenin publishes *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*.

1919

Third International founded in Moscow.

1924

Lenin dies.

Biographical and Organizational Glossary

Avksentyev, Nikolai (1878–1943). Socialist Revolutionary leader. Minister of Internal Affairs under Provisional Government. Opposed the October Revolution, briefly collaborating with White Army forces led by Admiral Kolchak before emigrating to Europe and then the United States.

Bakunin, Mikhail (1814–1976). Russian anarchist and ideological foe of Marx and Engels. Advocated secret plots by armed minorities as a means of sparking revolutions, but criticized the Paris Commune for being overly centralized. Became Marx and Engels's chief rival in the International Workingman's Association, from which he was expelled in 1872.

Bebel, August (1840–1913). Cabinet maker and founder of the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany in 1869. Led the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) from its founding in 1875, after merging with the Lassallean General German Workers' Association. Close confidant of Marx and Engels. Elected to the Reichstag in 1867. Imprisoned for two years in 1872 for opposing the Franco-Prussian War. An outspoken opponent of German colonialism in Africa and author of many books and articles, including *Women and Socialism* (1879).

Bernstein, Eduard (1850–1932). Engels's close associate and literary executor, and a leading intellectual in the SPD. After Engels's death in 1895, published a series of attacks arguing that Marx and Engels had been wrong to believe that capitalism could not outgrow economic

crisis and that the working class needed to make a revolution in order to achieve socialism. Author of *Evolutionary Socialism* (originally titled *The Premises of Socialism and the Tasks of the Social-Democrats*) (1899).

Bismarck, Otto von (1815–98). German aristocratic politician who campaigned for the unification of non-Austrian Germany through a series of wars in the 1860s. Appointed First Chancellor of the united German state by King Wilhelm I in 1871 after victory in the Franco-Prussian War. Authored the Anti-Socialist Laws (1878–90), but also instituted a series of social welfare reforms designed to placate socialist demands, such as accident, sickness, and old-age insurance benefits. Held the post of Chancellor until 1890.

Bissolati, Leonida (1857–1920). Founding member of Italian Socialist Party; expelled in 1912. Joined the Italian government to advocate supporting the Entente in World War I.

Black Hundreds. Extreme reactionary Russian monarchist gangs organized to carry out extrajudicial attacks on political opponents and ethnic minorities, especially Jews.

Blanc, Louis (1811–82). French politician and moderate socialist. Appointed to head the Workers' Commission during the French Revolution of 1848. Exiled in 1849, but returned after the fall of Emperor Napoleon III (Louis Bonaparte) in 1870 and was elected to the French National Assembly. Advocated defeating the Paris Commune in 1871.

Blanqui, Louis Auguste (August) (1805–81). French revolutionary greatly admired by Marx for his audacity and leadership qualities. Advocated armed revolution led by secretly organized societies. It was in opposition to Blanqui's conception of a revolutionary dictatorship *over* the proletariat that Marx counterposed his notion of the dictatorship *of* the proletariat. Blanqui was arrested and escaped or was granted amnesty several times between 1848 and 1870. Detained on the eve of Paris Commune, he was elected president of the Commune from his prison cell, where he remained until 1879 when he was elected, again from prison, to the National Assembly.

He died shortly thereafter, his health broken by incarceration.

Bolsheviks. A faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party led by Lenin after the split in the 1903 at the Second Party Congress. Named after the Russian word for “majority,” it was founded based on the support of a majority of delegates at that congress. After periods of semi-unity with the Mensheviks (“minority”) during and after the 1905 Russian Revolution, the Bolsheviks emerged after 1912 as an independent party based on the belief that the Russian working class must play the leading role in any revolution. Intransigently opposed to World War I, after the February Revolution of 1917 the party gained the support of a small but significant minority of the working class. It gained majority support in the working class by the fall of 1917 by advocating an immediate end to the war and the transfer of all power to the Soviets of Workers, Soldiers’, and Peasants’ Deputies. Led the 1917 October Revolution and organized the first successful workers’ state in history.

Bonaparte, Napoleon (1769–1821). French military officer born in Corsica. Became Emperor Napoleon I in 1804 and conquered much of continental Europe. Defeated and exiled in 1814 and then again in 1815.

Bonaparte, Louis Napoleon (Napoleon III) (1778–1846). Nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte and politician; first elected president of France under universal male suffrage following the overthrow of King Louis Philippe in the 1848 Revolution. Carried out a coup d’état on December 2, 1851, installing himself as Emperor Napoleon III with the backing of the French military. Marx parodied him in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852).

Bracke, Wilhelm (1842–80). Bookseller and leading figure close to Marx and Engels in the SPD after the 1875 unity congress at Gotha.

Branting, Hjalmar (1860–1925). Leader of the Swedish Social Democratic Party who joined the liberal government in 1917. Served as Prime Minister of Sweden in the 1920s.

Breshkovskaya, Catherine (1844–1934). Historic leader of populist and socialist movements in Russia. Joined Bakunin's followers at an early age and suffered long periods of imprisonment and exile, especially after her role in founding the Socialist Revolutionary Party in 1901. She was sent to Siberia from 1905 until political prisoners were freed following the February Revolution in 1917. Appointed to the Provisional Government under Kerensky; opposed the October Revolution.

Bukharin, Nikolai (1888–1938). Joined Bolshevik faction in 1906 as a student leader in Moscow. Became a close collaborator of Lenin and a leading Bolshevik theorist on questions of economy and imperialism. Elected to the Central Committee and Politburo after the October Revolution. Clashed with Lenin over questions of the state and national self-determination during World War I and over the Brest-Litovsk Treaty in 1918. Considered one of the most popular figures in the Communist Party leadership after the revolution. Championed the Soviet New Economic Policy in 1921 and, after Lenin's death, encouraged an "enrich yourselves" policy to peasants in the hope of spurring rapid agricultural growth and moderate industrialization. Served as president of the Communist International from 1926 to 1929 before running afoul of Stalin's consolidation of power. Executed by Stalin in 1938 during the Great Purge.

Cavaignac, Louis-Eugène (1802–1857). French military officer during the conquest of Algeria. Led the suppression of the Parisian working-class uprising in June 1848 and the subsequent state of siege. Defeated by Louis Bonaparte for president in the December 1848 election.

Chernov, Victor (1873–1952). Founding member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Elected to the Second Duma after the 1905 Revolution and was a leader of the SR parliamentary group. Acted as an outspoken opponent of Lenin and the October Revolution from his post as the appointed Minister of Agriculture in Provisional Gov-

ernment. Elected chairman of the Russian Constituent Assembly in January 1918 before its dissolution by the Soviet Government. Fleed to the United States during the Russian Civil War.

Cornelissen, Christiaan (1864–1942). Dutch anarchist who signed the “Manifesto of the Sixteen” advocating Allied victory over the Central Powers in World War I.

David, Eduard (1863–1930). Leader of the right wing of the German Social Democratic Party and a supporter of the German war effort; elected to various ministerial posts in the Weimar Republic after November 1918 Revolution.

Dühring, Eugen Karl (1833–1921). Reformist socialist and philosopher who gained a widespread hearing for his ideas in the SPD. Marx and Engels considered him a threat to the revolutionary character of the party.

Duma. Elected legislative assembly with limited power, conceded by the Tsar after the 1905 Revolution. Four successive Duma elections featured progressively restrictive and undemocratic voting procedures, each dissolved by royal decrees. Bolshevik, Menshevik, and Socialist Revolutionary deputies elected to various Dumas.

Engels, Friedrich (1821–95). Close friend, benefactor, and collaborator with Marx for forty years; cofounder of the theory that became known as Marxism. Prolific author and journalist. Participated the German Revolution of 1848, for which he was exiled from Germany for the rest of his life. Leader in the International Workingman’s Association from 1864 to 1872. Served as a practical advisor to the SPD for more than two decades during its rise from illegality to prominence in Germany and helped engineer the unification of European socialism in the Second International in 1891. Increasingly vocal critic of opportunist trend in the SPD in the years before his death.

Erfurt Program. Program adopted by the German Social Democratic Party in 1891.

Fabians. A British socialist society founded in 1884, named after a Roman general, Fabius, who was famous for avoiding head-on battles. Beatrice and Sidney Webb were the group's main leaders. Other well-known members included Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw and Ramsey MacDonald, future prime minister of Great Britain for the Labour Party in 1924 and from 1929 to 1935.

First International (1864–76). Originally named the International Workingmen's Association, it was a loose coalition of socialist organizations and trade unions founded in 1864. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels played prominent roles in developing the International's program and developing its practical work. Collapsed in wake of the Paris Commune because of repression in France and disputes between socialists and anarchists, represented chiefly by Marx and Bakunin, respectively. Formally dissolved in 1876.

Ghe, Alexander (1879–1919). Russian anarchist. Supported the October Revolution. Lenin quoted him as calling pro-war anarchists "anarcho-trenchists."

Gotha Program. Program adopted by German Social Democratic Party in 1875.

Grave, Jean (1854–1939). French anarchist who signed the "Manifesto of the Sixteen," advocating Allied victory over the Central Powers in World War I.

Guesde, Jules (1845–1922). Leader of the left wing of the French socialist movement, forced to emigrate after the Paris Commune. An ardent proponent of Marx's ideas, but his intellectual rigidity prompted Marx to state famously that if Guesde and his followers were Marxists, then "I myself am not a Marxist!" His ultra-revolutionary positions collapsed during World War I when he joined the French government as a minister in the war cabinet.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1770–1831). The most influential German philosopher of the first half of the nineteenth century.

Initially inspired by the 1789 French Revolution's promise of democracy and liberation, but became reconciled to the Prussian monarchy and state after Napoleon's defeat and the restoration of the French king in 1815. An extreme idealist, he argued that all human history is a reflection or material manifestation of God (or what he called Absolute Spirit) coming to self-awareness through a dialectical process of conflict and transformation over time. He had a profound impact on Marx and Engels's views on revolutionary change as the key to social change.

Henderson, Fred (1867–1957). British socialist writer; elected to Parliament as a member of the Labour Party.

Hyndman, Henry (1842–1921). Leader of the British socialist movement; supported Britain in World War I.

Jaurès, Jean (1859–1914). Pioneering French socialist; elected to Parliament from 1893 to his death. Supported French socialist Alexander Millerand's participation in the bourgeois government as Minister of Labor in 1899, provoking sharp debate in the Second International. Emerged as leader of the Unified French Socialist Party (SFIO) in 1905 after the merger of left-wing and more moderate socialist factions. Assassinated in July 1914 by an extreme nationalist for his opposition to French militarism and war preparations.

Kautsky, Karl (1854–1938). Protégé of Marx and Engels. Widely considered the "Pope of Marxism" after their deaths. Prolific author and most important theorist of SPD from 1890s until after World War I. After 1900, adopted a middle ground between the SPD's left and right wings, opposing Bernstein on the right and Luxemburg on the left. Refused to split with the SPD after the party leadership voted for war credits for German military in August of 1914; remained in the party even after the leadership's complicity in the murders of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in 1919. Opposed the war but argued that socialists should agitate for peace, not anticapitalist revolution. Principal antagonist of Lenin's call for the creation of a

new, revolutionary Third International and a relentless critic of the October Revolution.

Kerensky, Alexander (1881–1970). Member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Defended workers and socialists from repression as a lawyer before World War I. Entered the Provisional Government as minister of justice in February 1917, then becoming minister of the army and navy and finally, in July, premier. Narrowly escaped from the Soviet government after the Provisional Government's overthrow in October 1917. Emigrated to the United States.

Kolb, W. (1870–1918). Prominent SPD editor who supported Germany in World War I.

Kropotkin, Peter (1842–1921). Major Russian anarchist writer and scientist from an aristocratic family. Arrested in 1874 for opposing the tsar. Author of *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. Signed the "Manifesto of the Sixteen," supporting Russia in World War I, but opposed the October Revolution on the grounds that it was authoritarian. Emma Goldman spoke at his funeral in Russia.

Krupskaya, Nadezhda (1869–1939). Early convert to Russian Marxism and leader of Saint Petersburg's underground movement. Arrested and exiled to Siberia in 1896, where she married Lenin. Helped lead the Bolshevik faction after the 1903 split in the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party; served as the Central Committee's secretary from 1905. Returned from exile with Lenin in 1917 and joined the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party after Lenin's death in 1924. Criticized some of Stalin's repressive acts in the late 1920s, but served as a Soviet functionary until her death.

Kugelmann, Ludwig (1828–1902). German physician, socialist, and friend of Marx and Engels.

Lassalle, Ferdinand (1825–1864). German socialist writer and agitator who, in the course of just two years of public activity, inspired the creation of the first large workers' political organization, the

General German Workers' Association, in 1863. However, he conceived of himself as the dictatorial leader of the working class, on whose behalf he would negotiate with Prussian minister Otto von Bismarck for reforms. This led to a sharp clash with Marx and Engels, who emphasized the need for the working class to act on its own behalf. Killed in a pistol duel over his fiancée's father's refusal to allow them to marry. Many of Lassalle's followers merged with Marx's supporters to form the Social Democratic Party in 1875.

Legien, Carl (1861–1920). Trade-union leader and leader on the right wing of the German Social Democratic Party. Supported the German war effort. Initiated a general strike in 1920 to defeat the Kapp Putsch, an attempted military coup.

Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich (1871–1924). Brilliant law student turned underground Marxist organizer, prolific author, and revolutionary journalist. His older brother Alexander was executed for taking part in a failed plot to assassinate the tsar in 1887. Exiled to Siberia in 1897 for political activity, where he married Nadezhda Krupskaya. Escaped to Western Europe, where he became the leading advocate of the 1903 Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party; led the Bolshevik faction during and after the Congress. Returned to Russia during the 1905 revolution, but was exiled after its defeat. Initiated the independent Bolshevik Party in 1912 and helped establish a significant working-class following through publishing the daily newspaper *Pravda*. With the outbreak of World War I, he adopted an extreme antiwar position, insisting that socialists should advocate the overthrow of capitalism as the only means to end the war. Returned from exile in April 1917 after the tsar's abdication. Advocated "All Power to the Soviets" as an alternative to the reformist Provisional Government. Elected chairman of the Council of People's Commissars by the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets on October 27, 1917, after the overthrow of the Provisional Government in Saint Petersburg. Initiated the Third (Communist) International in 1919. Shot by a Socialist Revolutionary leader in

the summer of 1918. In May 1922, suffered the first of three strokes that progressively disabled him until his death in January 1924.

Liebknecht, Karl (1871–1919). Son of Wilhelm Liebknecht. Karl emerged as the leader of SPD's antimilitarist left wing. Elected to the Prussian Reichstag from prison in 1908 while serving an eighteen-month sentence for writing *Militarism and Anti-Militarism*. Abstained from voting on war credits in August 1914, but broke party discipline and cast the sole vote against the German war effort, for which he was stripped of parliamentary immunity and sent to the front. In 1914, with Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin, and others, he cofounded the Spartacus League, a revolutionary faction within the SPD. Following the November 1918 German Revolution, in which the king abdicated power, Liebknecht proclaimed the Free Socialist Republic in Berlin. The SPD leadership's opposition to following the Russian Revolution's example, led Liebknecht and Luxemburg to organize the German Communist Party (KPD) in late December 1918. But a premature uprising in January 1919 was quickly suppressed by the SPD-led government; Liebknecht and Luxemburg were both arrested and murdered by government troops.

Liebknecht, Wilhelm (1826–1900). Took part in the German Revolution of 1848, joining the Communist League in exile thereafter. Founded the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany in 1869 and became a central leader of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) from its founding in 1875, after merging with the Lassallean General German Workers' Association. Arrested for his opposition to the Franco-Prussian war. Elected to the Reichstag, where he served from 1874 to 1900; edited many party publications, including *Vorwärts* (Forward). Father of Karl Liebknecht.

Luxemburg, Rosa (1871–1919). Jewish revolutionary socialist from Poland. Cofounder of the Polish Social-Democratic Party and a prominent leader on the extreme left of the German SPD. Prolific writer, organizer, and educator in the workers' movement and the most vocal opponent of Eduard Bernstein. Split with Karl Kautsky

over World War I and advocated revolutionary action against the German state, for which she was imprisoned in 1914. The November 1918 revolution freed her from prison and she soon cofounded the German Communist Party (KPD) with Karl Liebknecht in late 1918. Arrested by government troops during the January 1919 uprising and assassinated along with Karl Liebknecht.

Martov, Julius (1873–1923). Founder of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party and intellectual leader of Menshevik faction from 1903 until the October Revolution. Broke with the prowar right wing of the Menshevik party to form an Internationalist faction, but opposed the October Revolution.

Marx, Karl (1818–1883). With Friedrich Engels, cofounder of the revolutionary theory subsequently known as Marxism, defining socialism as the self-emancipation of the working class. Author of *The Communist Manifesto* and *Capital*, among many other works. Played a leading role in the German Revolution of 1848 and co-founded the International Workingmen's Association, also known as the First International.

Mehring, Franz (1846–1919). Leading left-wing intellectual within the SPD, close to Rosa Luxemburg. Published a well-known biography of Marx in 1918. Supporter of the Bolshevik Revolution and one of the central founders of the German Communist Party in 1919.

Mikhailovsky, Nikolai Konstantinovich (1842–1904). Russian populist and sociologist.

Millerand, Alexandre (1859–1943). Opportunist French socialist politician. Joined the bourgeois government in 1899, provoking sharp debate in the Second International. Became president of France in 1920.

Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat, Baron de (1689–1755). French liberal political philosopher who advocated the “separation of powers” in government.

Palchinsky, Peter (1875–1929). Aligned with the Socialist Revolutionary Party; exiled to Siberia after the 1905 revolution. Member of the Provisional Government. Opposed the Bolsheviks, but later worked for the Soviet government in the 1920s before being executed by Stalin in 1929.

Pannekoek, Anton (1873–1960). Dutch revolutionary. Early ally of Lenin in opposing the Second International's support for World War I. Highly influential in the development of a revolutionary tendency in Germany and elsewhere. Opponent of the German Communist Party (KPD) and founder of the "council communism" current.

Philippe, King Louis (1773–1850). King of France from 1830 to 1848, when he was overthrown by the February Revolution.

Plekhanov, Georgi (1856–1918). Brilliant writer of whom Engels thought highly. Considered the founder of Russian Marxism; central to the organization of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. Maintained an uneasy alliance with Lenin and the Bolsheviks until the failed 1905 revolution, after which he drifted steadily to the right, joining the Menshevik camp. Strong supporter of Russia in World War I and opponent of the October Revolution.

Pomyalovsky, Nikolay Gerasimovich (1835–63). Author of *Seminary Sketches*; early critic of the Russian Romanov dynasty.

Potresov, Alexander (1869–1934). Influential early Russian Marxist and one of the initial six editors of *Iskra*, the socialist newspaper Lenin organized in order to build the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. At the 1903 Party Congress, Potresov was removed from the editorial board by the majority of voting delegates, hardening the split between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. Prominent leader of the Menshevik faction from this time, becoming an outspoken supporter of Russia in World War I.

Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph (1809–65). Early French critic of capitalism and author of *The Philosophy of Poverty*. Soon clashed with Marx and

Engels over economic analysis and political strategy. Argued that society could be transformed into a loosely federalized conglomeration of rural communities and small workshops based on cooperatives.

Provisional Government. Ad hoc government of Russia established in the wake of Tsar Nicholas II's abdication in February 1917. Composed of royal ministers and liberal politicians as well as a minority of Socialist Revolutionary and Menshevik representatives. Formed the center of the Russian capitalist state, as opposed to the embryonic working-class state represented by the soviets. Overthrown by the 1917 October Revolution.

Radek, Karl (1885–1939). Polish revolutionary socialist, active in the German Communist Party as an ally of Lenin. Leading personality in the founding of the German Communist Party (KPD) and the Third (Communist) International in 1919. Died in a Stalinist concentration camp in 1939.

Renaudel, Pierre (1871–1935). Editor of *L'Humanité*; on the right wing of the French Socialist Party (SFIO) before and after World War I.

Rubanovich, Ilya (1859–1920). Populist and socialist Russian leader. Exiled to France where he became influential in the French socialist party. Joined the Socialist Revolutionary Party in 1901. Supporter of both France and Russia during World War I. Opposed the October Revolution.

Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP). Party officially formed in 1898 as a section of the Second International, but immediately broken by the arrests of most of its leading members. Held its second official Congress in 1903, where the party split into competing Bolshevik and Menshevik factions. These factions temporarily reunited in the wake of the 1905 Revolution, but split into irreconcilable parties after 1912.

Rusanov, Nikolai (1859–1939). Member of the Russian populist movement in 1870s and 1880s; edited *Zemlya i Volya* (Land and Liberty)

and *Narodnaya Volya* (People's Will). Supported the soviets in the 1905 revolution and emerged as a prominent leader of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. In 1917, supported the Provisional Government and opposed the October Revolution.

Scheidemann, Philipp (1865–1939). Leader of the right wing of the German Social Democratic Party. Proclaimed the end of monarchy and the birth of the German Republic from a balcony on November 9, 1918, in opposition to Karl Liebknecht's proclamation of the German Socialist Republic later that day. Elected to the Council of People's Deputies from the German Workers and Soldier's Councils between November 1918 and February 1919, but opposed the Councils assuming state power. Briefly headed the national government in wake of the November 1918 revolution.

Second International (1899–present). Coalition of mass socialist parties that sought to coordinate communication and action for the international workers' movement. Proclaimed May Day an international workers' holiday in 1889 and International Women's Day in 1910. Split between prowar, pacifist, and revolutionary anti-imperialist factions during World War I. After its left wing split to form the revolutionary Third International in 1919 in the wake of the Russian Revolution, the Second International moved sharply to the right. Today it remains the official organization of reformist socialist parties such as the French Socialist Party, the British Labour Party, and the German Social Democratic Party.

Sembat, Marcel (1862–1922). Leader of the French Socialist Party (SFIO). Served as minister of public works in the war cabinet between 1914 and 1916.

Skobelev, Matvey (1885–1938). Joined the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1903, aligning with the Menshevik faction. Collaborated closely with Leon Trotsky, editing *Pravda* between 1908 and 1912 (not to be confused with Lenin's paper of the same name launched in 1912 in St. Petersburg) before being elected to the

Fourth Duma in 1912. Central leader of the Petrograd Soviet from February 1917, then minister of labor in the Provisional Government. Opposed the October Revolution and returned home to Baku, then under occupation by British troops. After the Red Army's victory in the civil war, emigrated to Paris but returned to the Soviet Union, joining the Communist Party in 1922 as a foreign trade specialist. Executed during Stalin's 1938 Great Purge.

Social Democratic Party (SPD). Formed in 1875 in Gotha, Germany, from a merger of the General German Workers' Association (organized by Ferdinand Lassalle in 1863) and the German Social Democratic Workers' Party (founded by Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel in Eisenach, Germany, in 1869). Despite the Anti-Socialist Laws in force between 1878 and 1890, the SPD grew significantly and emerged with 20 percent of the popular vote by the time the party was legalized in 1890, adopting a new program at Erfurt, Germany, in 1891. Largest and most influential party in Second International. In the years before World War I, grew to nearly a million members, including right, center, and left factions. In August 1914, SPD Reichstag deputies voted unanimously under central party discipline to support war credits in preparation for World War I. Under the influence of the war, the majority of party members radicalized and were subsequently expelled by the SPD leadership, forming the United Social Democratic Party (USPD) in 1917. A small minority left the USPD after the November 1918 revolution to form the German Communist Party (KPD) that December.

Socialist Revolutionary Party. Founded in 1902 by Victor Chernov and inheritors of the Russian populist tradition. Advocated land reform and democracy, but a majority of party supported Russia in World War I. Along with the Mensheviks, won majority support in the soviets in early 1917 before their support shifted to Bolshevik Party. The party split between right-wing and left-wing Socialist Revolutionaries after the October Revolution.

Soviets. Russian word for *council*, referring to democratically elected

representative organizations of the working class. Soviets first formed in Russia during the 1905 revolution and were revived in February 1917 in Saint Petersburg, rapidly spreading across all Russian cities, rural areas, and the army and navy. Coordinated by the All-Russian Congress of Soviets. Lenin argued that soviets served as a working-class alternative to the capitalist Provisional Government and should be understood as the potential basis for a revolutionary workers' state, as elaborated in his slogan "All power to the soviets." The Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets assumed state power after the October Revolution.

Spencer, Herbert (1820–1903). Nineteenth-century English philosopher and sociologist. Coined the term "survival of the fittest."

Stalin, Josef (1878–1953). Early member of the Bolshevik faction and a consistent supporter of Lenin. Played an important role in the Bolshevik Party during the repression in the summer of 1917. After the devastation of the Russian Civil War, international isolation, and Lenin's death in the early 1920s, Stalin personified the bureaucratic turn in the Bolshevik Party. By the late 1920s, he had consolidated control over the party's apparatus and launched a series of Five-Year Plans aimed at smashing all internal political opposition and forcing rapid industrialization in order to compete with Western European capitalist states. By the early 1930s Stalin had initiated brutal purges of almost the entire past leadership of the Bolshevik Party.

Stauning, Thorvald (1873–1942). Dutch socialist leader who joined the government during World War I. Served as Prime Minister of the Netherlands in 1924 to 1926 and from 1929 until his death in 1942.

Stirner, Max (1806–56). German anarchist. Author of *The Ego and Its Own* (1845). On friendly terms with Marx and Engels in their student days, but they dedicated hundreds of pages to denouncing him in their joint work *The German Ideology* (1845–46).

Struve, Peter (1870–1944). Important theorist in the Russian socialist movement in 1890s; wrote the Russian Social Democratic Labor

Party's manifesto in 1898. He joined the Menshevik faction after 1903. Soon moved to the right, helping to found the liberal Cadet Party in 1905; was hostile to the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. Became editor of a prominent counterrevolutionary newspaper in territory controlled by the White Army, rising to serve as General Wrangel's foreign minister. With the victory of the Red Army, Struve emigrated to Paris where he remained active in anti-Bolshevik circles until his death.

Thiers, Adolfe (1797–1877). Liberal politician who served as prime minister in 1836 and 1840 under King Louis Philippe and then again after Philippe's overthrow in 1848. Opposed Louis Bonaparte as president and emperor. Served as head of state after Louis Bonaparte (Napoleon III) fell in the wake of defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. Led the offensive against the Paris Commune, ordering the massacre of as many as thirty thousand Parisian workers in 1871.

Third International (1919–43). Popularly called the Communist International or Comintern. Initiated by the revolutionary left wing of the Second International, principally the Bolshevik Party. By 1920, majorities or large minorities of the most important socialist parties had joined the Third International, forming mass parties in France, Italy, Germany, and Bulgaria and smaller parties of thousands or tens of thousands in the United States, Britain, and China. By the 1930s, large parties had taken root in India, Indonesia, and various countries in Latin America and other parts of the world. Stalin's bureaucratic counterrevolution in Russia transformed the Comintern into a tool of Soviet foreign policy, destroying the member parties' commitment to working-class self-emancipation. Dissolved by Stalin in 1943 as a gesture of unity with the Allies during World War II.

Treves, Claudio (1869–1933). Prominent leader in the Italian Socialist Party; imprisoned for political activity in 1894. Opposed the party's entry into the Third International, organizing the Unified Socialist Party in 1920. Forced into exile by Mussolini by 1926.

Trotsky, Leon (1879–1940). Early member of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party and leader in the Menshevik faction after the 1903 Second Congress. Elected president of the Saint Petersburg Soviet in the 1905 revolution. Opposed Lenin's Bolshevik faction before World War I, but Trotsky and his supporters joined the Bolshevik Party in May and June of 1917. Elected Commissar of Foreign Affairs after the October Revolution. Leader of the Red Army in the Russian Civil War. Stalin's chief political opponent in 1920s and 1930s. Exiled from the Soviet Union in 1929. Assassinated on Stalin's orders in Mexico in 1940.

Tsereteli, Irakli (1881–1952). Founding member of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. Joined the Menshevik faction at 1903 conference. Elected to the Second Duma after the 1905 revolution; exiled to Siberia in 1913. Minister of post and telegraph and of the interior under the Provisional Government. Opposed the October Revolution, returning home to support the British-backed Democratic Republic of Georgia in 1918. Emigrated to Paris after the Red Army took Tbilisi in 1921, then eventually to the United States.

Tugan-Baranovsky, Mikhail (1865–1919). Russian economist and “legal Marxist” (one of a group of writers who were tolerated by the tsar's censors for their moderation or for their highly abstract and technical style) at the turn of the century before moving to the right.

Turati, Filippo (1857–1932). Historic founder and leader of the Italian Socialist Party (ISP) in 1895. Opposed Italy's entry into World War I, but also opposed the revolutionary left wing of the party. Lenin demanded his expulsion by the ISP as a condition of entry into the Third International. Exiled by Mussolini after 1926.

Vandervelde, Emile (1866–1938). Leading figure in the Second International and the Belgian Socialist Party. Supported the Entente in World War I and become justice minister in the government after World War I.

Webb, Beatrice (1858–1943) and **Sidney Webb** (1859–1947).

British aristocrats and leading members of the liberal-reformist Fabian Society, along with George Bernard Shaw.

Weydemeyer, Joseph (1816–66). Socialist leader in the 1848 revolution and close friend of Karl Marx. Moved to United States after the defeat of the revolution.

Zenzinov, Vladimir (1880–1953). Prominent leader of the Socialist Revolutionary Party who participated in the 1905 and 1917 revolutions. Opposed the October Revolution, supporting the anti-Bolshevik government in Samara before being exiled by counterrevolutionary General Kolchak.



Vladimir Ilyich Lenin was hiding from the police during the 1917 Russian Revolution while he finished *State and Revolution*. Lenin's most widely read—and most misunderstood—book describes the “monstrous oppression of the working people by the state” and how capitalism transforms whole areas of the globe into “military convict prisons for workers.” *State and Revolution* defends Marx and Engels's argument that workers must dismantle, or “smash,” capitalist states through revolution from below, and replace them with radically democratic states.

This new edition features an introduction and hundreds of explanatory annotations by Todd Chretien that place Lenin's work in its historical context. Chretien provides insight into some of the book's most controversial points, many of which are still being debated in movements today, from the Arab Spring revolutions to upheavals in Greece and Venezuela, to the fight against mass incarceration in the United States.

State and Revolution is an indispensable guide to confronting the political and bureaucratic structures that stand between humanity and the creation of a socialist world based on fulfilling human need. No revolutionary should be without it.

Todd Chretien is a frequent contributor to *Socialist Worker* and the *International Socialist Review*.

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