

V. GAVRILOV

Lenin's “The State and Revolution”

Progress Publishers

Издательство „ЖИЗНЬ и ЗНАНИЕ“.
Петроградъ. Поварской пер., д. 2, кн. 9 и 10. Телефонъ 227-42.

Библиотека Обществовѣдѣнія. №. 40-я.

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ГОСУДАРСТВО и РЕВОЛЮЦІЯ

Ученіе марксизма о государствѣ и задачах
пролетариата въ революціи.

ВЫПУСКЪ I.



ПЕТРОГРАДЪ.

1918·

V. GAVRILOV

Lenin's
“The State
and Revolution”



Progress Publishers
Moscow

Translated from the Russian by *Jane Sayer*
Designed by *Nikolai Senko*

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Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Г 0102020000-066 6-88
014 (01)-88

ISBN 5-01-000441-0

INTRODUCTION

The world has changed fundamentally since Lenin's *The State and Revolution* first came out. The turning point in world history came in 1917, with the Great October Socialist Revolution which determined the general direction and main trends in the development of the world and initiated an irreversible historical process—the replacement of capitalism with a new, communist socio-economic formation. The worldwide historical process of social emancipation, started by the October Revolution, was marked, following the defeat of Nazism and Japanese militarism by the anti-Hitler coalition in 1945, by the power of the exploiters being overthrown in a number of countries—in Europe, Asia and later in America too. Socialism, which first became a reality in one country, established itself over vast areas of the Earth and became a world system.

"More and more nations are losing their confidence in capitalism; they do not wish to associate their prospects of development with it and are persistently searching for and finding ways of socialist transformation of their countries."¹

One characteristic feature of world development

¹ *The Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. A New Edition*, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1986, pp. 12-13.

today is that the peoples of the recently freed countries are entering the world arena. The diverse contradictions that have accumulated for centuries deep within these countries have come to the surface and set powerful social forces in motion.

Lenin's prediction is coming true that "the movement of the majority of the population of the globe, initially directed towards national liberation", will act increasingly "against capitalism and imperialism".¹ He believed that, without unity with this movement, "complete victory over capitalism cannot be won".² In turn, according to his brilliant hypothesis set out in the work *Our Revolution*, the backward and dependent countries will follow a qualitatively different course in their transition to socialism.

The conclusions Lenin drew at the dawn of the national liberation movement confirmed the rule that the struggle for national liberation grows into one for social emancipation, and the possibility of a non-capitalist course of development towards socialism. It was Lenin who pointed out that Marxism, as a revolutionary theory required for success in practice, is basically a creative generalisation of the results of the struggle, a formulation of the essence of its historical lessons. He not only put forward this proposition, but also showed how Marxism could be enriched theoretically. A classic example of this was his work *The State and Revolution. The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution*.

¹ V.I. Lenin, "Third Congress of the Communist International, June 22-July 12, 1921", *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, 1973, p. 482 (here and hereafter Progress Publishers, Moscow).

² V.I. Lenin, "Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, 1982, p. 151

The idea of the need for a theoretical elaboration of the question of the state was first expressed by Lenin in the second half of 1916. "The order of the day now," he wrote, "is not only the continuation of the line we have endorsed (against tsarism, etc.) in our resolutions and pamphlet ... but also cleansing it of the stupidities which have accumulated, and the muddle about rejecting democracy (this includes disarmament, repudiation of self-determination, the theoretically wrong rejection 'in general' of defence of the fatherland, the wobblings on the question of the role and significance of the state in general, etc.)."¹

Following the February 1917 bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia, which overthrew the autocracy, under the conditions of the impending socialist revolution, a precise and clear formulation was required of the significance and role of the state. "The question of the relation of the socialist proletarian revolution to the state, therefore, is acquiring not only practical political importance, but also the significance of a most urgent problem of the day, the problem of explaining to the masses what they will have to do before long to free themselves from capitalist tyranny."²

The vital question of the state also had to be elaborated and elucidated because opportunists in all countries had basically distorted Marx's theory of the state, this constituting a tremendous danger for the proletariat, disorienting it and disarming it ideologically. The first thing was to unmask these distortions, restore the true views of Marx and Engels, develop and apply them under new historical conditions—the

¹ V.I. Lenin, "To A.G. Shlyapnikov", *Collected Works*, Vol. 35, 1976, pp. 232-33.

² V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, 1977, p. 388.

age of imperialism. Lenin believed that the struggle for liberation of the working masses from the influence of the bourgeoisie was impossible without a struggle against opportunist prejudices on the question of the state.

How, at that time, did the leaders of the West European Social-Democratic parties consider the Marxist theory of the state?

The distortion of Marxism in a reformist spirit was initiated by the German Social-Democrat Eduard Bernstein. He also opposed the Marxist conception of the state and the dictatorship of the proletariat. In his book *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus* (The Premises of Socialism), he accused Marxism of Blanquism (secret plotting). On the question of the Paris Commune, Bernstein confused Marxism with Proudhonism (radical petty-bourgeois protest against the state as the defender of big bourgeois interests) and, as Lenin wrote, generally evaded the need to break up the oppressive bourgeois state machine. This reformist stand predominated not only in the German Social-Democratic Party, but also in the socialist parties of other countries. Characteristic of all of them, as Lenin noted, was a superstitious reverence for the bourgeois state and denial of the need to create a proletarian, socialist one.

Criticising the opportunist views on the state, disseminated by the revisionists, Lenin wrote: "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 by a new one, and in this way make their political rule the foundation for the socialist reorganisation 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."¹

The greatest danger was posed by the views of Karl Kautsky, who was considered a major theoretician of the international workers' movement, while, as Lenin showed, on all issues of the class struggle of the proletariat and in his attitude to the bourgeois state, Kautsky descended to a stand of pure and vulgar opportunism.²

Petty-bourgeois views on the question of the state and its essence were held by the members of the Russian petty-bourgeois parties of Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries. This became particularly manifest during the period of the February bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1917. Lenin wrote: "...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, all the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks descended at once to the petty-bourgeois theory that the 'state' 'reconciles' classes."³

The Marxist theory of the state also consolidated and developed in the struggle against anarchism, which exerted a certain influence on immature strata of the working class. The anarchist conceptions of the state, in spite of their superficial radicalism, were essentially reactionary in character, since they were directed not only against the bourgeois, but also the proletarian state. Anarchists maintained the need to destroy the state, to abolish it immediately, taking no account of the objective historical conditions. Marx and Engels had sharply criticised the anarchist views on the state propounded by the Russian revo-

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 495.

² Kautsky's views will be discussed below.

³ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 392.

lutionary Mikhail Bakunin.

Lenin defined the difference between the anarchist and Marxist views on the state thus: "From the anarchists we are distinguished (α) by the use of the state *now*, and (β) during the *revolution* of the proletariat ('the dictatorship of the proletariat'), points of the utmost importance for practice, immediately."¹

A leading member of the Bolshevik Party,² N.I. Bukharin, at that time also departed from Marxism on the question of the state, taking a semi-anarchistic stand in his articles on the imperialist state.

Bukharin believed that Social-Democracy should inculcate in the masses a fundamental hostility towards the state, especially when the First World War of 1914-18 showed how deeply the "roots of the state idea" had penetrated into the workers' minds. Lenin showed that Bukharin was departing from Marxism in this and explained: "The point is not that the 'state idea' has clashed with the repudiation of the state, but that opportunist policy (i.e., the opportunist, reformist, bourgeois attitude towards the state) has clashed with revolutionary Social-Democratic policy (i.e., the revolutionary Social-Democratic attitude towards the bourgeois state and towards utilising it against the bourgeoisie to overthrow the bourgeoisie).

¹ V.I. Lenin, *Marxism on the State*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1984, p. 26.

² Bolsheviks supported a consistently revolutionary trend in the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. In 1903, at the Second Congress of the RSDLP, in the elections to the central bodies, the revolutionary Social-Democrats, headed by Lenin, gained a majority (hence the name Bolsheviks, from the Russian word *bolshinstvo*—majority) and the opportunists won a minority of the votes (hence, likewise, Mensheviks from the Russian *menshinstvo*—minority).

The history of Bolshevism is the history of the CPSU. From 1917 to 1952, the official name of the party included the word "Bolsheviks".

These are entirely different things."¹

Lenin began writing a work setting out Marx's and Engels' true views on the state when he was living as an émigré in Zurich, in the autumn of 1916, after re-reading everything they had written on the subject. The Zurich libraries still have the cards on which Lenin indicated the literature he required. In the Canton Library, for instance, he made notes on Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, and in the reading room of the Centre for Social Literature (now the Swiss Social Archives)—on Marx's work *The Civil War in France*. As a result of this tremendous scientific research work Lenin carried out in Zurich over a comparatively short period of time (January-February 1917) a notebook appeared that has become known as the Blue Notebook, entitled *Marxism on the State*.

The theoretical work on the question of the state was interrupted at this stage by the February bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia, which turned all Lenin's efforts towards returning home. When he left for revolutionary Russia, he took the Blue Notebook with him, but rather than lose it on arrival, he left it in Stockholm on the way. In April Lenin arrived in Russia, but shortage of time prevented him from continuing with his planned work. Leadership of the Party, of the working-class struggle, many and varied political activities, and a multitude of speeches used up all his time. Suffice it to recall that, from April to July 1917, Lenin wrote over 170 articles, pamphlets, appeals, and draft resolutions of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party, and spoke repeatedly at conferences, gatherings and meetings. Yet he did not abandon his planned research completely.

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The Youth International", *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, 1981, p. 166.

He returned to it when in hiding from the Provisional Government, which began persecuting the Bolshevik Party after the July 1917 events, during which the Provisional Government gave orders to fire on a peaceful demonstration of workers and soldiers in Petrograd. The revolution had reached a crisis—the power won by the revolutionary masses was forcibly taken over by the bourgeoisie. Mass arrests began of leaders of the Bolshevik Party and a start was made on breaking up its organisations. The Provisional Government put out a warrant for a search for Lenin and his arrest. He was, therefore, in an illegal position, and stayed so right up until October 24 (November 6), 1917, when the October Socialist Revolution took place in Russia. During those disturbed days (July 5-7), Lenin wrote to L.B. Kamenev, a member of the Central Committee: ‘If they do me in, I ask you to publish my notebook: ‘Marxism on the State’ (it got left behind in Stockholm). It’s bound in a blue cover. It contains a collection of all the quotations from Marx and Engels, likewise from Kautsky against Pannekoek. There are a number of remarks and notes, and formulations. I think it could be published after a week’s work. I believe it to be important, because not only Plekhanov but also Kautsky have bungled things.’¹

While in hiding in various places, Lenin continued to lead the Party. During this time he wrote the theses “The Political Situation”, the pamphlet “On Slogans”, the articles “Constitutional Illusions” and “The Lessons of the Revolution”, and other works, giving a profound analysis of the development of the revolution in Russia. During four months of being in an illegal position, Lenin wrote over 60 works showing that, as a consequence of the conciliatory policy pursued

¹ V.I. Lenin, “Note to L.B. Kamenev”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 36, 1971, p. 454.

by the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, the Soviets (organs of revolutionary power) had become a mere appendage to the bourgeois government. During this time, Lenin organised the preparations for and work of the Sixth Party Congress (July-August 1917), the decisions of which were designed to prepare the working class for an armed uprising and for victory of a proletarian revolution.

Lenin wrote his work, *The State and Revolution*, under the difficult conditions of operating deep under cover, while in constant mortal danger. The book was written in Helsingfors¹ (Finland) in August and September 1917. In mid-September Lenin concluded a contract with the *Zhizn i znaniye* (Life and Knowledge) publishing house for its publication. In a note to the publisher, he wrote that, if he took too long over the last chapter or if it grew “too bulky” (he was referring to Chapter VII, “The Experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917”), the first six should be published separately as Book One. Initially it was proposed that the book should come out under the pen-name F. F. Ivanovsky, but in fact it was published in 1918, after the October Socialist Revolution, so there was no longer any need for secrecy. It came out under the well-known literary pseudonym V. Ilyin (N. Lenin).

The book consists of six chapters, prefaces to the first and second editions and a postscript to the first edition.

Chapter I is called “Class Society and the State”, and is devoted to the chief theoretical propositions contained in the theory of Marx and Engels of the state: the state as a product of the irreconcilability of class contradictions and serving as an instrument for the exploitation of the oppressed class. In Chapter II,

¹ Helsinki.

"The State and Revolution. The Experience of 1848-51", Lenin analyses mainly Marx's presentation of the question of the state in the work *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) and in his letter to Joseph Weydemeyer of March 5, 1852, in which Marx formulates his new contributions to the science of the class struggle and the state since the *Communist Manifesto* came out. The book's third chapter is "The State and Revolution. Experience of the Paris Commune of 1871. Marx's Analysis". Here Lenin considers Marx's assessments of the historical experience of the first proletarian revolution—the Paris Commune, and the conclusion that the working class can gain political power only by forcibly breaking up the bourgeois state machine and creating a qualitatively new state apparatus. In Chapter IV, "Continuation. Supplementary Explanations by Engels", Lenin assigns a major place to Engels' criticism of the draft of the Erfurt Programme of the German Social-Democratic Party.¹

Note should be made of one specific of chapters II-IV—the profound inner unity of the logical and historical methods used for analysing the development of the Marxist theory of the state. Only two diversions are made from a chronological exposition. The first is Engels' work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, which, though written in 1895, is considered in Chapter I, which reveals the essence of the Marxist theory of the state, and the second is in Chapter V, "The Economic Basis of the Withering Away of the State", where Marx's work *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875) is presented out of

¹ The programme of the German Social-Democratic Party, adopted at its Erfurt Congress in October 1891, was a step forward compared with the Gotha Programme (1875); it pointed out, in particular, the role of the Party as the leader of the political struggle of the working class. Yet it also contained serious concessions to opportunism.

chronological order.

Chapter VI, "The Vulgarisation of Marxism by the Opportunists", gives a critique of opportunist distortions of the Marxist theory of the state. The final section of Lenin's book was to be devoted to analysing the experience of the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917. "Apart from the title, however," Lenin modestly noted in his postscript to the first edition, "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.... It is more pleasant and useful to go through the 'experience of the revolution' than to write about it."¹ The spirit of the revolutionary experience of the Russian proletariat naturally penetrates the entire work. This experience facilitated a deeper understanding of the political lessons of the West European workers' class struggle, as assessed by Marx and Engels, and added thrust to the ideological criticism of the opportunist vulgarisation of Marxism on the fundamental issue of the revolution—that of the proletariat winning power. Finally, it allowed the foundations of the theory of the socialist state, developed in Lenin's works written after the triumph of the socialist revolution in Russia and the consolidation of the power of the Soviets, to be laid in the work *The State and Revolution*. A major place among these later works belongs to Lenin's *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*.

It is important to note the major independent significance of the preparatory material (plans, synopses and notes), which Lenin entitled *Marxism on the State*. This material shows how deeply he studied the given problems of the state. Moreover, it takes the reader into Lenin's laboratory of scientific creativity,

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 497.

this being an invaluable heritage of Marxism-Leninism.

Since *The State and Revolution* first came out many years have passed, during which it has enjoyed an eventful life. It has been published in large issues in over a hundred countries, translated into many languages and republished repeatedly.

Chapter I. THE MAIN TASKS OF THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

1. How Lenin Posed the Question

Lenin's work *The State and Revolution* begins, as already noted, by posing the question of the primary need to "re-establish what Marx really taught on the subject of the state",¹ which was seriously distorted at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century by the leading ideologists of German Social-Democracy. Confusing two totally different issues—the struggle for participation in the government and the winning of power by the working class—and virtually taking a line of conciliation with the bourgeoisie (concern for the interests of the governmental authorities), they, as Lenin wrote, "omit, obscure or distort the revolutionary side of this theory, its revolutionary soul. They push to the foreground and extol what is or seems acceptable to the bourgeoisie".² He saw this as a monstrous concession to the class opponent, betrayal of the genuine interests of the working class, reducing the goals of the struggle for socialism to reformism—to scattering the revolutionary forces of the proletariat in political battles between the bourgeois parties.

Lenin explains the need at that moment for an irreconcilable attitude towards any manifestations of opportunism in the working-class movement also by

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 391.

² Ibid., p. 390.

the fact that the crisis of state-monopoly capitalism, which developed into the bloody battle unleashed by imperialism for a redivision of the world—the First World War, created only the opportunity for a socialist revolution, while its realisation depended totally on the subjective factor, the level of the masses' political consciousness. The workers' movement remained, however, under the influence of the opportunist Social-Democratic leaders, so, as Lenin stressed, "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'".¹

The leaders of the main parties of the Second International,² including the biggest and apparently the most experienced of them—the German Social-Democratic Party—defended (in spite of the decisions of the congresses of the Second International) the imperialist policies of their bourgeois governments. "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," Lenin stressed, "when states, which possess a military apparatus expanded 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."³

¹ Ibid, p. 388.

² The *Second International* was an international association of socialist parties, founded in 1889 with Engels' direct participation. After his death in 1895, right-wing opportunist tendencies began gaining strength within the Second International. The opportunist trend in the Second International was counterposed by the revolutionary one, the leading force of which was the Bolshevik Party headed by Lenin.

³ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", pp. 495-96.

A similar political trend was characteristic of Russia too, where the multimillion masses, aroused by the February revolution but still unskilled in politics, saw the collapse of tsarism as the birth of the reign of universal "fraternity", "liberty" and "democracy", which had to be defended. These illusions were also fostered by the opportunist press, which presented Russia's participation in the imperialist war as "defence of the revolutionary cause".

Making a frontal attack on opportunism, Lenin reveals the most "typical" errors of its ideologists. One of these is that the state constitutes, in their interpretation of Marx, an instrument for reconciling classes, an expression of some general national will, regulating the life of society and order within it. This interpretation of Marx distorts his main idea concerning the historical place and role of the state, which consists mainly, as Lenin wrote, in that "the state is a product and a manifestation of the *irreconcilability* of class antagonisms. The state arises where, when and insofar as class antagonisms objectively *cannot* be reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state proves that the class antagonisms are irreconcilable."¹

In bourgeois society these antagonisms are conditioned by the private capitalist nature of relations to the means of production and exploitation of wage labour by capital. Here the state acts as a political superstructure above the system of basic (economic) relations. It is a means for maintaining the *status quo* of the institutions of private property and, consequently, the bourgeoisie's domination over the proletariat. On the basis of his analysis of Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Lenin stresses that the dominant class, with the help of "not merely armed men", but special bodies of armed men, special

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 392.

state institutions and establishments, such as the army, police and officialdom, subordinates the oppressed class to its will and suppresses the latter's will to resist. While the state does "alleviate" unavoidable class conflicts it does so only by strengthening and improving its own structure.¹

In *The State and Revolution*, Lenin shows which specific arguments the ideologists of opportunism use to substantiate their "view" of the Marxist theory of the state. These include references to the growing complexity of the life of society and discussion of the differentiation of the economic functions of the state apparatus, which gained impetus under the conditions of state-monopoly capitalism. They also embrace calls for universal suffrage, which would supposedly reveal the will of the majority and allow it to be implemented, and assertions that no "civilised" society could get by without a special organisation for managing it, etc. According to Lenin, these obscure and evasive formulations clearly demonstrate a striving to prove "scientifically" that the modern state is no longer an instrument of oppression, force and domination; that it is "neutral" in character, acting almost as a referee in the class struggle, and able to be used by the proletariat for its liberation.

At the same time, Lenin also draws attention to a much more subtle (Kautskyite) distortion of the Marxist theory of the state, where "theoretically", as Lenin writes, "it is not denied that the state is an organ of class rule, or that class antagonisms are irreconcilable".² At the same time, however, it is declared, as Lenin quotes from Kautsky, that "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 rank of master of the gov-

ernment".¹ Thus, Lenin goes on, the following fact is ignored or concealed: if the state is the product of the irreconcilability of class contradictions, 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'.²

The question inevitably arises as to how Kautsky, such an eminent figure in the West European workers' movement, a fighter against Bernstein's vulgarisation of Marxism, reduced the political tasks of the proletariat in "impending revolutions", of which he spoke in his pamphlet *Der Weg zur Macht* (The Road to Power) (1909),³ to the need to fight for a government "will-

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 494.

² Ibid., p. 393.

³ Lenin described this work as "a most complete exposition of the tasks of our times, ... most advantageous to the German Social-Democrats (in the sense of the promise they held out)" (V.I. Lenin, "Dead Chauvinism and Living Socialism", *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, 1977, p. 94). In it, Kautsky directly linked his view with the intensification of the class contradictions in the age of imperialism, militarisation, and the onslaught made by the monopolies and the bourgeois state on the gains of the working class. "What, to the 'reformists', " he wrote, "appears to be a peaceful growth into socialism is nothing but a growth of the strength of the two antagonistic classes that face each other in irreconcilable hostility. This means that the contradiction between labour and capital ... is now developing into a struggle of enormous, united organisations that determine the direction of all social and state life. Thus, the growth into socialism means a growth into major battles that shake all the foundations of the state, will inevitably gain in intensity and can end only with the overthrow and expropriation of the capitalist class" (Karl Kautsky, *Der Weg zur Macht. Politische Betrachtungen über das Hineinwachsen in die Revolution*, Buchhandlung Vorwärts Verlag, Berlin, 1910, S. 33-34).

ing to meet it [the proletariat] half-way".¹ An answer to this question can be found in Kautsky's own words: "It only needs the class or the state to go over from the revolutionary stage to the conservative one, only needs it to cease fighting for its existence or consolidation, to begin being satisfied with the existing situation and improving only the details of it, for the intellectual outlook of its ideological leaders to narrow immediately. Their interest in significant issues dies, they lose their courage, bold thinkers and fighters are seen as inconvenient and are pushed into the background. Petty intrigues and lack of character come to the fore."²

In exposing the evolution of Kautsky's views on the tasks of the proletariat in the struggle for socialism, Lenin shows that he gradually divorced the proposition of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* on the organisation of the proletariat as a ruling class and the winning of the battle of democracy from the theoretical development of the same proposition by Marx and Engels based on analysis of the revolutionary practice of the proletariat in the period 1848-49 and 1871. This was due to an uncritical attitude towards the successes achieved in the legal struggle by the West European Social-Democrats after the defeat of the Paris Commune of 1871. The exclusive emphasis laid on the significance of this experience, in spite of Engels' repeated warnings, finally led to the revolution being counterposed to the process of winning the battle of democracy, to a denial of the need for a revolutionary struggle for power. According to Kautsky, the state is no obstacle to a gradual "democratisation" of bourgeois society and its development into a classless society. The working class can, step by step, take

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 494.

² Karl Kautsky, op. cit., S. 106.

over the political power apparatus, using transitional stages from one coalition with the bourgeois government to another for this purpose. Each new step forward must be preceded by thorough political preparations, the retention of existing socio-political institutions and liberties. The proletariat's struggle for power must, in contrast to bourgeois revolutions, proceed less dramatically, involve no conflict and be characterised by the absence of political acts of force in relation to the class opponent.

Describing this, Lenin pointed out that the supporters of such an approach in Social-Democracy "were hypnotised by a definite form of growth of the working-class movement",¹ elevated "one-sidedness to a theory", declared "mutually exclusive those tendencies or features of this movement that are a specific peculiarity of a given period, of given conditions of working-class activity".² They used the successes of the West European workers' movement at the end of the 19th century to teach the proletariat, not revolution, but reformism, that nothing more was needed for the achievement of social justice and realisation of economic and political demands of the working class than a struggle for "consistent", "pure" democracy.

There is no doubt that the bourgeois-democratic system as a specific form of political domination of capital took shape under the impact of the working-class struggle and objectively furthers the formation of new conditions for the workers' struggle for socialism. Lenin stressed here that "a wider, freer and more open form of the class struggle and of class op-

¹ V.I. Lenin, "Left-Wing" Communism—an Infantile Disorder", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 102.

² V.I. Lenin, "Differences in the European Labour Movement", *Collected Works*, Vol. 16, 1977, p. 349.

pression vastly assists the proletariat in its struggle for the abolition of classes in general".¹ At the same time, however broad and representative it may be, bourgeois democracy cannot be relied upon at all to become an instrument for fundamental social transformations. The form of political guidance remains a form and, moreover, only of guidance, rather than of administration of the state machinery, which is based on class domination by the bourgeoisie. The breakdown of this machinery and the construction of a new type of state are essential conditions for the building of socialism. Moreover, no democracy guarantees the crisis-free development of bourgeois society or, guards its institutions against onslaughts by reaction. "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."²

Otherwise there is a tendency to believe, as Bernstein did, that "what one calls the final goal of Socialism is nothing..., the movement is everything", an idea that transforms the concept of the "withering away" of the state into an empty abstraction. This inclination became inherent in the final period of activities of Kautsky who, within the Second International, was considered an advocate of revolutionary struggle for socialism. It was manifested particularly clearly in his conception of "ultraimperialism" (1915), which forecast a transition by imperialism after the First World War to a new stage that would lead to the disappearance of interimperialist contradictions and of the need for an enormous bureaucratic military apparatus, and would establish new conditions for the proletariat to win the battle of democracy. Lenin

considers such misconceptions to be monstrous errors jeopardising the workers' movement to the extreme. Attempts were made to convince the masses that a new era would come allowing them, without a violent revolution, to implement large-scale social transformations; it was an attractive idea, but anti-historical and harmful in essence.

2. Lenin on Marx's Theory of the State

Lenin began his analysis of the most important stages in the development of the Marxist theory of the state with Marx's and Engels' research into French political history from 1848 to 1851, and only then goes on to their assessment of the experience of the Paris Commune (1871). It was on the eve of the 1848 revolution in France that the first mature Marxist works were written: *The Poverty of Philosophy* and the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. They take into account the results of the bourgeois revolutions of the past (in Britain from 1640 to 1649 and France from 1789 to 1794) and the theoretical researches of the great utopian socialists (at the beginning of the 19th century), and establish who heads the struggle for a fundamental social restructuring.

"The working class," Marx writes in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, "in the course of its development, will substitute for the old civil society an association which will exclude classes and their antagonism, and there will be no more political power properly so-called, since political power is precisely the official expression of antagonism in civil society."¹

¹ K. Marx, "The Poverty of Philosophy. Answer to the 'Philosophy of Poverty' by M. Proudhon", K. Marx, F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1984, p. 212.

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 459.

² Ibid., p. 405.

In the *Communist Manifesto*, defining the proletarian state, Marx and Engels stress that this is the "proletariat organised as the ruling class".¹

Including the socio-economic sphere in their analysis of the political struggle, Marx and Engels not only noted in these works that the world had entered a phase of new, bourgeois development, but also proved that the course of history assigned to the working class the historic mission of eliminating irreconcilable social relations.

Although these works were written just before the February 1848 revolution in France, which overthrew the Louis Philippe monarchy and proclaimed the Second Republic, they were not yet available to the proletarian strata. These works could not, of course, reflect the results of the new stage in the class struggle, when the proletariat took revolutionary action against reaction for the first time.

The Provisional Government formed after the revolution included one worker and set up a special commission for the "organisation of labour" (Labour Commission). It was headed by the Socialist Louis Blanc. The idea of the Commission was for the representatives of the workers and bourgeoisie to find, by their combined efforts, the best form of mutually beneficial political co-operation between the two classes. This utopian idea fell through. The bourgeoisie ousted the proletarians from the positions they had gained.

The government formed in April 1848 of bourgeois republicans, who were victorious in the elections to the Constituent Assembly (April 23-24), moved against the working class and declared the closure of the *ateliers nationaux* (national workshops). In response to this provocation on the part of the bour-

¹ K. Marx and F. Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party", K. Marx, F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 504.

geoisie, the workers of Paris raised the barricades (June 23, 1848). The republican government did not waver, but immediately initiated bloody suppression of the uprising. June revealed to the workers the essence of the bourgeois republic—it was just as ardent a defender of the interests of capital as the bourgeois monarchy had been.

Having temporarily removed the proletariat from the political arena, various bourgeois factions started struggling for power. As a result, the post of president went to Louis Bonaparte, Napoleon I's nephew. On December 2, 1851 he dissolved parliament and established a personal dictatorship. Exactly a year later, Louis Bonaparte became Emperor Napoleon III. The Second Empire was established in France.

French political events from 1848 to 1851 were set out by Marx in the works *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850* and *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Speaking of the problems raised in these works, Lenin, on the one hand, explains what new elements Marx's analysis introduced into the theory of proletarian revolution. On the other, he shows how Marx enriched the propositions on the state formulated originally in *The Poverty of Philosophy* and the *Communist Manifesto*. Above all, Lenin draws attention to the fact that, in the course of the formation of the "civil society", the economic dominance of the bourgeoisie is consolidated politically and, as a part of this process, the bureaucratic-military machine grows tremendously. Under these conditions, Marx concludes in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, the only way to socialism is through destruction and abolition of this machine. Presenting Marx's conclusion, Lenin himself infers: "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.

"This conclusion is the chief and fundamental point in the Marxist theory of the state."¹

Lenin's thorough study of Marx's new conclusions allowed him to formulate: "It was not logical reasoning, but actual developments, the actual experience of 1848-51, that led to the matter being presented in this way."² Moreover he adds: "The 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."³

While in profound agreement with this approach, Lenin also raises the question as to whether it is correct to generalise the experience of a comparatively short period studied on the example of a single country. In answer, he turns to the history of the advanced countries (late 19th and early 20th centuries), which had "entered" the age of imperialism, of a sharp growth of the state machine and its repressive appara-

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 411.

² Ibid., p. 414.

³ Ibid.

tus. "World history is now undoubtedly leading," Lenin states on the basis of analysis of the state-monopoly stage of capitalism, "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."¹

Among the many historical events that took place in the first few decades after 1848, Marx, Engels and Lenin identify the Paris Commune as the most important. It appeared in an extremely difficult political situation, during the Franco-Prussian war. The capitulation of the hundred-thousand-strong French army brought Paris to revolution and the collapse, on September 4, 1870, of the Second Empire. Taking advantage of the indignation of the Paris masses, a Provisional Government came to power (a bloc of bourgeois republicans and monarchists), declaring itself to be the Government of National Defence. The approach of the Prussian forces to Paris compelled the Government to arm the citizens, to form a three-hundred-thousand-strong army. At the same time, military patriotic organisations of workers sprang up in the city—Defence and Vigilance Committees, which began presenting the Government with resolute demands that affected, to one degree or another, the very foundations of the existing system and its bulwark—the state (replacement of Bonapartist officials, elections to leading positions).

Fear of the armed masses began to determine the policy pursued by Paris ruling circles, who, rather than fulfil their patriotic duty to defend the homeland, protected their own class interests. As a result, the elections to the National Assembly (February 8, 1871), which was to take the final decision whether to go on fighting or conclude a peace on Prussia's

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 415.

terms, created an extremely unfavourable situation for revolutionary Paris. Elected as head of the new government was a 74-year-old reactionary, an ardent opponent of the workers' movement—Thiers, who, on February 26, 1871, signed a preliminary peace treaty with Prussia, in order to free his hands to put down the armed proletarian masses. Meanwhile, the discredited bourgeoisie was losing control of Paris. The chief centre of revolutionary forces became the Central Committee of the National Guard, representing 215 proletarian battalions. By mid-March 1871, the Thiers government found itself virtually incapable of administering Paris. On the night of March 18, it unleashed a civil war. Working-class Paris, the core of the French working people, did not flinch. Seven days later a general vote elected the Paris Commune. The world's first ever proletarian revolution had been accomplished.

Lenin writes: "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 unfavourable auguries. Marx did not persist in the pedantic attitude of condemning an 'untimely' movement Although the mass revolutionary movement did not achieve its aim, he regarded it as a historic experience of enormous importance, as a certain advance of the world proletarian revolution, as a practical step that was more important than hundreds of programmes and arguments. Marx endeavoured to analyse this experiment, to draw tactical lessons from it and re-examine his theory in the light of it."¹

¹ Ibid., pp. 418-19.

In the very first days of the Paris Commune, the Central Committee of the National Guard made a fatal mistake. Concerned primarily with holding elections and transferring the power to a "lawful" government, it was in too much of a hurry to start introducing constitutional actions and allowed Thiers, who had escaped to Versailles, to put his troops in order and then increase their numbers to 150,000 (with the addition of prisoners of war released by Prussia). Thiers hurled them against revolutionary Paris. The Communards' heroic resistance could not ward off defeat. The Commune lasted only 72 days and was then bloodily quashed. The cruelty shown by the reactionaries demonstrated how much they feared the defeated revolution, its ideals and principles, for which the Communards were willing to die.

Marx's analysis could not, of course, be exhaustive: it was made right after the event and the Commune itself lasted for too short a time—its most significant measures were never put to the main test, the test of time. The proletariat had no other creative revolutionary experience to draw on, however. It was necessary to identify the main things the Communards had achieved, even if the data were not all-embracing. "Marx subjected the experience of the Commune," Lenin wrote, "meagre as it was, to the most careful analysis in *The Civil War in France*."¹

Above all, as Marx showed, the Commune legislatively secured the elimination of the apparatus of coercion. It was replaced by universal arming of the people. Moreover, the Commune proclaimed its rejection of parliamentarianism and started turning the representative institutions into "working" bodies—not just legislative ones, but also executive. It declared all officials to be elected and subject to recall. Its intervention in the sphere of production relations was much more modest.

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 423.

To sum up, its measures affected the state element, the purely political restructuring of society. Yet all their meaning and significance derives precisely from their nature as preparation for the expropriation of private property and the transfer of the means of production to public ownership. The Commune's programme stated: "Paris wants, ultimately, the land for the peasants, the instruments of labour for the workers and jobs for all." Thus, Marx concludes, it at last revealed for scientific communism the political form under which economic emancipation of the working class would be possible.

Having disclosed the essence of the Commune, Marx comes to the very important conclusion that the political task of the proletarian revolution "to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy",¹ which had already been set by the *Communist Manifesto*, was a dual one. It implied establishment of a fundamentally new type of state and democracy on the ruins of the bourgeois state. Focusing attention on this vital discovery of Marx's, Lenin writes: "The Commune, therefore, 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 the state proper."²

This way of thinking, suggested by the revolu-

¹ K. Marx and F. Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party", p. 504.

² V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 424.

tionary practice of the Communards, Lenin writes, prompted Marx and Engels to introduce a major correction into the text of the new, 1872 German edition of the *Communist Manifesto*, pointing out in the Preface: "The working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes."¹ However it might be formed politically, its purpose is to ensure the domination of the ruling class, the bourgeoisie, so the "winning of the battle of democracy" does not mean to take over this machinery as had been done previously, but to destroy it and build a basically new state system, this being essentially a step towards the "withering away" of the state. "Most characteristically," Lenin stresses, "it is this important correction that has been distorted by the opportunists."²

In particular, Bernstein saw it as meaning that the process of the proletariat assuming state power would be very protracted. He presents matters, as Lenin notes, "as though Marx in these words warned the working class *against* excessive revolutionary zeal when seizing power".³ In turn, Kautsky, objecting to Bernstein's approach to Marx, reduces the entire essence of the issue to the working class being able to take over the state machinery by winning the battle of democracy. Thus, the main thing that Marx drew from the experience of the Paris Commune was concealed—when deciding the question of power, the proletarian revolution not only assumes democracy, but also creates a fundamentally new type of it (a

¹ K. Marx, "The Civil War in France", K. Marx, F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1986, p. 328; K. Marx, F. Engels, "Preface to the 1872 German Edition of the Manifesto of the Communist Party", K. Marx, F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1987, p. 175.

² V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 419.

³ Ibid., p. 483.

higher one, as Lenin later says, drawing from the experience of the Soviets¹), which has only a few features in common with bourgeois democracy and parliamentarianism (universal suffrage, and so on). Its essence consists in the fulfilment of the functions of state power by all the people, which leads, as society develops, to less need, as Lenin stresses, “for the existence of this power”,² i.e., to the “withering away” of the state. Yet within the framework of bourgeois democracy, however advanced its form, the idea of the state is merely consolidated.

3. On Engels’ Contribution to the Marxist Theory of the State

According to Lenin, Engels’ study of the experience of the West European workers’ movement following the Paris Commune was of vital importance for a critique of bourgeois democracy. “Engels,” he wrote, “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 with his explanations specially.”³ Moreover, this necessity was also determined by attempts by one group of op-

¹ Soviets are mass elected political bodies of the Russian working class, which appeared during the 1905-07 revolution. The Soviets of Workers’ Deputies were organs of the armed uprising and the first offshoots of the new revolutionary power.

In 1917, in the course of the February bourgeois-democratic revolution, the Soviets reappeared. As organs of the dictatorship and alliance of the working class and the peasantry, the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies existed alongside the bourgeois Provisional Government. After the October Socialist Revolution they became the organs of state power.

² V.I. Lenin, “The State and Revolution”, p. 425.

³ Ibid., p. 437.

pportunists (Bernstein) to prove that, at the end of the 19th century, Engels reviewed Marx’s analysis of the experience of the Paris Commune as already obsolete political practice, and by the other group (Kautsky)—that there was no revision and that Engels’ conclusions on the possibility of making use of parliamentarianism merely corresponded to the spirit of Marx’s ideas on “winning the battle of democracy”.

Indeed, in Germany in the 1880s a certain connection was observed between parliamentarianism and the possibilities for social reformism “from above”. This was manifested in the so-called labour legislation (laws on social security for the sick and victims of professional injury, and later the law limiting the length of the working week). In this context, Marxist theory faced the task of revealing the ruling circles’ opportunities for keeping up with the times. These opportunities, as Engels showed in his work *The Role of Force in History*, turned out to be very restricted. At the same time, he focuses attention on the fact that social reformism “from above” might be used by the proletariat, too, as a form of class struggle. Engels’ formula “we are thriving far better on legal methods than on illegal methods and overthrow”,¹ testified, on the one hand, to the growing might of the proletariat and, on the other, to the strengthening of statehood and the growth of militarism. “If conditions have changed,” he wrote, “in the case of war between nations, this is no less true in the case of the class struggle. The time of surprise attacks, of revolutions carried through by small conscious minorities at the head of unconscious masses, is past.”²

¹ K. Marx, “The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850” Introduction by Frederick Engels”, K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* in three volumes, Vol. 1, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1973, p. 202

² Ibid., pp. 199-200.

In connection with this, he puts forward the task of making use of the democratic institutions of the bourgeois state, developing the skills of government in representatives of the working class elected to them, an ability to prepare for impending revolutions under legal conditions, without wasting the revolutionary strength of the proletariat.

It should be noted that, speaking of parliamentarianism, Engels did not mean at all what the opportunists later reiterated, starting with Bernstein. He certainly did not envisage co-operation with the bourgeoisie, but a struggle against it within the very citadel of bourgeois society. "Engels repeated..." Lenin stresses, "in a particularly striking form the fundamental idea which runs through all of Marx's works, namely, that the democratic republic is the nearest approach to the dictatorship of the proletariat."¹ That is why Kautsky's ideas concerning "democracy" in general, connected with a striving to expand the social base of Social-Democracy under the conditions of state-monopoly capitalism, are, in Lenin's view, a failure, a step backwards in the development of scientific communism. They are usually concealed by dialectical terminology that "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".²

The dialectical approach shows that the proletarian revolution cannot be accomplished by one or just a few parliamentary actions. The changes it must bring require the vigorous political creativity of the masses. Parliament is very weak in this respect. It merely reflects, and then only partially, the electoral

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 450.

² Ibid., p. 405.

demands of the masses. Parliamentary activities, including the struggle by opposition workers' parties, do not exclude the possibility of reactionaries winning the coming elections. In such a situation, the proletariat's orientation on only representation in parliament allows the class opponent to make an assault on the gains of the working people and fetters their political initiative. Moreover, the revolution cannot fit within the narrow limits of parliament's basically legislative activities, since, even under the most favourable circumstances for the proletariat, these activities cannot have any real influence on the course of political events, but merely give form to their results. An orientation on parliament deprives the revolution of its dynamism and takes it off the offensive. Its course inevitably presupposes the emergence of institutions directly reflecting and defending the political will of the revolutionary masses. Only democracy for these masses themselves, free from protracted, official parliamentary procedures, is capable of directing this will along the necessary channels and reacting quickly to events. "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.... This is the dialectics of living history."¹ The proletariat's political domination cannot be established in bourgeois-democratic forms and the struggle between opposites is not resolved in old ones.

According to Kautsky, the new form of democracy consists in a transition from quantity to quality, when "the winning of the battle of democracy" will be ensured by the support of the necessary major-

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", pp. 457, 458.

rity of the population. "In mockery of the teachings of Marx," Lenin writes, "those gentlemen, the opportunists, including the Kautskyites, 'teach' the people that the proletariat must first win a majority by means of universal suffrage, then obtain state power, by the vote of that majority, and only after that, on the basis of 'consistent' (some call it 'pure') democracy, organise socialism."¹ Without vigorous revolutionary actions, designed to break up the state machinery protecting bourgeois principles, law and order, so Lenin believed, the question of winning the majority over to the side of the revolution would remain on paper. No solution to it had been suggested by history to take the place of the experience of the Paris Commune. The revolutionary course for the majority cannot go round this machinery or through the parliamentary "grinder", as Kautsky considered.

As the revolution gains depth, the established political structures of society break down and the institutions of the new democracy develop; more and more new social forces and strata join the revolution, and additional resources of the creativity of the masses are revealed. The moral authority of the revolution is, Lenin believed, a force capable of arousing the masses, who then become the force of the revolution itself. The political majority, revealed by parliamentary, electoral means, cannot by itself become such a force; itself it needs protection from the anti-constitutional intrigues of reaction, inevitable in the course of fundamental social transformations. Considering precisely this presentation of the question by Engels in the work *A Critique of the Draft Social-Democratic Programme of 1891* (the Erfurt Programme), Lenin writes:

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The Constituent Assembly Elections and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, 1977, p. 263.

"Democracy is a form of the state... Consequently, like every state, it represents, on the one hand, the organised, systematic use of force against persons; but, 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...."

"Here 'quantity turns into quality': such a degree of democracy implies overstepping the boundaries of bourgeois society and beginning its socialist reorganisation. If really *all* take part in the administration of the state, capitalism cannot retain its hold."²

In order to show the fundamental coincidence between Engels' point of view and Marx's position on this question, Lenin turns from the critique of the Erfurt Programme to Marx's work *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875). He quotes: "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*."² Thus, he stresses, that which the utopians missed and the opportunists forgot, received in Marxist theory the "most consis-

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 477.

² Ibid., p. 464; Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme", K Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* in three volumes, Vol. 3, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1970, p. 26.

tent, complete, considered and pithy form".¹ "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."²

Considering how Marx and Engels formulated the question of the fate of democracy, Lenin does not forget to stress that "the problem of applying this theory ... to the *forthcoming* collapse of capitalism"³ was also an acute one for them. The revolutionary events of the early 20th century did not, of course, take place exactly as Marx and Engels had imagined. Socialism initially became established in Russia—a country with an average level of development of capitalism for the time. Yet this in no way reduces the scientific value of their theoretical conclusions, their contribution to the development of revolutionary theory of the state. The impossibility of predicting precisely the time and place when the formulated laws of history would be realised, and the specific nature of the forms in which they are manifested merely reaffirms the need for the proletariat to be comprehensively prepared for the impending battles, the need for an ability to change its line of political conduct flexibly in response to a sharp turn of events. It was for this that Engels was preparing West European Social-Democracy after Marx's death in 1883. In *The State and Revolution*, on the basis of the ideas of Marx and Engels and the creative application of these ideas to the new political conditions of

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", pp. 462-63.

² Ibid., p. 465.

³ Ibid., p. 463.

the class struggle, engendered in the age of imperialism, Lenin showed convincingly that the expectation of some mythical stage of ultrainternationalism, which would open up the possibility for a crisis-free parliamentary road to socialism, is one of the grossest, most inexcusable theoretical errors. He saw the striving "to force the complex, urgent, rapidly developing practical tasks of the revolution into the Procrustean bed of narrowly conceived 'theory' instead of regarding theory primarily and predominantly as a *guide to action*"¹ as another such mistake.

Lenin supports this idea with what were then the very latest examples from the history of the Russian revolution, and reveals a major circumstance: it is in the course of the extra-parliamentary struggle that the proletariat gains the advantage over the bourgeoisie from the point of view of influence on the masses and their involvement in the revolution and defence of democratic gains. Considering the Bonapartist (after July 1917) nature of the Provisional Government, he not only finds a similarity and differences between its policies and analogous events in France in the mid-19th century, but also indicates that the bourgeois-democratic revolution would perish unless this government were soon overthrown by the proletariat.

The victory of the October Socialist Revolution was ensured by the Bolsheviks' consistent struggle for the masses, skilled actions against the bourgeois-monarchist forces, and the correct policy of isolating the masses from bourgeois-republican conciliators. In turn, the Bolshevik Party did everything possible to support the revolutionary initiative and independence of the masses, which the bourgeoisie was doing its utmost to bring under parliamentary control. At the

¹ V.I. Lenin, "Letters from Afar", *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 330.

same time, the revolutionary practice helped the masses get rid of illusions and false conceptions concerning democracy, although, of course, this was not achieved fully or at once. All this required from the Bolsheviks a flexibility to teach the masses on their own practical experience and raise the revolutionary movement. Elucidating the essence of this Party policy, Lenin said: "We do not claim that Marx knew or Marxists know the road to socialism down to the last detail. It would be nonsense to claim anything of the kind. What we know is the direction of this road, and the class forces that follow it; the specific, practical details will come to light only through the *experience of the millions* when they take things into their own hands."¹

It is because the Bolsheviks, at all sharp turns in history, have been able to learn from the masses and to teach them that they achieved a fundamental turn of events in favour of these masses. In place of parliamentary bourgeois democracy, merely appearing to represent the interests of the majority of the people, the October Revolution in Russia established the real domination of this majority. The ideas Marx and Engels formulated from analysis of the experience of the Paris Commune received new life.

As already noted, having destroyed the bourgeois state and transferred all the legislative and executive power into the hands of the popular masses, the Paris Commune made state functions accessible to all, open and clear in character. The outcome of the civil war with Versailles showed, however, that a number of the fundamental features of the Commune, which had promised to become a tremendous advantage of the new system over the old, proved a disadvantage in

practice. The Commune failed partly because it could not centralise all spheres of social practice—military matters, administration, and so on. The most important problem for revolutionary theory and practice, that of the correlation between democracy and centralism, had only been outlined, but not resolved, the need having been shown for analysis of the new circumstances, previously not envisaged by the theory. This analysis was carried out by Lenin on the basis of the experience of the first steps of Soviet power, which was reflected in his conception of the building of socialism and the socialist state.

For many decades, bourgeois and revisionist ideologists have been counterposing the "scholar" Marx to the "voluntarist" Lenin, the "reformist" Engels to the "revolutionary" Lenin. The aim of these attempts is clear—to present Leninism in isolation from Marxism, not as the successor and continuer of all worldwide revolutionary thinking of the past, but as some specifically Russian phenomenon, a historical exception, a distorted "eastern" variant of Marxism, clearly inapplicable for other regions and countries. The work *The State and Revolution* razes these prejudiced assertions to the ground. A study of it shows that Lenin knew, valued and defended the teachings of Marx and Engels more than anyone else did. He elevated them to a new level by creatively applying them to the conditions of the new era. In Lenin's works, the concept of social emancipation in the age of imperialism was filled with new content. He considered the impending revolutions not as the result of just a single conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, but as an onslaught on capitalism by the anti-imperialist movements—the proletarian, semi-proletarian and national liberation movements. This constitutes the profound international essence of the problems he raised.

¹ V.I. Lenin, "From a Publicist's Diary", *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 285.

Chapter II. DEMOCRACY AND THE PROBLEMS OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

What distinguishes the Marxist from the opportunist and anarchist? This question, which Lenin raised in *The State and Revolution*, is just as topical today, since people who long since abandoned scientific socialism and rejected the revolutionary struggle for the liberation of the working people sometimes call themselves Marxists. What answer does Lenin give to this question?

Above all, he stresses, it is wrong to assert that the Marxist teaching pivots on the class struggle. In his letter to Weydemeyer of March 5, 1852, Marx wrote: "Now as for myself, I do not claim to have discovered either the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me, bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this struggle between the classes, as had bourgeois economists their economic anatomy. My own contribution was 1. to show that the *existence of classes* is merely bound up with *certain 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 constitutes no more than a transition to the *abolition of all classes* and to a *classless society*."¹

¹ Marx to Weydemeyer, 5 March 1852, K. Marx, F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 39, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1983, pp. 62-65

Analysing Marx's words, Lenin says: "Those who recognise *only* the class struggle are not yet Marxists; they may be found to be still within the bounds of bourgeois thinking and bourgeois politics."² The fact that society is divided into conflicting classes, is also recognised by those Social-Democrats who advocate the peaceful development of capitalism into socialism, by petty-bourgeois reformists and overt supporters of the capitalist development course, but "to confine Marxism to the theory of the class struggle means curtailing Marxism, distorting it, reducing it to something acceptable to the bourgeoisie. Only he is a Marxist," Lenin points out, "who extends the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*.³"

The thesis concerning the difference between the Marxist and the opportunist has stood the test of time. In 1917, when the question of a socialist revolution was on the agenda in Russia, it was this that determined the dividing line between the revolutionaries and the conciliators. Much later, after the Second World War of 1939 to 1945, when, in 1956 in Hungary, 1968 in Czechoslovakia and 1980 in Poland, critical moments in these countries' development, anti-socialist forces raised their heads, their chief target was the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Does, however, the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat imply the perpetuation of the idea of the state, of the state in general? Lenin answers this question in the work under study.

"In seizing state power, the proletariat thereby 'abolishes the state as state'.³" Lenin focuses particular attention on this phrase from Engels' *Anti-Dühring*.

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", pp. 416-17.

² Ibid., p. 417.

³ Ibid., p. 401.

He believes that these words express the experience of the Paris Commune, which differed fundamentally from the old exploitative states, particularly in that, by taking control of social production in the interests of the overwhelming majority of the working people, it made the first step towards the “withering away” of the state in general. The dictatorship of the proletariat is thus only the first stage in the protracted evolution of the socialist state.

Lenin stresses that “the proletariat needs the state only temporarily. We do not at all differ with the anarchists on the question of the abolition of the state as the *aim*. We maintain that, to achieve this aim, we must temporarily make use of the instruments, resources and methods of state power....”¹

Equally alien to Marxism, therefore, are left-wing exclusive emphasis on the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat with its specific methods for regulating social development, and the anarchist demand for the immediate abolition of the state after the victorious socialist revolution.

What does “temporarily” really mean, however, and how exactly can we tell when the time has come to do without the state? Resolving this problem, Lenin notes that there can be no question of determining the moment when the state withers away, especially since this will be a protracted process. He sees the methodological key to understanding the problem in Marx’s approach to the question of communism, which he demonstrated in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. “There is no trace,” Lenin writes, “of an attempt on Marx’s part to make up a utopia, to indulge in idle guess-work about what cannot be known. Marx treated the question of communism in the same way as a naturalist would treat the question of the de-

velopment 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.”¹ So there can be no question of a voluntaristic solution to the problem of the fate of statehood under socialism. In no way can it be urged forward, nor can firm temporal boundaries be set for its implementation. The withering away of the state is an objective process, subordinated to specific laws, and it can be regulated only once these laws have been recognised.

Lenin identifies three fundamental points in the Marxist approach to the question of what happens to the state after the victory of the socialist revolution:

1. Recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat.
2. Consideration of the withering away of the state as a protracted historical process, determined by objective laws.
3. Rejection of hasty, voluntaristic solutions to the question of the withering away of the state, adopted without these laws being taken into account.

Now let us consider the specific way the problem is interpreted in *The State and Revolution*.

1. Why Does the Victorious Proletariat Need a State?

Back in 1873, when arguing against anarchists who wanted to “abolish” the state immediately after the victory of the proletarian revolution, Marx noted the capitulatory character of such a stand. The workers cannot reject organised force against the overthrown class of exploiters because the victory of the revolution does not mean an end to the latter’s resistance; indeed, sometimes, as the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871 and the October Socialist Revolution of 1917 showed, this resistance assumes even

¹ Ibid., p. 441.

more extreme forms, leading to a civil war to decide the fate of the new system. "Marx," Lenin stresses, "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 state?"¹

The first task of the victorious revolution is to defend itself against internal and external enemies. In this connection Lenin focuses particularly on the fact that Marx and Engels criticised the leaders of the Paris Commune for indecisiveness and vacillations in the struggle against the overthrown bourgeoisie. Precisely this, he stresses in *The State and Revolution*, constituted one of the reasons for its defeat. The history of the establishment of Soviet power shows that Russian Bolsheviks had learned their lesson from the tragic experience of the Communards and so were able to survive the extraordinarily difficult internal and foreign political conditions. The Civil War, foreign intervention,² ruin, widespread crime, and sabotage by the bourgeois intelligentsia and the old bureaucracy forced the Soviet Government to take extreme measures to suppress hostile elements, and create an efficient apparatus for protecting the world's first socialist

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 441.

² *The Civil War and the foreign intervention of 1918-20 in Russia*: the struggle by the workers and toiling peasants, under the leadership of the Communist Party, in support of the gains of the October Socialist Revolution, and against internal and foreign counterrevolution. The social basis of the counterrevolution consisted of former capitalists, landowners, officials, tsarist army officers, and rich peasants (*kulaks*). The decisive factor in the unleashing of the Civil War was intervention by imperialist states.

state against foreign and internal counterrevolution. If the Red Army and new law-enforcement organs had not been set up, the victorious Russian proletariat would never have maintained its hold on the state power.

It is interesting to trace in *The State and Revolution* how Lenin's views on force used by the state of the victorious proletariat developed. Since the book was written before the October Socialist Revolution, it naturally offers only a theoretical answer to the question of how to organise the suppression of the exploiters' resistance under the dictatorship of the proletariat. In principle, Lenin presumed, as the work shows, that the revolutionary masses would deal quite easily with the hostile minority, without any special apparatus, simply by organising the armed masses.

The Civil War and foreign intervention by fourteen imperialist states against the young Soviet Republic changed his ideas somewhat, however. In 1920, speaking at the Ninth Congress of the RCP(B), Lenin emphasised that "more than any other, our revolution has proved the rule that the strength of a revolution, the vigour of its assault, its energy, determination, its victory and its triumph intensify the resistance of the bourgeoisie. The more victorious we are the more the capitalist exploiters learn to unite and the more determined their onslaught."¹ The road to socialism proved much more difficult than had been imagined before the October Revolution. Mere organisation of the armed people (workers' militia) proved insufficient for countering internal and external reaction; a special apparatus of force had to be set up.

Lenin's views on the specific forms in which the force functions of the dictatorship of the proletariat should be carried out totally refute the ideas expressed by some bourgeois and reformist ideologists to

¹ V.I. Lenin, "Ninth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.). March 29-April 5, 1920", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 450.

the effect that a cult of force is virtually quintessential to Marxism-Leninism. While stressing the role of force in revolution, Lenin believed that the forms and degree of its application depend entirely on the intensity of the resistance put up by the exploiting classes, on the methods they use in trying to take their social revenge. In Soviet Russia, the counterrevolution chose terror and military actions, with the support of foreign interventionists. The harsh measures taken against hostile elements were, therefore, merely a response to the reactionary challenge.

Moreover, such Western political scientists as Robert Conquest from Britain, who identify revolutionary force with the genocide practised by Nazi barbarians, are outright slanderers. Circumstances did, indeed, force the young Soviet power to apply the harshest sentences to individual members of the exploiting classes who had committed serious crimes against the people. Yet never did Lenin or the Bolshevik Party understand revolutionary force as the physical annihilation of their political opponents or the isolation of whole classes and social groups from society.

How, then, is revolutionary force manifested in relation to the exploiting classes? Above all, Lenin says, in the isolation of these classes from power (political force), in the removal of the means of production from them and their transfer into the hands of the people (economic force), and in their being deprived of the opportunity to carry out counterrevolutionary propaganda (ideological force).

The socialist and people's democratic revolutions that have taken place since the October Revolution have shown that the application of revolutionary force in relation to the overthrown exploiting classes is an inevitable law. The forms, methods, and degree of restriction on the rights of the formerly dominant classes naturally differ, depending on the intensity of

the class struggle, the international situation and national specifics. Even so, one thing is clear: a rejection of force in principle, and the preaching of "class reconciliation", which is supposed to follow virtually the day after the working people gain power, jeopardise the revolution.

In *The State and Revolution*, Lenin refers repeatedly to Marx's idea that the new communist society will not appear immediately after the victory of the socialist revolution. "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"¹ "in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat".²

The historical function that the dictatorship of the proletariat must fulfil throughout the period of transition to the new system is to create the conditions for the development of socialist relations in all spheres of the life of society. In other words, the dictatorship of the proletariat fulfils primarily creative, rather than destructive tasks.

The chief functions of the proletarian state are connected with the fulfilment of these creative tasks. In the economic sphere, it not only eliminates private ownership of the basic means of production, but also creates and consolidates social ownership. In the sphere of social relations, it not only eliminates the exploiters as a class, but also creates conditions to

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 464.

² Ibid.; Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme", p. 26.

prevent the emergence of exploiting strata in the future, too. In the political sphere, the dictatorship of the proletariat strengthens the alliance of all the toiling people, under the leadership of the working class, and involves the broad masses of the working people in building up the state. In the sphere of ideology, it fights to overcome anti-socialist views and the petty-bourgeois psychology, and to consolidate the new mode of thought.

Immediately after the October Revolution, the opportunist Kautsky maintained that the expression "dictatorship of the proletariat" implied the abolition of democracy. For the Marxist approach to the nature of democracy as a form of state he substituted ideas of "pure" democracy, by which he meant only formal equality of all citizens before the law. Yet such equality is already proclaimed by bourgeois constitutions, so, as Kautsky argued, the proletariat had no need to break up the state machinery created by the bourgeoisie. In order to achieve its goals, it only needed to ensure consistent implementation of democratic ideals in practice. In order to do this, no dictatorship of the proletariat was required. It would be enough to reform the state machinery in a consistently democratic spirit.

Today, too, the concept of the "peaceful development" of capitalism into socialism is still brought into play by modern reformists. In the 1960s, a period with a relatively favourable economic situation in the capitalist world, it cloaked itself in the fashionable political-philosophical interpretation of the nature of the bourgeois state, which had supposedly changed unrecognisably under the impact of universal suffrage, the power of the trade unions and the objective processes of the scientific and technological revolution. The programme documents of Social-Democratic, Socialist and even some Christian Democratic and Liber-

al parties in the West European countries contained such expressions as the "welfare state", "social partnership", the "new industrial society", "postcapitalist society" and so on. US President Johnson's Brains Trust answered the call of the times with the slogan of the "Great Society".

To what were they referring? How were the new variants of the concept of the "peaceful development" of capitalism reflected in the capitalist states' actual policies? Above all, it should be noted that the "welfare state" is still the same old capitalist state, the same machinery for oppressing the working people, but operating by other means, more suited to the tasks of the moment. In the period of "classical capitalism" in the 19th century, the state preferred not to intervene in social and economic processes and to fulfil only the most general, essentially police functions of protecting the capitalist order, but during the period of state-monopoly capitalism, the ruling classes could no longer guarantee the stability of this order without extensive interference by the state apparatus in all spheres of the life of society. One of the variants of this intervention was suggested by the fascists in the 1920s and 30s. Their plan also envisaged the "transformation" of capitalism in the interests of the most reactionary part of the state-monopoly bourgeoisie—"transformation" by reprisals, terror, forcible change of the political superstructure, the exclusion from it of all organisations independent of the fascist state, above all those expressing the interests of the working people.

The fascist plan was an utter failure. Then the ruling classes turned to other variants for adapting the capitalist system to the changed circumstances. Economic, scientific and technical progress would seem to provide all the grounds for *buying* the loyalty of the lower classes, rather than guaranteeing it merely

by compulsion. So the state began to intervene increasingly in the sphere of distributive relations, using the tax system to remove part of superprofits in order to distribute it among the poor strata of the population through the system of medical care, social security, education and so on.

Intervention in distributive processes could not, of course, change the essence of the capitalist order—after all, the property relations and production relations, determining the character of a given social structure, were not affected by this intervention. As the Communists warned, the “welfare state” proved to be just one more variant of state-monopoly capitalism, under which the ruling upper crust modified their policy in relation to the working masses in a reformist, conciliatory spirit.

In the 1970s and 80s, as soon as the favourable economic situation was replaced by stagnation and crisis trends, this concept lost its attraction for the powers-that-be. It was replaced by a new edition of the antiquated concepts of the market economy—neoliberalism, which was embodied in the policy pursued by the Republicans in the USA, the Tories in Britain and the Christian Democrats in West Germany.

Under the slogans of “modernisation”, state property was transferred into private hands and existing social programmes abandoned. The age of the “welfare state” had passed, but capitalism remained. Neoliberal circles in the ruling upper crust went over from methods of “buying loyalty” to stricter economies and political control over the dissatisfied. Once again the “peaceful transformation” of bourgeois society into “pure democracy for all” did not take place.

Today, Kautsky’s theses are reiterated not only by Social-Democrats, but also revolutionaries in the developing countries who do not accept Marxism or adapt it to various concepts of national socialism. In

Sweden the Social-Democrats have been in power (with only short interruptions) since the early 1920s. No other bourgeois party can compare with them in political influence. Quite a few reforms have been made in the sphere of state management and the rights of trade unions extended; the state intervenes directly in the economy and distributive relations. The country enjoys the West’s most progressive social security system. Yet can the Swedish Social-Democrats be said to have laid the road to their own socialism, getting by without a dictatorship of the proletariat? No, because the nature of the country’s socio-economic system has not changed at all. The capitalists remain the economically dominant class: they hold the basic means of production and receive surplus value from exploiting wage labour. Nor has the class nature of the Swedish state changed: in spite of all the reforms, it remains a bourgeois state that supports the foundations of the capitalist system in the country.

The Swedish experience and that of other bourgeois-democratic states in the West is anticipated, as it were, in Lenin’s criticism of bourgeois democracy, to which a considerable place is allotted in *The State and Revolution*. “In capitalist society, providing it develops under the most favourable 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.”¹

Here are some facts testifying to the validity of Lenin’s propositions today. According to bourgeois constitutions, the supreme state power is in the hands of parliament. It must be said that, when criticising

¹ V.I. Lenin, “The State and Revolution”, p. 465.

the socialist countries for their “anti-democratism”, bourgeois political scientists try to avoid mentioning the social composition of the Western countries’ supreme legislative bodies.

Bourgeois constitutions grant everyone the right to be elected, but only representatives of the dominant élite, possessing considerable funds, contacts and so on, are in a position to exercise it to the full. Meanwhile, the working people “are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representative of the oppressing class shall represent and repress them in parliament!”¹

Bourgeois political scientists, forced to admit the existence of class privileges in the formation of the supreme state bodies, use another thesis. Yes, they say, politics is primarily a sphere of activity for people from the upper or middle strata of society, but they are elected by the working people! In other words, while the right to be elected in capitalist society cannot be exercised by everyone, the right to elect, the passive suffrage, is enjoyed by all, since its exercise does not require wealth, contacts or education.

This thesis is, however, refuted by bourgeois reality. Political apathy, refusal by electors to exercise their vote, have become so widespread that serious bourgeois scholars even speak of a new phenomenon—“democracy without the masses”. Only just over 50 per cent of electors take part in the US presidential elections; apathy is growing among the French and Italians, who in the first few years after the war were distinguished by virtual 100 per cent political activity.

Sociological research shows that the passive suffrage in bourgeois society does involve class limitations. The most deprived and oppressed strata as a

rule demonstrate no interest at all in politics and do not vote. As Lenin wrote, “Owing to the conditions of capitalist exploitation, the modern wage 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”.¹ Yet the isolation of the masses from politics is not a mere consequence of the “objective” living conditions of the working people in capitalist society, which influence the formation of their views on political institutions, socio-psychological attitude to parties and their leaders, etc. The working man is hampered in demonstrating any active interest in socio-political affairs by quite specific legal barriers. “If we look more closely,” Lenin wrote, “into the machinery of capitalist democracy, we see everywhere, in the ‘petty’—supposedly petty—details of the suffrage (residential qualification, exclusion of women, etc.), in the technique of the representative institutions, in the actual obstacles to the right of assembly (public buildings are not for ‘paupers’!), in the purely capitalist organisation of the daily press, etc., etc.—we see restriction after restriction upon democracy.”²

Many of the restrictions described by Lenin still exist: on participation in elections in connection with residence, literacy, sex; they exist even in certain advanced Western democracies. The laws of the bourgeois democracies indicate not only who may participate in politics. Directly or indirectly they predetermine the forms of this participation, so the individual’s freedom of political choice becomes fictitious.

“Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich—that is the democracy of capital-

¹ V.I. Lenin, “The State and Revolution”, p. 465.

² Ibid., pp. 465-66.

¹ Ibid., p. 466.

ist society.”¹ Even many bourgeois political scientists today agree with Lenin’s description of bourgeois democracy. A whole theory of “élitist democracy” has arisen, based on the following postulate: in a normally functioning and well run society, the masses have no need to interest themselves in politics. The apathy of electors is a natural phenomenon, and indication that things are going well. In contrast, an excessive increase in their interest in politics may have serious consequences for the existing order. What, then, does “Western democracy” provide? The supporters of this concept suggest that it guarantees competition between élites, which replace one another in power and achieve success thanks to increasingly sophisticated methods of state management. The latter’s goal is to serve the population, resolving the problems of socio-economic development as they arise. The democratic state is thus a sort of system of mass services, not an instrument of class domination.

2. From the Winning of the Battle of Democracy to the Withering Away of the State

The State and Revolution presents a profound and comprehensive critique of the limited, false and hypocritical nature of bourgeois democracy and unmasks the methods used by bourgeois parties to manipulate the “people’s will” in the interests of the dominant classes. Bourgeois science frequently indulges in criticism of political parties, electoral systems and the state machinery of the industrially developed capitalist countries. In the USA, for example, researchers into electoral behaviour showed empirically that there is no really “free” and “rational” expression of the electors’ will during elections. In France, Maurice Du-

verger criticised the system of elections, which allows the bourgeois parties not to represent, but rather to distort the interests of the electors. In Britain, C. Pateman has called for the representative system in general to be abandoned in favour of direct democracy. Such criticism is frequently heard in other bourgeois-democratic states too.

How, then, does it differ from the Marxist-Leninist approach? In the very fact that bourgeois scholars, first, remark the shortcomings of individual institutions, without questioning the system as a whole. For them it is the natural order of things and its principles reflect general human moral values and even Christian virtues. Any shortcoming in the functioning of bourgeois democracy is seen as a divergence from these principles, rather than a defect inherent in the system itself.

Second, measures suggested by bourgeois scholars to correct such shortcomings do not affect the principles. On the contrary, they are called on to strengthen the vitality of the bourgeois-democratic system, to make its chief political institutions more effective and consolidate their support on the part of the working masses.

A careful analysis of *The State and Revolution* shows clearly that, for Lenin, bourgeois democracy was no ethical phenomenon, but a class, historical one, a quite specific mechanism, the organisation of political domination. “Democracy,” he stresses, “is a state which recognises the subordination of the minority to the majority, i.e., an organisation for the systematic use of force by one class against another, by one section of the population against another.”¹ Under capitalism, as under any other exploitative system, democracy is only one of the possible forms of state.

¹ Ibid., p. 465.

¹ V.I. Lenin, “The State and Revolution”, p. 461.

Both the bourgeois republic and the bourgeois monarchy fulfil exactly the same class functions by their own inherent specific methods. "People think," Lenin quotes Engels' ironical words, "they have taken quite an extraordinarily 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."¹

It should be said that the definition of bourgeois democracy as one form of class domination has often given rise to mistaken interpretations among left-wing elements who consider themselves to be true Marxists. According to their logic, the working class and all the working people should not, under the conditions of capitalism, struggle for democracy, since it supposedly does nothing to change their position. Moreover, some ultra-revolutionaries go as far as declaring overt dictatorship a more beneficial factor for the struggle for socialism. A defective theory engenders defective tactics. Thus, in the Third World countries, left-wing groupings that have adopted terrorist methods do their best to undermine a number of generally progressive regimes, and in Italy the anti-capitalist slogans of the notorious Red Brigades are reminiscent of the attacks made by neofascists on democracy.

In *The State and Revolution*, Lenin speaks not only about the struggle to expand democracy, but also about "overcoming democracy", a fact on which the opponents of socialism have always tried to play. They argue roughly as follows: yes, under capitalism Communists have an interest in the maximal expansion

¹ Ibid., p. 458; K. Marx, "The Civil War in France. Introduction by Frederick Engels", K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* in three volumes, Vol. 2, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1973, p. 189.

sion of democratic rights and liberties. It is not surprising that, in countries with fascist and authoritarian regimes, they are always in the front ranks of those fighting for democracy. They only do so, however, in order to seize power. As soon as they have, the Communists hurriedly get rid of democratic procedures as dead weight.

What did Lenin really mean when he wrote of overcoming democracy? In *The State and Revolution* Lenin quotes Engels on the scientifically incorrect nature of the name "Social-Democracy", which was used at the time by all proletarian parties that set themselves the task of overthrowing capitalism and building communism. A clear and precise definition is given of the ultimate political aim of Communists: "To overcome the whole state and, consequently, democracy as well."¹ Analysing Engels' proposition, Lenin stresses: "The abolition of the state means also the abolition of democracy... the withering away of the state means the withering away of democracy."²

Thus, in the period of the transition from capitalism to communism, it is not simply a matter of statehood, but of moribund statehood, not simply of democracy but of moribund democracy. In this connection, Lenin focuses particular attention on the analysis Marx and Engels made of the link between the development of communism and the withering away of the state. He stresses that Engels did not even consider the Paris Commune "a state in the proper sense of the word",³ while Marx drew a clear distinction between modern statehood, i.e., bourgeois statehood,

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", pp. 459-60; F. Engels, "Vorwort zur Broschüre *Internationales aus dem 'Volksstaat' (1871-75)*", Marx/Engels, *Werke*, Bd. 22, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1963, S. 418.

² V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 460.

³ Ibid., p. 446.

and the statehood of the future, of communist society in the early stage of its development.

Lenin develops this idea in relation to the evolution of democracy during the transition from capitalism to communism. "In capitalist society we have a democracy that is curtailed, wretched, false, a democracy only for the rich, for the minority. The 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, of 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."¹

The very first Constitution of the RSFSR, of 1918, granted the working people of town and countryside rights and liberties that were not, at that time, enjoyed by their counterparts in even the most advanced bourgeois-democratic republics. Equality of citizens irrespective of sex, religion, race and nationality was proclaimed and guaranteed. The Soviets—freely elected bodies of people's power—became the basis of the entire state system. The new state machinery was made up primarily of the best representatives of workers and peasants.

While democratism is an inevitable feature of any socialist state, the forms in which it is manifested differ. As *The State and Revolution* notes, the question of the forms of socialist statehood is of considerable significance. In solving it, Lenin emphasises, one needs to proceed not from abstract dogmas concerning the "ideal" state structure, but from the specific features of each country—above all from how matters stand on the national problem there. If no such prob-

lem exists, because the population is nationally homogeneous, a unitary form of socialist state is quite possible. Wherever the population is multinational, federalism and various other forms of national autonomy must be developed.

In *The State and Revolution* Lenin gives a serious warning to those revolutionaries who attempted to ignore the national question. The experience of socialist revolutions in multinational states has confirmed such anxieties. In Czechoslovakia, right up until the 1968 crisis, the existence of problems in national relations was virtually ignored, as was the very presence of two equal socialist nations—the Czechs and the Slovaks, within a single state. In planning economic development, the central state authorities, whether deliberately or not, underestimated the specific requirements of the country's individual national regions. Counterrevolutionaries did not hesitate to take advantage of these errors and attempted to play on nationalistic prejudices. Under these conditions, the Czechoslovak Communists, following Lenin's instructions, adopted the only correct decision: in order to formulate the relations between the two socialist nations politically, the unitary form of state system was replaced with a federative one. From the dogmatic point of view, this was a step backwards, but, as Lenin warned in *The State and Revolution*, dogmatism on the national question can only harm the workers' movement.

A federation is not, of course, the only political formulation of inter-national relations under socialism. Other forms of national autonomy are also possible. As experience has shown, the choice of these forms depends on the degree of development of given ethnic groups, the character of the inter-national relations, the economic development of individual national regions, and so on. In connection with this, in the

¹ Ibid., p. 468.

USSR such forms of national autonomy were created as the Union Republic, the Autonomous Soviet Republic, the autonomous region, and the autonomous area. Each of them is characterised by a specific degree of development of national statehood, specific features of the system of administration and interrelations. They are all, however, based on the principle of strict respect for the rights and freedoms of all nations, nationalities and ethnic groups, irrespective of their numbers and level of economic and cultural development. It is the constant observance of this principle that has ensured the unity of the Soviet peoples, who have survived the extremely harsh trials of the Second World War, and has created the preconditions for the progress and comprehensive development of all nations and nationalities in the USSR.

It is not, therefore, surprising that the experience of national-state construction in the Soviet Union is subject to particularly fierce attacks on the part of Western propaganda. Those who have a vested interest in the perpetuation of neocolonialist dependence greatly benefit from fanning inter-national dissent and ethnic conflicts. That is why they are so against the leaders of the newly-free countries that have chosen a non-capitalist development course turning to the Soviet experience. In the meantime, the question of the correct regulation of inter-national and inter-ethnic relations is assuming primary significance. Practice has shown that enforced "unitarisation" of multinational states and attempts to assimilate national minorities undermine the stability of still weak revolutionary regimes and create a nourishing environment for counterrevolutionary elements.

Thus, the main development course of statehood after the victory of the socialist revolution is a steady expansion of democracy, democracy for the people and accomplished by the people themselves. In the

sphere of state construction, the foundations for such an expansion are laid by rejecting parliamentarianism, by which Lenin meant not the abolition of representative institutions and the elective principle, but their transformation from just hot air into working bodies.

What does this imply? Already during the years of the First World War, parliamentary institutions were suffering a deep crisis in the Western countries. "Take any parliamentary country," Lenin stresses in *The State and Revolution*, "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'.¹" In contrast to the "hot air" produced by bourgeois parliaments, revolutionary organs of power must be, at one and the same time, "executive and legislative".²

Lenin sharply criticises the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries who, after the February revolution, even managed, as he put it, to pollute the Soviets after the fashion of bourgeois parliamentarianism, making them produce just a lot of empty hot air. Proletarian democracy is also unimaginable without representative institutions, but true people's democracy can be achieved without parliamentarianism, the essence of which, under the domination of the bourgeoisie, consists in an election being held every few years to decide which parliamentary representative of the dominant bourgeois class will be allowed to oppress the people. This, Lenin writes, is the true essence of bourgeois parliamentarianism, not only in parliamentary-constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics.

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 428.

² Ibid.

While sharply criticising bourgeois parliamentarianism as a political system used by the bourgeoisie in their own class interests, far from rejecting the participation of working-class representatives in parliaments, Lenin even considered it essential. In the article "The Constituent Assembly Elections and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", written in December 1919, he wrote: "The party of the revolutionary proletariat must take part in bourgeois parliaments in order to enlighten the masses; this can be done during elections and in the struggle between parties in parliament."¹ Lenin wrote in detail on this question in his work "*Left-Wing Communism—an Infantile Disorder*", in which he gave a developed critique of "*Left-wing Communists*"² who denied the need for Communists to participate in bourgeois parliaments.

Following Marx and Engels, Lenin rejects the bourgeois-democratic principle of the division of power into legislative and executive, which in fact conceals the omnipotence of the executive bodies and their overt interference in the affairs of parliaments and courts. In the USA, for example, there exists a system supposed to guarantee the independence of legislative and executive bodies and their non-interference in each other's affairs, and to put executive power under constitutional control on the part of legislative and judicial bodies. Even according to the existing legislation, however, the executive power invested in the president enjoys extraordinarily broad powers and possesses powerful levers for bringing pressure to bear on Congress and the Supreme Court. Thus, the president is empowered to veto bills, unless an extreme-

¹ V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 272.

² "*Left-wing Communists*" constituted an opposition group in the RCP(B) in 1918 who came out against concluding a peace treaty with Germany and for a "revolutionary war".

ly complex legislative procedure is brought into force. As head of state, the president can halt an investigation or even revoke a sentence already passed.

Instead of seeming "division of power", Lenin suggests the principle of elections and recall of all bodies of people's power exercising daily, operative control over the activities of the state machinery. He does not give dogmatic instructions as to which form should be chosen for the representative institutions of the new type, since he considers this to be the proletariat's decision in each individual country, with its specific features of the revolutionary struggle, political culture, traditions, and so on.

Considering the question of the exploitative state as a machine oppressing the working masses under capitalism, Lenin pointed out that a specific privileged stratum of society—the bureaucracy, directly fulfils the functions of oppression and management. It personifies, as it were, a specific force standing above society—the class state. When breaking up this state, the proletariat must also eliminate the bureaucracy. How, then, can management of the state be organised? Answering this question, Lenin carefully analyses what Marx said about the experience of the Commune. He draws attention to three aspects. First, the *political* precondition for the elimination of the bureaucracy is "full democracy", i.e., "all officials to be elected and subject to recall", including judges. Second, the *constitutional-legal* precondition for it is the immediate removal of all political functions from the bureaucratic apparatus and its transformation into a "responsible organ" of people's power, replaceable at any time. Third, the *social* precondition for the elimination of the bureaucracy is it being deprived of its material privileges: "the abolition of all representation allowances, and of all monetary privileges to officials, the reduction of the remunera-

tion of all servants of the state to the level of ‘*workmen’s wages*’’. Lenin focuses particularly on the last aspect. “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 *general force* of the majority of the people—the workers and the peasants.”¹

It is particularly dangerous to forget what Lenin wrote on this in societies of the transitional type, where a private sector, which spontaneously reproduces capitalist relations, continues to operate and develop alongside the state sector. If, at the same time, there still exists an élite of highly paid officials and officers, they will inevitably follow a course of bourgeoisifying and enriching themselves through corruption, contacts with foreign firms, machinations and deals with representatives of the local bourgeoisie and agricultural upper crust. This process can be neutralised and a successful battle fought against the degenerated bureaucratic stratum only by a power that has assimilated the principles of scientific socialism, expresses the interests of the people, encourages the activity of the masses, breaks up the old state machinery and creates organs of true people’s power.

Unfortunately, a number of countries that took a non-capitalist development course in the 1950s and 60s lacked such a power. The “revolution from above” did not develop there into a “revolution from below”, and the “power for the people” never really became true people’s power. It degenerated into a stratum of parasitic state bourgeoisie. Under the conditions of a low level of political activity of the popular masses, it proved impossible to resist this degeneration.

¹ V.I. Lenin, “The State and Revolution”, p. 425.

Even in the countries of socialism, however, where the entire political system, all the social and ideological relations guarantee society against a bourgeois revival, the struggle against bureaucratic deformations is still on the agenda. As practice has shown, bureaucratic system is dangerous not only when it leads to the creation of a specific anti-socialist stratum, but also when it conceals a definite social approach to fulfilling the tasks of state management. Its clearest manifestations are sham efficiency, red tape, immoderate exaltation of achievements and smoothing over of shortcomings, and ignoring of the working people’s needs. All this is, of course, detrimental to the cause of socialism and hampers its advance.

What is the relationship between the expansion of democracy and the withering away of the state? In order to answer this question, the first thing is to find out exactly what Marx, Engels and Lenin meant by the withering away of the state.

Analysis of the corresponding places in *The State and Revolution* shows that, for the classics of Marxism-Leninism, the withering away of the state meant primarily the abolition of a special apparatus for class coercion, i. e., of public power standing above the people and operating against their interests. Hence the conclusion that the state begins to wither away from the moment the socialist revolution is victorious. “The state withers away,” Lenin wrote, “insofar as there are no longer any capitalists, any classes, and, consequently, no *class* can be suppressed.”¹ For Lenin the dictatorship of the proletariat is already a moribund state, no longer a state in the true sense. By transitional state or semi-state, Lenin meant, of course, not weakness of state power, but its class character and functional purpose. Lenin considered Marx’s

¹ V.I. Lenin, “The State and Revolution”, p. 472.

term “the withering away of the state” extremely felicitous: it expresses the gradual, protracted and spontaneous nature of this process.

As Lenin stresses in his polemics with anarchists, the state cannot be abolished by decrees or resolutions. Its fate is tied up very closely with the internal development of communist society, the changes both in its economic basis and the form of political system. So, Lenin believed, it is extremely important to understand the scientific laws governing the development of the communist mode of production.

This is why Lenin considers Marx’s identification, in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, of the main stages in the development of society following the revolution—the transition period, the lower and higher phases of communism—to be a conclusion of tremendous scientific significance. This breakdown allows the difference between socialism and communism to be understood and theoretically substantiated, as well as the things they have in common, which make them phases of one and the same social formation.

3. The Two Phases of the Communist Formation

“The whole theory of Marx,” Lenin wrote, “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.”¹ In *The State and Revolution* Lenin shows that Marx “brushed aside the confusion” the Gotha Programme² of the

¹ Ibid., pp. 462-63.

² The *Gotha Programme* was the programme of the Socialist Workers’ Party of Germany, adopted in 1875 at the

German Social-Democrats introduced into the question of the “relationship between state and society”² in the future. This Programme treated the state rather as an independent entity, possessing its own intellectual, ethical and libertarian bases,³ completely separate from the socio-economic conditions. Marx sharply criticised these definitions of the state as being absolutely untenable, far from reality and taken outside analysis of the class relations existing in capitalist society. Although this Programme spoke of the state of the future society, in reality the German Social-Democrats’ ideas on the future state, as put forward in the Gotha Programme, remained within the framework of bourgeois democracy, as already implemented in such countries as the USA and Switzerland. So vulgar and narrow-minded were their views, the German Social-Democrats lacked the courage even to include in the Programme the demand that Germany be declared a democratic republic.

It is to the enormous credit of Marx and Engels that, in criticising the Gotha Programme, they analysed the future society—communism, on the basis of scientific data, as being a natural result of histori-

Congress in Gotha, when the two previously separate German socialist parties—the Eisenachers and the Lassalleans, joined forces. The Programme suffered from eclecticism and was opportunist, since the Eisenachers (led by August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht) had made fundamental concessions to the Lassalleans on vital issues and adopted the latter’s formulations. In his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx sharply criticised the draft programme, as did Engels in his letter to Bebel of March 18-28, 1875, both considering it as a step backwards compared with the Eisenach Programme adopted in 1869.

² V.I. Lenin, “The State and Revolution”, p. 463.

³ See Karl Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Programme”, p. 25.

cal development. “The great significance,” Lenin wrote, “of Marx’s explanations is that here, too, he consistently applies materialist dialectics, the theory of development, and regards communism as something which 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.”¹

Socialism and communism, as Lenin understood them, are modes of production of one and the same type. They are kindred in the main thing—social ownership of the means of production, while the difference between these phases derives from the difference in the level of development of the productive forces and the character of social labour. Hence, also, the difference in the principle for the distribution of material goods—according to work done under socialism and according to needs under communism. While defining socialism as “*not* complete communism”,² Lenin called it a utopian, hair-brained, and ignorant idea that the new system would be a society of abundance and arise “ready-made” straight after the revolution. At its first stage, communism cannot yet be fully mature and free from the traditions and traces of the past. The principle of distribution according to work done is, therefore, the only fair one at the given level of development of the productive forces and of the social consciousness. While retaining, on the whole, the description Marx gives in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* of the main features of the first phase of communism, Lenin explains what this principle means: ‘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 labour which goes to the public fund, every worker, therefore, receives from society as much as he has given to it.’¹ Lenin stresses the correctness of the law Marx discovered of the direct correspondence between the relations of distribution and the economic level of development of society. Marx, and later Lenin called inequality in people’s material conditions under socialism vestiges of bourgeois law, for the implementation of which a state is necessary. “In its first phase, or first stage,” Lenin notes, “communism *cannot* as yet be fully mature economically and entirely free from 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!”²

Let us try to clarify what Lenin wrote. “Until the ‘higher’ phase of communism arrives,” he writes, “the socialists demand the *strictest* control by society and by the state over the measure of labour and the measure of consumption; but this control must start with the expropriation of the capitalists, with the

¹ V.I. Lenin, “The State and Revolution”, p. 476.

² Ibid.

¹ Ibid., p. 470.

² Ibid., p. 476.

establishment of workers' control over the capitalists, and must be exercised not by a state of bureaucrats, but by a state of *armed workers*".¹ The accounting and control functions of the state, and the need for an improved system of management and planning are brought to the fore. This is necessitated both by the tremendous scale of the socialist construction and the need for the well-organised functioning of all its links. Historical experience has shown that, without this organising role of the state, it would be impossible to build socialism. While it is being carried out, however, the inequality between people is not completely eliminated, as is reflected in the laws and rules of law. This is the only sense in which the words of Marx and Lenin on bourgeois law under socialism should be understood.

Lenin begins his assessment of the higher phase of communism by presenting the full description Marx gave of it in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*: "In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and with it also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished, after labour has become not only a livelihood but life's prime want, after the productive forces have increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois law be left behind in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!"²

Proceeding from this description, Lenin goes into more detail on how to understand full communism,

¹ Ibid., pp. 474-75.

² Ibid., p. 473; Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme", p. 19.

On the one hand, at this stage of social development, a high level of production ensures an abundance of material goods and allows all members of society to receive what they need. This in turn, however, presupposes a very high level of labour productivity, labour to the best of human ability, i.e., a very high level of consciousness in people. Lenin wrote: "We give the name of communism to the system under which people form the habit of performing their social duties without any special apparatus for coercion, and when unpaid work for the public good becomes a general phenomenon."¹ The way to such a society lies, however, only through socialism, through the all-out development of socialist democracy. While socialism can be achieved by-passing the capitalist stage of development, socialism cannot be by-passed on the way to communism. The development of socialist democracy will then lead to the participation of all members of society in running the state. "For when *all* have learned to administer and actually do independently administer social production...", Lenin writes, "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."²

The withering away of the state is not, of course, the same thing as the anarchist abolition of all forms of social organisation. It is state forms of regulation of social relations that wither away, but they are replaced by forms of public self-government. This is how to understand Lenin's remark to the effect that, at a certain stage of development, "the state which is

¹ V.I. Lenin, "Report on Subbotniks Delivered to a Moscow City Conference of the R.C.P.(B.), December 20, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, pp. 284-85.

² V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 479.

withering away may be called a non-political state”¹

The practice of building socialism confirms this conclusion, as is reflected in the development of the forms of socialist self-government, which in time leads to the transformation of the organs of state power into organs of communist public self-government. The state does not just wither away; it grows into communist self-government.

Considering the urgent tasks of the current stage in the battle for socialist transformations in the newly-free countries, two points should be highlighted. First, Lenin considered it impossible to determine the specific dates and forms of the withering away of the state for, in his words, the material was not available at the time for doing so. It is still unavailable today, though socialism has already triumphed in a number of countries and is developing successfully. All the more inadmissible are the attempts made by some revolutionary leaders to “urge on” the process of the introduction of self-government. These attempts shake the young states and make them vulnerable to counterrevolution.

Second, Lenin’s provisions on the withering away of the state clearly present his broad understanding of state functions. Their goal lies in the organisation and development of communist relations, rather than in force and coercion. So, until the administrative, political and organisational potential of the state is exhausted it is too early to think of abolishing it.

In *The State and Revolution*, Lenin concentrated attention on the internal preconditions for the withering away of the state, referring only in passing to external factors. Yet right after the October Socialist Revolution, the external conditions acquired primary significance, so in later works Lenin stressed repeatedly the need for the state to rebuff attacks by interna-

tional imperialism, which supports internal counter-revolution, and, by means of economic and political blockade and military pressure, hampers the successful implementation of socialist transformations. Thus, the complete withering away of the state is possible only under full communism and on the condition that the danger of a military invasion has disappeared by this time.

Lenin’s description of the stages in the development of society towards communism, as set out in *The State and Revolution*, is assuming fundamental significance today, when systems that took centuries to shape are collapsing and the appearance of whole continents is being renewed and transformed. For the peoples who have thrown off the yoke of colonialism, the question of the choice of social development course, forms of transition to socialism and means to ensure the establishment of socialist relations is particularly acute. Even greater significance, however, is being assumed by these problems under the conditions of the building of socialism and communism in practice. It is the Marxist-Leninist theory of the communist transformation of society that allows the builders of the new society to set their goals correctly, give a sober assessment of what they have achieved and tackle new tasks.

¹ Ibid., p. 443.

CONCLUSION

In *The State and Revolution* Lenin generalised and developed the Marxist theory of the state, beginning with the question of its origins and ending with an analysis of the conditions for its withering away under communism. The book is a genuine encyclopaedia of the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state.

This book shows the care with which Lenin approached the main propositions and conclusions on the state of the founders of scientific communism. Considering them, Lenin points out the inseparable link between the emergence of the state and the division of society into antagonistic classes, gives a brief review of the forms of the state in their historical sequence, discloses the class nature of the views on the state held by bourgeois ideologists in their strivings to whitewash as much as possible force in bourgeois society, and reveals the laws of the withering away of the state.

Together with Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Lenin's *The State and Revolution* constitutes the basis of the Marxist-Leninist teaching on the inevitable demise of capitalism and transition by mankind to the communist socio-economic formation. In his book, Lenin considers in detail the transition period from capitalism to socialism as a necessary stage in the revolutionary creative activities of the proletariat, a stage in the development of society towards the communist formation. According to Marx,

longed birth-pangs precede socialism and communism. This is the transition period. For brevity, Lenin provides the following scheme: I. "prolonged birth-pangs"; II. "the first phase of communist society"; III. "a higher phase of communist society".¹ In other words:

| | |
|--|---|
| "the state is needed by the bourgeoisie | I—in capitalist society the state in the proper sense |
| "the state is needed by the proletariat | II—transition (dictatorship of the proletariat): the state of a transitional type (not state in the proper sense of the word) |
| "the state is not necessary, it withers away | III—communist society: the <i>withering away</i> of the state." ² |

Speaking of the need for a dictatorship of the proletariat in the period of "prolonged birth-pangs", Lenin focuses particular attention on the relationship between the dictatorship of the proletariat and democracy, showing the fundamental distinction between the latter and parliamentarianism. Democracy, Lenin stresses, is a class concept, a state concept. The state and its class essence characterise the forms and degree of development of democracy.

"I—democracy only
for the rich and a
thin layer of the pro-
letariat. (The poor
are not in a position
to think of it!)"

I—democracy only as an
exception, never com-
plete....

¹ V.I. Lenin, *Marxism on the State*, p. 31.

² Ibid., p. 29.

"II—democracy for the poor, for 9/10 of the population, forcible suppression of the resistance of the rich

"III—full democracy, which becomes a habit and is therefore withering away, yielding place to the principle: 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'

"The dialectic (course) of development is as follows: from absolutism to bourgeois democracy; from bourgeois democracy to proletarian democracy; from proletarian democracy to none at all."² This can only be understood correctly if one bears in mind that, under communism, there will be no state, but communist self-government.

It is important to emphasise that Lenin considered socialism to be a rapidly developing society. At the same time, looking at the question of the withering away of the state, he stressed the gradual and protracted nature of this process, the impossibility of predicting in advance how long it will take. Summing up what Lenin has to say about the *withering away* of the state at the higher phase of communism, it may be reduced to the following basic propositions: for the withering away of the state, a high level of de-

II—democracy almost complete, limited only by the *suppression* of the resistance of the bourgeoisie

III—genuinely full democracy, becoming a habit and *therefore* withering away.... Full democracy equals no democracy. This is not a paradox but a truth!"¹

velopment of productive forces is necessary, as is the sort of full democracy when everyone participates in running the society, thereby making the state unnecessary as a political organisation.

Lenin's book has also retained its significance to this day as a shattering criticism of opportunism on the question of the state. It is a major methodological means in the struggle against any theory designed to embellish bourgeois democracy and deny the exploitative functions of the capitalist state. In connection with this, Lenin reveals the tasks of the party of the new type. "Marxism," he wrote, "educates the vanguard of the proletariat, capable of assuming power and *leading the whole people* to socialism, of directing and organising the new system, of being the teacher, the guide, the leader of all the working and exploited people in organising their social life without the bourgeoisie."¹

It is important to note that Lenin even then foresaw the inevitability of the diverse forms of state power during the building of the new society. He wrote: "Bourgeois states are most varied in form, but their essence is the same: all these 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*."² It leads to a new, higher type of democracy, making social progress possible. Historical experience, including that of the national liberation movement, has clearly confirmed Lenin's scientific prediction.

While possessing the extremely rare ability to

¹ Ibid., p. 30.

² Ibid., p. 25.

¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", p. 409.
² Ibid., p. 418.

foresee the course of historical events, Lenin did not believe that the impending decline of capitalism would be a calm, peaceful old age and provide the revolutionary forces with an easy victory in the struggle for power. The decline and demise of capitalism were seen by Lenin in a way that history has confirmed—as a “tortuous” historical process of a struggle between the old and the new, connected with an intensification of all social antagonisms of capitalist society and a growth in the scale of political conflicts. The approach of capitalism's decline he linked unambiguously with the advent of a whole historical era of social disruptions and revolutions. In order to be fully prepared for this era, the revolutionary vanguard requires a theory constantly developing on the basis of the experience of the mass political movement. This is the main theme of *The State and Revolution*.

In other words, we are dealing with the constant interaction between revolutionary theory and practice. Just as there is no revolutionary movement without revolutionary theory, there is and can be no revolutionary theory without revolutionary practice. Revolutionary practice not only tests the theoretical conclusions; it can even exceed, as has frequently happened, the boldest theoretical forecasts, and open up new prospects for the political struggle, ones that could not be theoretically predicted in advance.

Without a firm link with practice, revolutionary theory is doomed to stagnation and may lose its creative revolutionary character, scientific basis and ability to look into the future. It should not be forgotten that the theory of revolution itself develops not from “pure reason”, but thanks to its links with practice. Since doctrinairism is alien to it, it does not turn into a system of limited views, but always goes to meet the solution of new practical problems. Thanks to this, revolutionary theory becomes an integral system

of scientific views, is elevated to a qualitatively new level of social significance and becomes capable of substantiating a clear and precise programme for revolutionary struggle, of ensuring improvement of the strategy and tactics of revolutionary action.

This aspect of the question is sometimes ignored by the opponents of Leninism, to whom the transition by revolutionary forces to new, vigorous practical actions appears spontaneous and random. Such was Kautsky's reaction to the October Socialist Revolution, a reaction that has not stood the test of time, for time constantly crystallises the link between revolutionary theory and practice revealed by Lenin in *The State and Revolution*.

The practice of building socialism in the USSR has confirmed the propositions Lenin elaborated. As a result of the victory of the October Socialist Revolution, a state of the dictatorship of the proletariat emerged and became established. The working class, uniting all the toiling people about itself, began to tackle the extremely difficult tasks of the transition period from capitalism to socialism, creating the foundations for the new society. During this process, the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat underwent changes. Once the exploiting classes had been eliminated, the function of suppression gradually disappeared and the fulfilment of the chief creative task—the building of socialism—assumed its full scale. Having fulfilled its historic mission, the dictatorship of the proletariat grew into the political power of all the working people, and the proletarian state into a state of the whole people. It acts as the chief instrument for improving socialism and, in the international arena, as an instrument for universal peace on Earth and the development of co-operation with all peoples.

At the current stage, the strategic direction of

the development of Soviet society's political system, like that of the other socialist countries, consists in improving democracy, implementing the socialist self-government of the people more fully, on the basis of active and vigorous participation by the working people, their collectives and social organisations in solving questions of overall state importance. The leading force of this process is the Party—the core of the political system of Soviet society.

The final goal of the CPSU is to build communism in the USSR. Socialism and communism are two consecutive phases of one and the same communist formation. There is no sharp dividing line between them: it is the development of socialism, the increasingly full revelation and use of its possibilities that means true movement by society towards communism. As this movement takes place and experience of building communism is accumulated, the scientific ideas concerning the higher phase of the classless society will be enriched and specified. This must be taken into consideration, so any attempts to rush ahead, to introduce communist principles without taking account of the material and intellectual maturity of society, are, as Lenin believed and experience shows, doomed to failure, and might entail both economic and ideological and political losses.

At the same time, the CPSU proceeds, as Lenin did, from the fact that there must be no delay in implementing transformations that are due. Their accomplishment will bring closer the fulfilment of the task of building the material and technical base of communism, of creating the economic preconditions for the withering away of the state.

At the higher phase of the communist formation, the directly social character of labour will be fully consolidated; today it is already taking shape in the

course of the protracted, but purposeful overcoming of the differences between industrial and agricultural, physical and mental labour. As a socially homogeneous society is formed, the degree of participation by all citizens in its administration will objectively increase and the socialist state, as Lenin forecast, will increasingly become a transitional form "from state to non-state". The activities of state bodies will assume a non-political character and the need for the socialist state as a special political institution will gradually disappear. Communism will be marked by a transformation of the system of socialist self-government by the people into a higher form of organisation of society—communist public self-government.

In the USSR, the activities of the Soviets of People's Deputies, as the political foundation of the Soviet state and the chief link in the people's socialist self-government, are constantly being improved. Both the forms of people's representation and the executive organs of power are developing. Millions of working people are learning to run the state. Democratic principles are being implemented more and more fully: collective, active and free discussion of urgent issues, publicity, regular accountability and responsibility of deputies to electors, and so on. The expansion of the rights and development of the activity of work collectives on all management issues connected with production and socio-cultural development, and in the political life of society, are assuming particular significance. At the same time, the administrative apparatus is being made simpler and cheaper.

In the light of all this, the significance of the ideas Lenin set out in *The State and Revolution*, their link with the advance of history, the direct practice of building the new society—the classless system based on public self-government, is appearing with particular force.

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ISBN 5-01-000441-0