

# THE STATE & REVOLUTION :

*Marxist Teaching on the State and  
the Task of the Proletariat  
in the Revolution*

By

V. I. ULIANOV (N. LENIN)

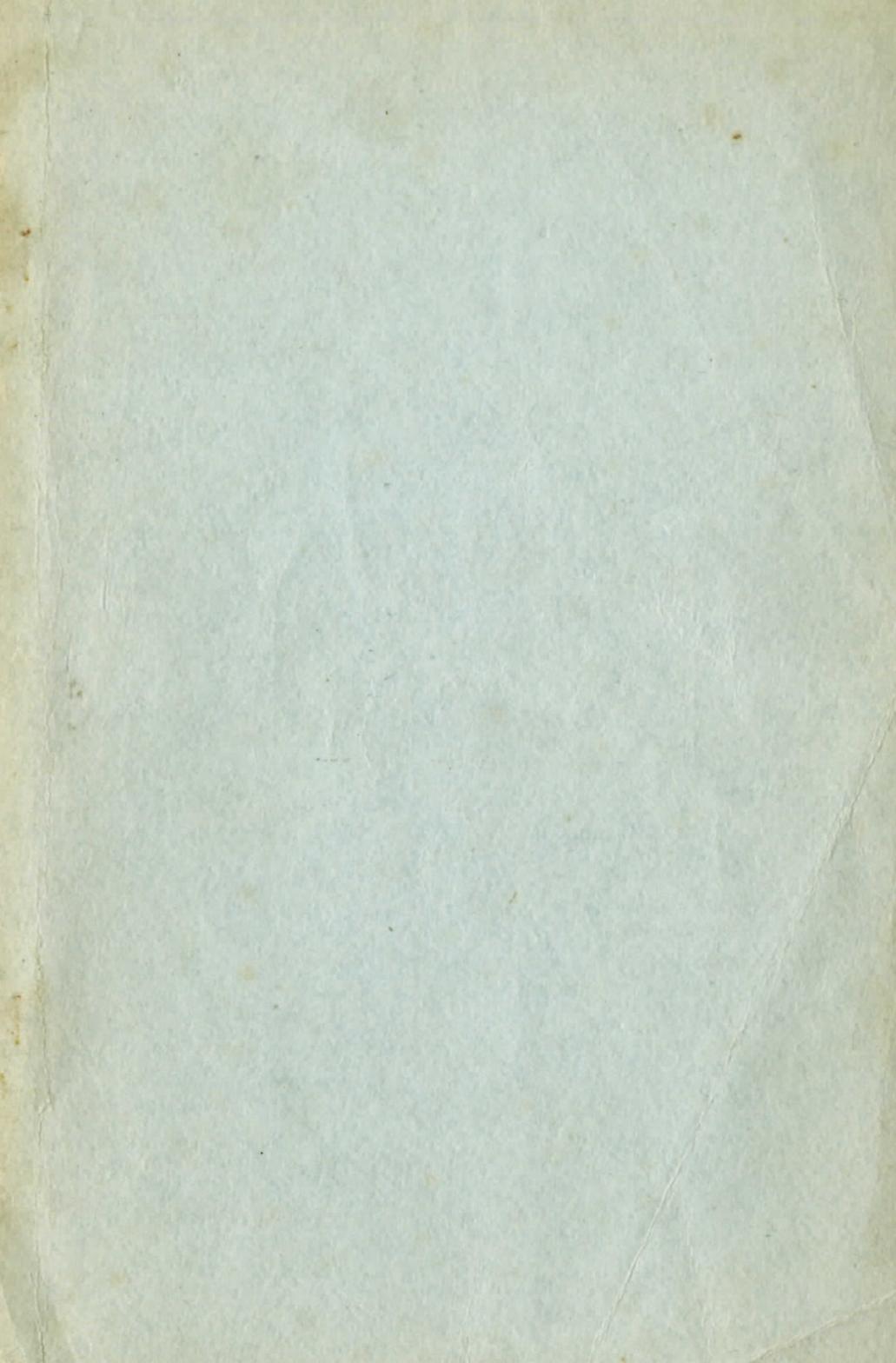
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SECOND EDITION



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## PREFACE

THE question of the State is acquiring at the present a particular importance, both theoretical and practical.

The Imperialist war has greatly accelerated and intensified the transformation of monopolist capitalism into State-monopoly Capitalism. The monstrous oppression of the labouring masses by the State—which is identifying itself more and more intimately with the all-powerful capitalist combines—is becoming ever more terrible. The foremost countries are being converted—we speak here of their “rear”—into military labour prisons for the workers.

The incredible miseries and horrors of the protracted war are making the position of the masses unbearable and increasing their indignation.

It is clear an international proletarian revolution is preparing.

The question therefore of its relations to the State is acquiring a practical importance.

The accumulation of opportunist elements during the decades of comparatively peaceful development has created a predominance of Socialist Chauvinism in the official Socialist parties of the whole world: Plekhanoff, Potresoff, Breshkovskaya, Rubanovitch, and, in a slightly concealed form, Tseretelli, Tchernoff and Co., in Russia; Scheidemann, Legien, David and others in Germany; Renaudel, Guesde, Vandervelde in France

and Belgium; Hyndman and the Fabians in England; and so on, and so on. Socialist in words, Chauvinist in deeds, these "leaders of Socialism" distinguish themselves by a base, servile adaptation to the interests not only of "their" national bourgeoisie, but also of "their" State—for plenty of smaller, weaker nationalities have long since been exploited and enslaved by most of the so-called Great Powers. The Imperialist war is just a scramble for more division and re-partition of the same kind of booty.

The struggle for the emancipation of the labouring masses from the oppression of the bourgeoisie in general, and the Imperialist bourgeoisie in particular, cannot be separated from a struggle against the opportunist superstitions concerning the State.

We, first of all, survey the teachings of Marx and Engels on the State, dwelling particularly fully on the forgotten parts, and on those aspects of their teachings which the opportunists have distorted. We then analyse specially the chief representative of these pervertors, Karl Kautsky (1889-1914), who has suffered such a pitiful political bankruptcy during the present war. Finally, we bring forward the most important results of the experiences of the Russian revolutions of 1905, and particularly of 1917.

This last revolution is evidently completing at the present time (beginning of August, 1917) the first stage of its development; but in general the whole of this revolution can only be looked upon as a link in the chain of Socialist proletarian revolutions which will result from the imperialist war.

The question of the relation of a proletarian Socialist revolution to the State is, therefore, not only of practical political importance, but is an urgent need of the day, being concerned with the elucidation for the masses of what they will have to do for their liberation from the yoke of Capitalism in the very near future.

THE AUTHOR.

August, 1917.



# THE STATE & REVOLUTION

## CHAPTER I.

### CLASS SOCIETY AND THE STATE.

#### 1. The State as the Product of the Irreconcilability of Class Antagonisms.

Marx's doctrines are now undergoing the same fate, which, more than once in the course of history, has befallen the doctrines of other revolutionary thinkers and leaders of oppressed classes struggling for emancipation. During the lifetime of great revolutionaries, the oppressing classes have invariably meted out to them relentless persecution, and received their teaching with the most savage hostility, most furious hatred, and a ruthless campaign of lies and slanders. After their death, however, attempts are usually made to turn them into harmless saints, canonising them, as it were, and investing their name with a certain halo by way of "consolation" to the oppressed classes, and with the object of duping them; while at the same time emasculating and vulgarising the real essence of their revolutionary theories and blunting their

revolutionary edge. At the present time the bourgeoisie and the opportunists within the Labour movement are co-operating in this work of adulterating Marxism. They omit, obliterate, and distort the revolutionary side of its teaching, its revolutionary soul, and push to the foreground and extol what is, or seems, acceptable to the bourgeoisie. All the Socialist Chauvinists are now "Marxists"—save the mark! And more and more do German bourgeois professors, erstwhile specialists in the demolition of Marx, speak now of the "National-German" Marx, who, forsooth, has educated the splendidly organised working class for the present predatory war.

In these circumstances, when the distortion of Marxism is so widespread, our first task is to resuscitate the real nature of Marx's teaching on the subject of the State. For this purpose it will be necessary to quote copiously from the works of Marx and Engels themselves. Of course, long extracts will make our text cumbersome and will in no way add to its lucidity; but we cannot possibly avoid them. All, or at any rate, all the most essential passages in the works of Marx and Engels on the subject of the State must be given as fully as possible, in order that the reader may form an independent and complete view of the ideas of the founders of scientific Socialism and their development, and in order that their distortions by the present predominant Kautsky school may be proved in black and white and rendered plain to all.

Let us begin with the most popular of Engels' works, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State," the sixth edition of which was published in Stuttgart as far back as 1894. Summarising his historical analysis Engels says:

"The State in no way constitutes a force imposed on Society from outside. Nor is the State 'the reality of the Moral Idea,' 'the image and reality of Reason' as Hegel asserted. The State is the product of Society at a certain stage of its development. The State is tantamount to an acknowledgment that the given society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has broken up into irreconcilable antagonisms, of which it is powerless to rid itself. And in order that these antagonisms, these classes with their opposing economic interests may not devour one another and Society itself in their sterile struggle, some force standing, seemingly, above Society, becomes necessary so as to moderate the force of their collisions and to keep them within the bounds of 'order.' And this force arising from Society, but placing itself above it, which gradually separates itself from it—this force is the State."—(Pages 117-118 of 6th German Edition.)

Here, we have, expressed in all its clearness, the basic idea of Marxism on the question of the historical role and meaning of the State. The State is the product and the manifestation of the irrecon-

cilability of class antagonisms. When, where and to what extent the State arises, depends directly on when, where and to what extent the class antagonisms of a given society cannot be objectively reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the State proves that the class antagonisms **are** irreconcilable.

It is precisely on this most important and fundamental point that distortions of Marxism arise along two main lines.

On the one hand, the middle class (bourgeois) and particularly the lower middle class (petty bourgeois), ideologists, compelled by the pressure of indisputable historical facts to recognise that the State only exists where there are class antagonisms and class struggles, "correct" Marx in such a way as to make it appear that the State is an organ for the **reconciliation** of classes. According to Marx, the State can neither arise nor maintain itself if a reconciliation of classes is possible. But with the middle class and philistine professors and publicists the State, (and this frequently on the strength of benevolent references to Marx) becomes a mediator and conciliator of classes. According to Marx, the State is the organ of class **domination**, the organ of oppression of one class by another. Its aim is the creation of order which legalises and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the collisions between the classes. But in the opinion of the lower middle class politicians, the establishment of order is

equivalent to the reconciliation of classes, and not to the oppression of one class by another. To moderate their collisions does not mean, according to them, to deprive the oppressed class of certain definite means and methods in its struggle for throwing off the yoke of the oppressors, but to conciliate it.

For instance, when, in the Revolution of 1917, the question of the real meaning and role of the State arose, in all its importance, as a practical question demanding immediate action on a wide mass scale, all the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks rattled down, suddenly and without reservation, to the lower middle class theory of the "conciliation of classes by the State." Innumerable resolutions and articles by publicists of both these parties were saturated through and through with this purely middle class and philistine theory of conciliation. That the State is the organ of domination of a definite class which **cannot** be reconciled to its social antipodes—this the lower middle class democracy is never able to understand. Their attitude towards the State is one of the most telling proofs that our Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks are not Socialists at all (which we, Bolsheviks, have always maintained), but only lower middle class democrats with a phraseology very nearly Socialist.

On the other hand, the distortion of Marx by the Kautsky school is far more subtle. "Theoreti-

cally," there is no denial that the State is the organ of class domination, or that the class antagonisms are irreconcilable. But what is forgotten or overlooked is this:—If the State is the product of the irreconcilable character of class antagonisms, if it is a force standing above society and "separating itself gradually from it," then it is clear that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible without a violent revolution, and without the destruction of the machinery of State power, which has been created by the governing class and in which this "separation" is embodied. This inference, theoretically quite self-evident, was drawn by Marx, as we shall see later with the greatest precision from a concrete historical analysis of the problems of Revolution. And it is exactly this inference which Kautsky—we shall show this fully in our subsequent remarks—has "forgotten" and distorted.

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

Engels continues:—

"As compared with the ancient gentilic (tribal or clan) organisation, the State is distinguished, first of all, by the grouping of the subjects of the State according to territorial divisions."

Such a grouping seems "natural" to us, but it came after a prolonged and costly struggle against the old form of tribal, gentilic Society.

"The second distinguishing feature is the

establishment of a public power which is no longer identical with the population and which is organised as an armed force.

“This distinct public power is necessary, because a self-acting armed organisation of the population has become impossible with the break up of Society into classes . . . This public authority exists in every State. It consists not only of armed men, but also of material additions in the shape of prisons and repressive institutions of all kinds which were unknown in the gentile (clan) form of Society.”

Engels develops the conception of that “force” which is termed the State—a force arising from Society, but placing itself above it and becoming more and more divorced from it. What does this force consist of, in the main? It consists of special bodies of armed men who have at their command prisons, etc.

We are justified in speaking of special bodies of armed men, because the public power peculiar to every State “is not identical” with the armed population, with its “self-acting armed organisation.” Like all revolutionary thinkers, Engels tries to draw the attention of the class-conscious workers to that very fact which to prevailing philistinism appears least of all worthy of attention, most common and sanctified by solid, indeed, one might say, petrified prejudices. A standing army and police

are the chief instruments of force of the State authority : but can it, then, be otherwise ?

From the point of view of the vast majority of Europeans at the end of the 19th century to whom Engels addressed himself and who had neither lived through nor observed at close quarters a single important revolution, this could not be otherwise. They could not understand what was meant by this "self-acting armed organisation of the population."

To the question, whence arose the necessity for forming special bodies of armed men (police and standing army) standing above Society and becoming divorced from it, the Western European and Russian philistines are inclined to answer with a few phrases, borrowed from Spencer, about the complexity of social life, the differentiation of functions and so forth.

Such a reference seems "scientific" and effectively dulls the senses of the average man, obscuring the most important and basic fact, viz. : the break up of Society into irreconcilably antagonistic classes. Without such a split the "self-acting armed organisation of the population" might have differed from the primitive organisation of a herd of monkeys merely grasping sticks, or of primitive man, or races united in a clan form of society, by its complexity, its high technique, and so forth, but would still have been possible. It cannot, however, exist now, because Society, in the period of civilisation, is broken up into antagonistic and, indeed, **irre-**

**concilably** antagonistic classes, the "self-acting" arming of which would lead to armed struggles between them. The State is, therefore, formed, a special force is created in the form of special bodies of armed men, and every revolution, in shattering the State machinery, demonstrates to us how the governing class aims at the restoration of the special bodies of armed men at **its** service, and how the oppressed class tries to create a new organisation of a similar nature, capable of serving not the exploiting, but the exploited class.

In the above discussion, Engels poses theoretically the very same question which is presented to us in a practical, palpable form, on a mass scale, by every great revolution, viz. : the question of the relation between "special bodies of armed men" and the "self-acting armed organisation of the population." We shall see how this question is illustrated concretely by the experience of the European and Russian revolutions.

But let us return to Engels.

He points out that sometimes (for instance, here and there in North America) this public power is weak (he has in mind here rare exceptions in capitalist society and parts of North America in its pre-Imperialist days, where the free colonist predominated), but that in general, it tends to become stronger :—

"The above-mentioned public force increases with the intensification of class antagonisms within the State, and with the growth in size and population of the adjacent States. One has but to glance at present-day Europe in which the

class struggle and rivalry in conquests have screwed up that public force to such a pitch that it threatens to swallow up the whole of Society and even the State itself . . .”

This was written as far back as the beginning of the 'nineties of last century, Engels' last Preface being dated June 16th, 1891. The turn towards Imperialism, in the shape both of a complete domination of the trusts and of the all-powerful large banks, and of a colonial policy on a grand scale and so forth, had only just begun in France, and was even weaker in North America and in Germany. Since then the “rivalry in conquests,” has made gigantic advances—especially as, by the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century, the whole world had been finally divided up between these “rival conquerors,” that is, between the great predatory Powers. Military and naval armaments then grew to monstrous proportions, and the predatory war of 1914-17 for the domination of the world by England or Germany, for the division of the spoils, bids fair to bring about “the swallowing up” of all the forces of society by the rapacious State power, and lead to a complete catastrophe.

Already in 1891 Engels was able to point to “rivalry in conquests” as one of the most important features of the foreign policy of the Great Powers but in 1914-1917, when this rivalry, many times intensified, had given birth to an Imperialist war, the rascally Social-Chauvinists cover up their defence of the policy of grab of “their” capitalist classes by phrases about the “defence of the Fatherland,” or “the defence of the Republic and the Revolution” and so on, and so on!

### 3. The State as an Instrument of Exploitation of the Oppressed Class.

For the maintenance of a special public force standing above society, taxes and State loans are indispensable.

“Wielding public power and the right to exact taxes, the officials [Engels writes] are raised as organs of society, **above** society. The free, voluntary respect enjoyed by the organs of the tribal (clan) society is no longer sufficient for them, even could they win it.”

Special laws are enacted regarding the sanctity and the inviolability of the officials. “The most insignificant police servant” has more authority than the representative of the clan, but even the head of a civilised State might well envy the Elder of a clan in respect of the “spontaneous, unforced regard on the part of society” enjoyed by that Elder.

Here is the question raised of the privileged position of the officials as organs of the State power, and the fundamental problem that has to be answered is this: What is it that places them above society? We shall see how this theoretical problem was solved practically by the Paris Commune in 1871 and how it was slurred over in a reactionary manner in 1912 by Kautsky.

“Since the State arose out of the need of keeping in check the antagonisms of classes; since at the same time it arose as a **result** of the collisions of these classes, it is, as a general rule, the State of the most powerful and economically predominant class, which by means of the State also becomes the predominant class politically, there-

by obtaining new means for the oppression and exploitation of the oppressed class.”

It was not only the ancient and feudal States which were organs of exploitation of the slaves and serfs, but the

“modern representative State, too, is the means of exploitation of wage labour by capital. By way of exceptions, however, there are periods when the warring classes attain such an equilibrium of strength that the State power for a time becomes, to an extent, independent of both classes and appears as a mediator between them. . . .”

Such, for instance, were the absolute monarchies of the 17th and 18th centuries, the Bonapartism of the First and Third Empires in France, and the Bismarck regime in Germany.

Such, we may add, is now the Kerensky Government in Republican Russia after it has initiated the persecution of the revolutionary proletariat, at a moment when the Soviets, thanks to the leadership of the lower middle class democrats, have already become impotent whilst the capitalist class is not yet strong enough to dissolve them.

“In a democratic Republic [Engels continues] wealth uses its power indirectly, but so much the more effectively, first, by means of direct bribery of officials [as in America]; second, by means of an alliance between the Government and the Stock Exchange” [as in France and America].

At the present time, Imperialism and the domination of the banks have reduced to a fine art both these methods of defending and practically assert-

ing the omnipotence of wealth in democratic Republics of all descriptions. If, for instance, in the very first months of the Russian Democratic Republic—one might say during the honeymoon of the union of the “Socialist”-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks with the bourgeoisie in the Coalition Ministry, M. Paltchinski obstructed every measure of restraint against the capitalists and war-profiteering, or the plunder of the public treasury by army contractors; and if, after his resignation, M. Paltchinski (replaced, of course, by an exactly similar Paltchinski) was “rewarded” by the capitalists with a “cushy” little job carrying a salary of 120,000 roubles (£12,000) per annum, what was this? Direct or indirect bribery? A league of the Government with the capitalist syndicates, or “only” friendly relations? What is the precise role played by Tchernoff, Tseretelli, Avksentieff and Skobelev? Are they the “direct,” or “only” the indirect allies of the millionaire thieves who are plundering the public treasury? The omnipotence of “wealth” is also more “secure” in a democratic republic, because it does not depend on the bad political form of capitalism. The democratic republic is the best possible political form for capitalism, and, therefore, once capital has gained control (through the Paltchinskis, Tchernoffs, Tseretellis and Co.) of this very best form, it establishes its power so securely, so firmly that no change of persons, or institutions or parties, in the bourgeois republic can shake it.

We must also note that Engels quite definitely regards universal suffrage as a means of capitalist domination. Universal suffrage, he says (summing up obviously the long experience of German Social-Democracy), is “an index of the maturity

of the working class; it cannot and never will, give anything more in the present state." The lower middle class democrats such as our Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks and also their twin brothers, the Social-Chauvinists and opportunists of Western Europe, all expect a "great deal" from this universal suffrage. They themselves think and instil into the minds of the people the wrong idea that universal suffrage in the "present state" is really capable of expressing the will of the majority of the labouring masses and of securing its realisation.

Here we can only note this wrong idea, and point out that this perfectly clear, exact and concrete statement by Engels is distorted at every step in the propaganda and agitation of the "official" (that is, opportunist) Socialist parties. A detailed exposure of all the falseness of this idea, which Engels simply brushes aside, is given in our further account of the views of Marx and Engels on the "modern" State.

A general summary of his views is given by Engels in the most popular of his works in the following words:—

"Thus, the State has not always existed. There were societies which did without it, which had no idea of the State or of State power. At a given stage of economic development which was necessarily bound up with the break up of society into classes, the State became a necessity, as a result of this division. We are now rapidly approaching a stage in the development of production, in which the existence of these classes is not only no longer necessary, but is becoming

a direct impediment to production. Classes will vanish as inevitably as they inevitably arose in the past. With the disappearance of classes the State, too, will inevitably disappear. When organising production anew on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers, Society will banish the whole State machine to a place which will then be the most proper one for it—to the museum of antiquities side by side with the spinning-wheel and the bronze axe.”

It is not often that we find this passage quoted in the propagandist literature of contemporary Social-Democracy. But even when we do come across it, it is generally quoted as some sacred or ritual formula, that is, merely to show official respect for Engels, without any attempt to gauge the width and the depth of the revolutionary act pre-supposed by this “banishment of the whole State machine to the museum of antiquities.” And often one cannot even trace the least comprehension of what Engels calls the State machine.

#### **4. The Withering Away of the State and Revolution by Force.**

Engels' words regarding the “withering away” of the State enjoy such a popularity, are so often quoted, and reveal so clearly the essence of the common adulteration of Marxism in an opportunist sense that we must examine them in detail. Let us give the whole argument from which they are taken.

“The proletariat takes control of the State authority and, first of all, converts the means of production into State property. But by this very

act it destroys itself, as a proletariat, destroying at the same time all class differences and class antagonisms, and with this, also, the State. Past and present Society, which moved amidst class antagonisms, had to have the State, that is, an organisation of the exploiting class for the support of its external conditions of production, therefore, in particular, for the forcible retention of the exploited class in such conditions of oppression (such as slavery, serfdom, wage-labour), as are determined by the given methods of production. The State was the official representative of the whole of Society, its embodiment in a visible corporation; but it was only in so far as it was the State of that class which, in the given epoch, alone represented the whole of society. In ancient times it was the State of the slave-owners—the only citizens of the State; in the middle ages it was the State of the feudal nobility: in our own times it is the State of the capitalists. When, ultimately, the State really becomes the representative of the whole of society, it will make itself superfluous. From the time when, together with class domination and the struggle for individual existence, resulting from the present anarchy in production, those conflicts and excesses which arise from this struggle will all disappear—from that time there will, therefore, be no need for the State. The first act of the State, in which it really acts as the representative of the whole of Society, namely, the assumption of control over the means of production on behalf of society, is also its last independent act as a State. The interference of the authority of the State with social relations will then become superfluous in one

field after another, and finally will cease of itself. The authority of the Government over persons will be replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the processes of production. The State will not be "abolished"; it will wither away. It is from this point of view that we must appraise the phrase, "a free popular State"—a phrase which, for a time, had a right to be employed as a purely propaganda slogan, but which in the long run is scientifically untenable. It is also from this point of view that we must appraise the demand of the so-called anarchists that the State 'should be abolished overnight.'"—Herr Eugen Dührings "Umwälzung der Wissenschaft," pp. 302-303, 3rd German Edition.

Without fear of committing an error, it can be said that the only point in this argument by Engels so singularly rich in ideas, which has become an integral part of Socialist thought among modern Socialist parties has been that, according to Marx, the State "wither away" in contradiction to the Anarchist teaching of the "abolition" of the State. To emasculate Marxism in such a manner is simply to reduce it to opportunism, for such an "interpretation" only leaves the semi-articulate conception of a slow, even, continuous change, free from leaps and storms, free from revolution. The current popular conception, if one may say so, of the "withering away" of the State undoubtedly means a quenching, if not negation, of revolution. Yet, such an "interpretation" is a most vulgar distortion of Marxism, advantageous only to the capitalist classes and based theoretically on the neglect of the most important conditions and considerations

pointed out in the very passage summarising Engels' ideas, which we have just quoted in full.

In the first place, at the very outset of his argument, Engels says that in assuming State power, the proletariat "by that very act destroys the State as such." It is not the custom to reflect on what this really means. Generally, it is either ignored altogether or it is considered as a piece of "Hegelian weakness" on Engels' part. As a matter of fact, however, these words express succinctly the experience of one of the greatest proletarian revolutions—the Paris Commune of 1871, of which we shall speak in greater detail in its own place. In reality, Engels speaks here of the **destruction** of the capitalist State by the proletarian revolution, while the words about its withering away refer to the remains of a **proletarian** State **after** the Socialist revolution. The capitalist State does not wither away, according to Engels, but is **destroyed** by the proletariat in the course of the revolution. Only the proletarian State or semi-State withers away after the revolution.

Second, the State is a "particular power of suppression." This splendid and extremely profound definition of Engels is given by him here with complete lucidity. It follows therefrom that the "particular power of suppression" of the proletariat by the capitalist class of the millions of workers by a handful of rich, must be replaced by a "particular power of suppression" of the capitalist class by the proletariat (the dictatorship of the proletariat). It is just this that constitutes the destruction of the State as such. It is just this that constitutes the "act" of taking possession of the means of production on behalf of Society. And

it is obvious that such a substitution of one (capitalist) "particular power" by another (proletarian "particular power" could in no way take place in the form of a "withering away."

Third, in using the term, "withering away," Engels refers quite clearly and definitely to the period **after** "the taking over of the means of production by the State on behalf of the whole of society," that is, after the Socialist Revolution. We all know that the proletarian form of the "State" is then an absolutely complete democracy. But it never enters the head of any of the opportunists who shamelessly distort Marx that Engels deals here with the withering away of the democracy. At first sight this seems very strange. But it will only be unintelligible to one who has not reflected on the fact that democracy is also a State and that, consequently, democracy will also disappear when the State disappears. Only a revolution can "destroy" the capitalist State. The State in general, that is, most complete democracy, can only wither away.

Fourth, having formulated his famous proposition that "the State withers away," Engels at once explains concretely that this proposition is directed equally against the opportunists and the anarchists. In doing this, however, Engels draws, in the first place, that deduction from his proposition, which is directed against the opportunists.

One can wager that out of every ten thousand persons who have read or heard of the "withering away" of the State, 9,990 do not know at all, or do not remember that Engels did not direct his conclusions from this proposition against the anarchists alone. And out of the remaining ten, nine do not

know the meaning of a "free popular State" nor the reason why an attack on this watchword contains an attack on the opportunists. This is how history is written! This is how a great revolutionary doctrine is imperceptibly adulterated and adapted to current philistinism! The reference to the anarchists has been repeated thousands of times, has been vulgarised in the crudest fashion possible until it has acquired the strength of a prejudice, whereas the reference to the opportunists has been hushed up and "forgotten."

"A free popular State" was the demand and current watchword in the programme of the German Social-Democrats of the 'seventies. There is no political substance in this watchword other than a pompous middle class circumlocution of the idea of democracy. In so far as it pointed in "lawful" manner at a democratic republic, Engels was prepared "for a time" to justify it from a propaganda point of view. But this watchword was really opportunist, for it not only took an exaggerated view of the attractiveness of bourgeois democracy, but also implied a lack of understanding of the Socialist criticism of the State in general. We are in favour of a democratic republic as the best form of the State for the proletariat under capitalism, but we have no right to forget that wage slavery is the lot of the people even in the most democratic middle class republic. Furthermore, every State is a "particular power of suppression" of the oppressed class. Consequently, no State is either "free" or "popular." Marx and Engels explained this repeatedly to their party comrades in the 'seventies.

Fifth, in the same work of Engels, from which

everyone remembers his argument on "withering away" of the State, there is also a disquisition on the nature of a violent revolution; and the historical appreciation of its role becomes, with Engels, a veritable panegyric of a revolution by force. This, of course, no one remembers. To talk or even to think of the importance of this idea, is not considered respectable by our modern Socialist parties, and in the daily propaganda and agitation among the masses it plays no part whatever. Yet it is indissolubly bound up with the "withering away" of the State in one harmonious whole. Here is Engels' argument:

"That force also plays another part in history (other than that of a perpetuation of evil), namely, a **revolutionary** part; that, as Marx says, it is the midwife of every old society when it is pregnant with a new one; that force is the instrument and the means by which social movements hack their way through and break up the dead and fossilised political forms—of all this not a word by Herr Dühring. Duly, with sighs and groans, does he admit the possibility that for the overthrow of the system of exploitation force may, perhaps, be necessary, but most unfortunate if you please, because all use of force, forsooth, demoralises its user! And this is said in face of the great moral and intellectual advance which has been the result of every victorious revolution! And this is said in Germany where a violent collision—which might perhaps be forced on the people—should have, at the very least, this advantage that it would destroy the spirit of subservience which has been permeating the national mind ever since the degradation

and humiliation of the Thirty Years' War. And this turbid, flabby, impotent, parson's mode of thinking dares offer itself for acceptance to the most revolutionary party history has ever known!" (p. 193, 3rd German Edition.)

How can this eulogy of a revolution by force, which Engels used to propound to the German Social-Democrats between 1878-94, that is, up to the very day of his death, be reconciled with the theory of the "withering away" of the State, and combined into one doctrine? Usually the two views are combined by a process of eclecticism, by an unprincipled, sophistic, arbitrary selection sometimes of passages here and there (to oblige the powers that be)—and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred (if not more often), it is the idea of the withering away of the State that is specially emphasised. Dialectics is replaced by eclectics—this is the most usual, the most widespread method used in the official Social-Democratic literature of our day in respect of Marxist teachings. Such a substitution is, of course, not new; one can see it even in the history of classic Greek philosophy. In the process of camouflaging Marxism as opportunism, the substitution of eclecticism for dialectics is the best method of deceiving the masses. It gives an illusory satisfaction. It seems to take into account all sides of the process, all the tendencies of development, all the contradictory factors and so forth, whereas, in reality, it offers no consistent revolutionary view of the process of social development at all.

We have already said above and shall show more fully at a later stage that the teaching of Marx and Engels regarding the inevitability of a violent

revolution refers to the capitalist State. It cannot be replaced by the proletarian State (the dictatorship of the proletariat) through mere "withering away," but, in accordance with the general rule, can only be brought about by a violent revolution. The hymn of praise sung in its honour by Engels and fully corresponding to the repeated declarations of Marx (see the concluding passages of the "Poverty of Philosophy" and the "Communist Manifesto," with its proud and open declaration of the inevitability of a violent revolution; also Marx's "Criticism of the Gotha Programme of 1875," in which, thirty years after, he mercilessly castigates its opportunist character)—this praise is by no means a mere "impulse," a mere declamation, or a mere polemical sally. The necessity of systematically fostering among the masses this and only this point of view about violent revolution lies at the root of the whole of Marx's and Engels' teaching, and it is just the neglect of such propaganda and agitation both by the present predominant social-chauvinists and the Kautskian schools that brings their betrayal of it into prominent relief.

The substitution of a proletarian for the capitalist State is impossible without a violent revolution, while the abolition of the proletarian State, that is, of all States, is only possible through "withering away."

Marx and Engels gave a full and concrete illustration of these views in their study of each revolutionary situation separately, by an analysis of the lessons of the experience of each individual revolution. To this, undoubtedly the most important part of their work, we shall now pass.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE EXPERIENCE OF 1848-51.

#### 1.—The Eve of Revolution.

The first productions of mature Marxism—"The Poverty of Philosophy" and "The Communist Manifesto"—date from the very eve of the revolution of 1848. As a result of this fact, we have in them, side by side with a statement of the general principles of Marxism, a reflection, to a certain degree, of the concrete revolutionary situation at that moment. Consequently, it will possibly be more to the point to examine what the authors of these works had written of the State immediately before they drew conclusions from their experience of the years 1848-51.

"The working class," wrote Marx in "The Poverty of Philosophy," "will, in the course of its development, replace the old bourgeois society by a society which will exclude classes and their antagonisms: there will no longer be any political authority in the proper sense of the word, since political authority is the official expression of the antagonism of classes within bourgeois society." (German Edition, 1885, p. 182.)

It is instructive to compare, side by side with this general statement of the idea of the disappearance of the State with the disappearance of classes, the statement contained in "The Communist Manifesto," written by Marx and Engels a few months later—to be precise, in November, 1847:

"Tracing the most general phases of the development of the proletariat, we followed up

the more or less hidden civil war within existing society to the point at which it is transformed into open revolution, and the proletariat establishes its rule by means of the violent overthrow of the capitalist class. . . . We have already seen that the first step in the workers' revolution is the transformation [literally "the promotion"] of the proletariat into the ruling class, the conquest of democracy. . . . The proletariat will use its political supremacy in order gradually to wrest the whole of capital from the capitalist class, to centralise all the instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organised as the ruling class, and to increase as quickly as possible the total of productive forces." (7th German Edition, 1906, pp. 31-37.)

Here we have a formulation of one of the most remarkable and most important ideas of Marxism on the subject of the State—namely, the idea of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" (as Marx and Engels began to write after the Paris Commune); and also a definition of the State, in the highest degree interesting, but nevertheless also belonging to the category of forgotten thoughts of Marxism: "**The State, that is, the proletariat organised as the ruling class.**"

This definition of the State, so far from having ever been explained in the current propagandist and agitation literature of the official Social-Democratic parties, has been deliberately forgotten, as it is quite irreconcilable with reformism, strikes straight at the heart of the common opportunist prejudices and middle class illusions about the "peaceful development of democracy."

“The proletariat needs the State,” a phrase repeated by all the opportunists, social-chauvinists and Kautskians, who assure us that this is what Marx taught. They “forget” however, to add that, in the first place, the proletariat, according to Marx, needs only a withering away State—a State that is so constituted that it begins to wither away immediately, and cannot but wither away; and, secondly, the workers “need” a State, “that is, the proletariat organised as the ruling class.”

The State is a particular form of organisation of force; it is the organisation of violence for the purpose of holding down some class. What is the class which the proletariat must hold down? It can only be, naturally, the exploiting class, i.e., the bourgeoisie. The toilers need the State only to overcome the resistance of the exploiters, and only the proletariat can guide this suppression and bring it to fulfilment—the proletariat, the only class revolutionary to the finish, the only class which can unite all the toilers and the exploited in the struggle against the capitalist class for its complete displacement from power.

The exploiting classes need political supremacy in order to maintain exploitation, i.e., in the selfish interests of a tiny minority, and against the vast majority of the community. The exploited classes need political supremacy in order completely to abolish all exploitation, i.e., in the interests of the enormous majority of the people, and against the tiny majority constituted by the slave-owners of modern times—the landlords and the capitalists. The lower middle class democrats, these sham Socialists who have replaced the class-war by dreams of harmony between classes, have imagined

even the transition to Socialism, in a dream, as it were—that is, not in the form of the overthrow of the supremacy of the exploiting class, but in the form of the peaceful submission of the minority to the fully enlightened majority. This lower middle class Utopia, indissolubly connected with the vision of a State above classes, in practice led to the betrayal of the interests of the toiling classes, as was shown, for example, in the history of the revolutions of 1848 and 1871, and in that of “Socialist” participation in bourgeois ministries in England, France, Italy and other countries, at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries.

Marx fought all his life against this lower middle class Socialism—now re-born in Russia in the Menshevik and S.R. parties. He carried his analysis of the class war logically, right up to the doctrine on political power and the State.

The overthrow of capitalist supremacy can be accomplished only by the proletariat, as the particular class, which is being prepared for this work, and is provided both with the opportunity and the power to perform it, by the economic conditions of its existence. While the capitalist class breaks up and dissolves the peasantry and all the lower middle classes, it welds together, unites and organises the town proletariat. Only the proletariat—on account of its economic role in production on a large scale—is capable of leading **all** the toiling and exploited masses, who are exploited, oppressed, crushed by the capitalists often more, not less, than the town proletariat, but who are incapable of carrying on the struggle for freedom unaided.

The doctrine of the class war, as applied by Marx to the question of the State and of the Socialist revolution, leads inevitably to the recognition of the **political supremacy** of the proletariat, of its dictatorship, i.e., of an authority shared with none else and relying directly upon the armed force of the masses. The overthrow of the capitalist class is feasible only by the transformation of the proletariat into the **ruling class**, able to crush the inevitable and desperate resistance of the bourgeoisie, and to organise, for the new settlement of economic order, **all** the toiling and exploited masses.

The proletariat needs the State, the centralised organisation of force and violence, both for the purpose of crushing the resistance of the exploiters and for the purpose of guiding the great mass of the population—the peasantry, the lower middle class, the semi-proletariat—in the work of economic Socialist reconstruction.

By educating a workers' party, Marxism educates also the advance-guard of the proletariat, capable of assuming power and of **leading the whole community** to Socialism, fit to direct and organise the new order, to be the teacher, guide, leader of all the toiling and exploited in the task of building up their common life without capitalists and against capitalists. As against this, the opportunism predominant at present breeds in the Labour movement a class of representatives of the better-paid workers, who lose touch with the rank and file, "get on" fairly well under capitalism, and sell their birthright for a mess of pottage, i.e., renounce their role of revolutionary leaders of the people against the capitalist class.

“The State, i.e., the proletariat organised as the ruling class”—this theory of Marx’s is indissolubly connected with all his teaching concerning the revolutionary part to be played in history by the proletariat. The fulfilment of this part is proletarian dictatorship, the political supremacy of the proletariat.

But, if the proletariat needs the State, as a particular form of organisation of force **against** the capitalist class, the question almost spontaneously forces itself upon us: Is it thinkable that such an organisation can be created without a preliminary breaking-up and destruction of the machinery of government created for **its own** use by the capitalist class? The “Communist Manifesto” leads us straight to this conclusion, and it is of this conclusion that Marx wrote when summing up the practical results of the revolutionary experience gained between 1848 and 1851.

## 2. The Results of Revolution.

On this question of the State with which we are concerned, Marx sums up his conclusions from the revolutions of the years 1848-51 in the following way (in his work “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”):

“Nevertheless, the revolution is thorough. It is still passing through its purgatory. It is doing its work systematically. By December 2nd, 1851 [the day of Louis Bonaparte’s coup d’etat] it had fulfilled half of its programme; now it is fulfilling the other half. First, it perfected parliamentary power, in order to be able to overthrow it. Now, when this has been accomplished it is drawing the **executive power** through the

perfecting process; it reduces that power to its simplest terms, isolates it, sets it up against itself as its own sole reproach—all in order to **concentrate against it all the forces of destruction** [the black type is ours]. And when the revolution has completed this second part of its preliminary work, Europe will rise to exclaim in triumph, 'Well grubbed, old mole!' . . . . This executive power with its enormous bureaucratic and military organisation, with its multi-form and artificial machinery of government, with its army of half a million officials, side by side with a military force of another half million, this frightful parasitic organism covering as with a net the whole body of French society and blocking up all its pores, had arisen in the period of absolute monarchy, at the time of the fall of feudalism: a fall which this organism had helped to hasten."

The first French Revolution developed centralisation "but at the same time increased the scope, the attributes, the number of servants of the central government. Napoleon completed this government machinery." The Legitimist and the July monarchies "contributed nothing but a greater division of labour." . . . "Finally, the Parliamentary Republic found itself compelled, in its struggle against the revolution, along with its repressive measures, to increase the resources and the centralisation of the State. **Every revolution brought this machine to greater perfection instead of breaking it up** [the black type is ours]. The political parties, which alternately struggled for supremacy, looked upon the capture of this gigantic governmental structure as the principal spoils of victory."

("Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," 1907 German edition, pp. 98-99.)

In this remarkable passage Marxism makes a great step forward in comparison with the position of the "Communist Manifesto." There the question of the State is dealt with still extremely in the abstract, and most general ideas and expressions are employed. Here the question becomes concrete, and the conclusions are most precise, definite, practical: all former revolutions helped to perfect the machinery of government, whereas now we must shatter it, break it to pieces.

This conclusion is the chief and fundamental point in the Marxist theory of the State, yet it is exactly this fundamental point which has been not merely completely "forgotten" by the dominant official Social-Democratic parties, but absolutely distorted (as we shall see later) by the foremost theoretician of the Second International, K. Kautsky.

In the "Communist Manifesto" are set out the general lessons of history, which force us to see in the State the organ of class domination, and bring us to the necessary conclusion that the proletariat cannot overthrow the capitalist class without, as a preliminary step, winning political power, without obtaining political supremacy, without transforming the State into the "proletariat organised as the ruling class"; and that this proletarian State must begin to wither away immediately after its victory, because in a community without class antagonisms, the State is unnecessary and impossible. At this stage the problem is not yet considered as to what form, from the point of view of historical develop-

ment, this replacement of the capitalist State by the proletarian State is to assume.

It is precisely this problem that is stated and solved by Marx in 1852. True to his philosophy of dialectical materialism, Marx takes as his basis the experience of the great revolutionary years 1848-51. Here, as everywhere, his teaching is the summing up of practical experience, illuminated by a profound philosophical world-conception and a great knowledge of history.

The problem of the State is put concretely: how in actual fact, the capitalist State arose, that is, the governmental machine necessary for capitalist supremacy? What have been its changes, what has been its evolution in the course of the bourgeois revolutions and in the face of the spontaneous risings of the oppressed classes? What are the problems confronting the proletariat in respect of this government machine?

The centralised power of the State, peculiar to capitalist society, grew up in the period of the fall of feudalism. Two institutions are especially characteristic of this machine: the bureaucracy and the standing army. More than once, in the works of Marx and Engels, we find mention of the thousand threads which connect these institutions with the capitalist class; and the experience of every worker illustrates this connection with extraordinary clearness and impressiveness. The working class learns to recognise this connection by its own bitter experience; that is why it so easily acquires, so firmly absorbs the idea of its inevitability—an idea which the lower middle class democrats either ignorantly and superficially deny, or, still more superficially

admit "in theory" forgetting to draw the corresponding practical conclusions.

The bureaucracy and the standing army constitute a "parasite" on the body of capitalist society—a parasite born of the internal struggles which tear that society asunder, but essentially a parasite, "blocking up" the pores of existence. The Kautskian opportunism prevalent at present amongst the official Social-Democratic parties considers this view of the State as a **parasitic organism** to be the peculiar and exclusive property of anarchism. Naturally, this distortion of Marxism is extremely useful to those philistines who have brought Socialism to the unheard-of disgrace of trying to justify and gloss over an Imperialist war on the pretext of "defence of the fatherland"; but none the less it is an absolute distortion.

The development, perfection, strengthening of the bureaucratic and military apparatus has been going on during all those bourgeois revolutions of which Europe has seen so many since the decay of feudalism.

In particular, the lower middle classes are attracted to the side of the capitalists and to their allegiance, largely by means of this very apparatus, which provides the upper sections of the peasantry, artisans and tradesmen with a number of comparatively comfortable, quiet and respectable posts, and thereby raises their holders above the general mass. Consider what happened in Russia during the six months following February 27th (March 12th), 1917. The government posts, which hitherto had been given by preference to members of the Black Hundreds, now became the booty of Cadets, Men-

sheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries. Nobody really thought of any serious reforms. They were to be put off "till the Constituent Assembly," which, in its turn, was gradually put off until the end of the war! But there was no delay, no waiting for a Constituent Assembly in the matter of dividing the spoils, of capturing snug places like Ministries, Under-Secretaryships, Governor-Generalships, etc., etc.! The game of permutations and combinations that went on in connection with the composition of the Provisional Government was, in reality, merely the expression of this division and re-division of the spoils, as it was going on high and low, up and down the country, in all departments of the central and local government. The concrete, practical result of the six months between February 27th (March 12th) and August 27th (September 9th), 1917, is beyond all dispute: reforms shelved, distribution of the official places accomplished, and "mistakes" in the distribution corrected by a few re-shufflings. But the longer the process of re-shuffling the posts goes on among the various capitalist and middle class parties (among the Cadets, S.R.'s and Mensheviks, if we take the case of Russia), the more clearly the oppressed classes, with the proletariat at their head, begin to realise the irreconcilable opposition of their interests to the **whole** of capitalist society. Hence arises the necessity for the bourgeois parties, even for the most democratic and "revolutionary democratic" sections, to increase their repressive measures against the revolutionary proletariat, to strengthen the machinery of repression, that is, the power of the State. Such a course of events compels the revolution "**to concentrate all the forces of destruction**" against the State, and to regard the

problem as one not of perfecting the machinery of the State, but of **breaking up and annihilating it.**

It was not logical theorising, but the practical course of events, the living experience of the years 1848-51, that produced such a statement of the problem. We can see to what extent Marx held strictly to the solid ground of historical experience from the fact that, in 1852, he did not as yet deal concretely with the question of what was to replace this State machinery that had to be destroyed. Experience had not as yet yielded material data sufficient for the solution of such a problem: history placed it on the order of the day later on, in 1871. In 1852 it could only be laid down, with the accuracy that comes of scientific historical observation, that the proletarian revolution **had arrived** at the stage when it must consider the problem of "concentrating all the forces of destruction" against the State, of "breaking" the governmental machine.

Here the question may arise: is it correct to generalise the experience, observation and conclusions of Marx, and to apply them to a wider scene of action than that of France during three years (1848-51)? In the discussion of this point, let us recall, first of all, a remark of Engels, and then proceed to examine our facts.

"France," wrote Engels in his introduction to the 3rd Edition of the "Eighteenth Brumaire," "France is a country in which the historical struggle of classes, more than in any other, was carried each time to a decisive conclusion. In France were hammered into most definite shapes those changing political forms within which that

class struggle went on, and through which its results found expression. The centre of feudalism during the Middle Ages; the model country, with the most centralised monarchy, based on rigid ranks and orders after the Renaissance, France shattered feudalism during the Great Revolution, and founded the undiluted supremacy of the middle class with such classical clearness as was to be found in no other European country. And the struggle of the revolting proletariat against the capitalist tyranny is in its turn taking here an acute form which is unknown elsewhere." (Edition 1907, p. 4.)

The last sentence is out of date, inasmuch as there has been a lull in the revolutionary struggle of the French proletariat since 1871; though, long as this lull may be, it in no way excludes the possibility that, in the oncoming proletarian revolution, France may once more reveal itself as the traditional home of the class war to a finish.

Let us, however, cast a general glance over the history of the more advanced nations during the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. We shall see that the same process has been going on more slowly, in more varied forms, on a much wider field. On the one hand, there has been a development of "parliamentary government" not only in the republican countries (France, America, Switzerland), but also in the monarchies (England, Germany to a certain extent, Italy, the Scandinavian countries, etc.). On the other hand, there has been the struggle for power of the various middle and lower middle class parties distributing and re-distributing the "plunder" of official appointments, the foundations of capitalist society

remaining all the while unchanged. Finally, there has been the perfecting and strengthening of the "Executive" and of its bureaucratic and military apparatus.

There can be no doubt that these are the general features of the latest stage in the evolution of all capitalist States generally. In the three years, 1848-51, France had shown in a swift, sharp, concentrated form, all those processes of development which are inherent in the whole capitalist world.

Imperialism in particular, the era of financial capital, the era of gigantic capitalist monopolies, the era of the transformation of **simple** trust-capitalism into **State** trust-capitalism, shows an unprecedented strengthening of the "State" and an unheard of development of its bureaucratic and military apparatus, side by side with the increase of oppression of the proletariat, alike in the monarchical and the freest republican countries.

World-history is undoubtedly leading up at the present moment, on an incomparably larger scale than in 1852, to the "concentration of all the forces" of the proletarian revolution for the purpose of "breaking up" the machinery of the State.

As to what the proletariat will put in its place, instructive data on the subject were given us by the Paris Commune.

### 3. The Formulation of the Question by Marx in 1852.

In 1907 Mering published in the journal "Neue Zeit" (XXV., 2, 164), extracts from a letter by Marx to Weidemeir dated 5th March, 1852. In

this letter, inter alia, the following remarkable dissertation is contained :—

“As far as I am concerned, the honour does not belong to me for either having discovered the existence of classes in present society or of the struggle between the classes. Bourgeois historians a long time before me expounded the historical development of this class war and the bourgeois economists the economical structure of classes. What I did, was to prove the following : (1) That the existence of classes is connected only with certain historical struggles which are characteristic of the development of production. (2) That class war indispensably leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat. (3) That this dictatorship is only a transition to the destruction of any classes and to society without classes. . . .”

In these words Marx has succeeded in expressing with striking clearness, firstly, the fundamental differences between his teachings and those of the leading and best thinkers of the bourgeoisie, and secondly the meaning of his theory concerning the State.

It is said, very often, that the main theme in the teachings of Marx is the class war, but this is not correct. And out of this error, here and there, is obtained an opportunist mutilation of Marxism, the falsification of it in the sense of acceptance for the bourgeoisie. The theory of class war was **not** created by Marx, but by the bourgeoisie **before** Marx and is for the bourgeoisie, generally speaking, **acceptable**.

The one who recognises **only** the class war is not yet a Marxist; that one may be found not to

have freed himself from the chains of bourgeois reasoning and politics. To limit Marxist theory to the teaching of the class war means to shorten Marxism—to mutilate it, to bring it down to something which is acceptable to the bourgeoisie. A **Marxist** is one who **extends** the recognition of class war to the recognition of the **Dictatorship of the Proletariat**. In this is the main difference between a Marxist and an ordinary bourgeois. On this grindstone it is necessary to test a **real** understanding and recognition of Marxism. And it is not astonishing that when the history of Europe put before the working class this question, practically, not only all opportunists and reformists, but all “Kautskians” (people who are wavering between reformism and Marxism) turned out to be poor philistines and petty bourgeois democrats, who **denied** the “Dictatorship of the Proletariat.” A brochure by Kautsky—“**Dictatorship of the Proletariat**,” published in August, 1918, i.e., long after the first edition of this book, is an example of petty bourgeois mutilation of Marxism and of mean renunciation of it **in practice**, by hypocritical recognition of it **in words** (see my brochure—**Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky**—Moscow, 1918). The present opportunism in the person of its main representative, late Marxist, K. Kautsky, comes wholly under the aforesaid characteristic of bourgeois ideology, because this opportunism limits the domain of recognition of class war within the domain of bourgeois relationship. (And within this domain, not a single educated Liberal will refuse to recognise “in principle” the class struggle.) Opportunism **does not lead** the recognition of class war up to the main issue, up to the period of **crossing** from capitalism to Com-

munism, up to the period of **throwing** off the bourgeoisie and a complete abolition of same. In reality this period inevitably becomes a period of violent class fights and, therefore, the State during this period inevitably must be a **new** democratic State (for the proletariat and for the general poor) and a **new** dictatorial State (against the bourgeoisie.) Further, the substance of the teachings of Marx about the State is assimilated only by one who understands that the dictatorship of one class is necessary not only for any class society generally, not only for the **proletariat** which overthrows the bourgeoisie, but for a whole **historical** period, which separates capitalism from "society without classes," from Communism. The forms of bourgeois States are exceedingly various, but their substance is the same and in the last analysis inevitably the **Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie**. The transition from capitalism to Communism will certainly bring a great variety and abundance of political forms, but the substance will inevitably be:

### **The Dictatorship of the Proletariat.**



## CHAPTER III.

### THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PARIS COMMUNE OF 1871: MARX'S ANALYSIS.

#### 1. In What Lay the Heroism of the Communards?

It is known that in the autumn of 1870, a few months before the Commune, Marx warned the Paris workers, proving to them that an 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 rising had become an accomplished fact, Marx welcomed the proletarian revolution with the greatest enthusiasm, in spite of unfavourable auguries. Marx did not fall back upon an attitude of pedantic condemnation of an "untimely" movement: unlike the all-too-famous Russian renegade from Marxism, Plekhanoff, who, in November, 1905, wrote in the sense of encouraging the workers' and peasants' struggle, but, after December, 1905, took up the liberal cry of "You should, not have resorted to arms."

Marx, however, was not only enthusiastic about the heroism of the Communards—"storming Heaven," as he said. In the mass revolutionary movement, although it did not attain its objective, he saw a historic experiment of gigantic importance, a certain advance of the world proletarian revolution, a practical step more important than hundreds of programmes and discussions. To analyse this experiment, to draw from it lessons in tactics, to re-examine his theory in the new light

it afforded—such was the problem as it presented itself to Marx. The only “correction” which Marx thought it necessary to make in the “Communist Manifesto” was made by him on the basis of the revolutionary experience of the Paris Communards.

The last preface to a new German edition of the “Communist Manifesto” signed by both its authors is dated June 24th, 1872. In this preface the authors, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, say that the programme of the “Communist Manifesto” is now “in places out of date.”

**“Especially,” they continue, “did the Commune demonstrate that the ‘working class cannot simply seize the available ready machinery of the State and set it going for its own ends.’ ”**

The words within the second inverted commas of this passage are borrowed by its authors from Marx’s book on “The Civil War in France.” One fundamental and principal lesson of the Paris Commune, therefore, was considered by Marx and Engels to be of such enormous importance that they introduced it as a vital correction into the “Communist Manifesto.”

It is most characteristic that it is precisely this correction which has been distorted by the opportunists, and its meaning, probably, is not clear to nine-tenths, if not ninety-nine hundredths, of the readers of the “Communist Manifesto.” We shall deal with it more fully further on, in a chapter devoted specially to distortions. It will be sufficient here to remark that the current, vulgar, “interpretation” of the famous formula of Marx here adduced consists in that Marx, it is said, is here

of itself lead to the gradual decay of all bureaucracy, to the gradual creation of a new order, an order without inverted commas, an order bearing no similarity to wage slavery, an order in which the constant simplification of the functions of inspection and registration will admit of their being performed by each in turn, will then become a habit, and will finally die out as **special** functions of a special class.

A witty German Social-Democrat of the 'seventies of last century called the **post office** an example of the Socialist system. This is very true. At present the post office is a business organised on the lines of a State capitalist monopoly. Imperialism is gradually transforming all trusts into organisations of a similar type. Above the "common" workers, who are overloaded with work and yet starve, there stands the same bourgeois bureaucracy. But the mechanism of social management is here already to hand. We have but to overthrow the capitalists, to crush with the iron hand of the armed workers the resistance of these exploiters, to break the bureaucratic machine of the modern State—and we have before us a highly technically-fashioned machine freed of its parasites, which can quite well be set going by the united workers themselves, hiring their own technical advisers, their own inspectors, their own clerks, and paying them all, as, indeed, every "State" official, with the usual workers' wage. Here is a concrete task immediately practicable and realisable as regards all trusts, which would rid the workers of exploitation and which would make practical use of the experience (especially in the task of the reconstruction of the State) which the Commune has

given us. To organise our whole national economy like the postal system, but in such a way that the technical experts, inspectors, clerks and indeed, all persons employed, should receive no higher wage than the working man, and the whole under the management of the armed proletariat—this is our immediate aim. This is the kind of State and the economic basis we need. This is what will produce the destruction of parliamentarism, while retaining representative institutions. This is what will free the labouring classes from the prostitution of these institutions by the capitalist class.

#### **4. The Organisation of the Unity of the Nation.**

“In the short sketch of national organisation which the Commune had had no time to develop, it was stated quite clearly that the Commune was to become . . . the political form of even the smallest village. . . . From these Communes would be elected the “National” Delegation at Paris . . .

“The few but very important functions which would still remain for a Central Government, were not to be abolished—such a statement was a deliberate falsehood—but were to be discharged by communal, that is, strictly responsible agents. . . .”

“The unity of the nation was not to be destroyed, but, on the contrary, organised by means of the communal structure. The unity of the nation was to become a reality by the destruction of the State, which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity and yet desired to be in-

dependent of, and superior to, the nation. In reality, this State was but a parasitic excrescence on the body of the nation. . . .”

“The problem consisted in this: Whilst amputating the purely repressive organs of the old government power, to wrest its legitimate functions from an authority which claims to be above society, and to hand them over to the responsible servants of society.”

To what extent the opportunists of contemporary Social-Democracy have failed to understand—or perhaps it would be more true to say, did not want to understand—these words of Marx, is best shown by the book, as famous or infamous as the work of Herostratus, of the renegade Bernstein—“The Fundamentals of Socialism and the Problems of Social-Democracy.” It is just in connection with the above passage from Marx that Bernstein wrote saying that this programme “in its political content displays, in all its essential features, the greatest similarity to the federalism of Proudhon . . . In spite of all the other points of difference between Marx and the ‘petty shopkeeper’ Proudhon [Bernstein places the words ‘petty shopkeeper’ in inverted commas in order to make them sound ironical], on these points their currents of thought resemble one another as closely as could be.” Of course, Bernstein continues, the importance of the municipalities is growing, but “it seems to me doubtful whether the first task of the democracy would be such a dissolution (“Auflösung”) of modern forms of the State, and such a complete transformation (“Umwandlung”) of their organisation as is imagined by Marx and by Proudhon,

that is, the formation of a national assembly from delegates of the provincial or district assemblies, which, in their turn, would consist of delegates from the Communes, so that the whole previous mode of national representation would vanish completely." (Bernstein, "Fundamentals," pp. 134-136, German Edition, 1899.)

It is really monstrous thus to confuse Marx's views on the "destruction of the State as parasite" with the federalism of Proudhon. But this is no accident, for it never occurs to the opportunist that Marx is not speaking here at all of federalism as opposed to Centralism, but of the destruction of the capitalist machinery of government which exists in all bourgeois countries.

The opportunist cannot see further than the "municipalities" which he finds around him in a society of middle class philistinism and "reformist" stagnation. As for a proletarian revolution, the opportunist has forgotten even how to imagine it. It is amusing. But it is remarkable that this point of Bernstein's has not been disputed. Bernstein has been refuted often enough especially by Plekhanoff in Russian literature, and by Kautsky in European, but neither made any remark upon this perversion of Marx by Bernstein.

The opportunist has forgotten to such an extent how to think in a revolutionary way and how to reflect on revolution, that he attributes "federalism" to Marx, mixing him up with the founder of anarchism, Proudhon; and, although they are anxious to be orthodox Marxists and to defend the teaching of revolutionary Marxism, Kautsky, and Plekhanoff are nevertheless silent on this point.

Herein lies one of the roots of those banalities and platitudes about the difference between Marxism and Anarchism, which are common to both Kautskians and opportunists, and which we shall have to discuss later.

There is no trace of Federalism in Marx's discussion of the experience of the Commune, quoted above. Marx agrees with Proudhon precisely on that point which has quite escaped the opportunist Bernstein; while he differs from Proudhon just on the point where Bernstein sees their agreement. Marx concurs with Proudhon in that they both stand for the "demolition" of the contemporary machinery of government. This common ground of Marxism with anarchism (both with Proudhon and with Bakunin), neither the opportunists nor the Kautskians wish to see, for on this point they have themselves diverged from Marxism. Marx does differ both from Proudhon and Bakunin on the point of federalism (not to speak of the dictatorship of the proletariat). Federalism is a direct fundamental outcome of the anarchist petty middle class ideas. Marx is a centralist; and in the above cited quotation of his speculations there is no withdrawal from the central position. Only people full of middle class "superstitious faith" in the State can mistake the destruction of the bourgeois State for the destruction of centralism.

But will it not be centralism if the proletariat and poorest peasantry take the power of the State into their own hands, organise themselves quite freely into communes, and co-ordinate the action of all the communes for the purpose of striking at capital, for the purpose of crushing the resistance of the capitalists, in order to accomplish the trans-

ference of private property in railways, factories, land, and so forth to the nation, to the whole of society? Will that not be the most consistent democratic centralism? And proletarian centralism at that?

Bernstein simply cannot conceive the possibility of voluntary centralism, of a voluntary union of the communes into a nation, a voluntary fusion of the proletarian communes in the business of destroying capitalist supremacy and the capitalist machinery of government. Like all philistines, Bernstein can imagine centralism only as something from above, to be imposed and maintained solely by means of bureaucracy and militarism.

Marx, as though he foresaw the possibility of the distortion of his ideas, purposely emphasises that the accusation against the Commune that it desired to destroy the unity of the nation, to do away with a central authority, was a deliberate falsehood. He purposely uses the phrase "to organise the unity of the nation," so as to oppose the conscious, democratic, proletarian centralism to the capitalist, military, official centralism.

But none so deaf as those who will not hear. And the opportunists of modern Social-Democracy do not, on any account, want to hear of the destruction of the State, of the removal of the parasite.

### **5. The Destruction of the Parasite-State.**

We have already quoted the words of Marx on this subject, and must now supplement them.

"It is generally the fate of new creations of

history, [wrote Marx], to be mistaken for any old and even defunct forms of social life to which the new institutions may bear a sort of likeness. Thus, this new Commune, which is breaking up ("bricht") the modern State, was regarded as the resurrection of the mediæval communes . . . as a federation of small States (Montesquieu, the Girondins) as an exaggerated form of the ancient struggle against over-centralisation. . . . The Communal constitution would have restored to the social body all those forces hitherto devoured by the parasitic excrescence called 'the State,' feeding upon society and hindering it from moving forward freely. By this one act the regeneration of France would have been advanced . . . .

"The Communal constitution would have brought the rural producers under the intellectual leadership of the chief towns of each district, and would have secured for them there, in the persons of the town workers, the natural representatives of their interests. The very existence of the Commune would have involved, as a matter of course, local self-government, but no longer as a balance to the power of the State, which now becomes superfluous. . . ."

"The annihilation of the power of the State," which was a "parasitic excrescence," its "amputation," its "destruction"; "the power of the State now becomes superfluous"—these are the expressions used by Marx regarding the State when appraising and analysing the experience of the Commune.

All this was written a little less than half a

century ago; and now one has to excavate, as it were, in order to bring uncorrupted Marxism to the knowledge of the masses. The conclusions drawn from the observation of the last great revolution, through which Marx lived, have been forgotten just at the moment when the time has arrived for the next great proletarian revolutions.

“The variety of interpretations to which the Commune has been subjected, and the multiplicity of interests which found their expression in it, proves that it was a thoroughly flexible political form, whereas all previous forms of government have been, in their essence, repressive. Its true secret was this. It was essentially **the government of the working class**, the result of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class; it was the political form, at last discovered, under which Labour could work out its economic emancipation. . . .”

“Without this last condition the Communal constitution would have been an impossibility and a delusion.”

The Utopians had busied themselves with the “discovery” of the political forms under which the Socialist reconstruction of society could take place. The Anarchists turned away from the question of political forms of any kind. The opportunists of modern Social-Democracy have accepted the capitalist political forms of a parliamentary democratic State as the limit which cannot be overstepped; they have broken their foreheads praying before this idol, and they have denounced as anarchism every attempt to destroy these forms.

Marx deduced from the whole history of Socialism and of political struggle that the State was bound to disappear, and that the transitional form of its disappearance (the transition from the political State to the non-State) would be the "proletariat organised as the ruling class." But Marx did not undertake the task of "discovering" the political "forms" of this future stage. He limited himself to an exact observation of French history, its analysis and the conclusion to which the year 1851 had led, viz., that matters were moving towards the destruction of the capitalist machinery of the State.

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

The Commune was the form "discovered at last" by the proletarian revolution, under which the economic liberation of Labour can proceed. The Commune was the first attempt of a proletarian revolution to **break up** the bourgeois State, and constitutes the political form, "discovered at last," which can and must take the place of the broken machine. We shall see below that the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, in different surroundings and under different circumstances, have been continuing the work of the Commune and have been confirming Marx's analysis of history.

## CHAPTER IV.

### CONTINUATION. SUPPLEMENTARY EXPLANATIONS BY ENGELS.

Marx gave us the fundamentals on the subject of the meaning of the Commune. Engels returned to the same question repeatedly, elucidating Marx's analysis and conclusions, sometimes explaining so clearly and forcibly **other** sides of the question that we must stop expressly to consider these explanations.

#### 1. The Housing Question.

Already in his work on the Housing Question (1872) Engels took into account the experience of the Commune, dwelling several times on the problems of the revolution in relation to the State. It is interesting to note that in the treatment of this concrete question we are shown clearly, on the one hand, those features of the proletarian State which resemble features of the present State—features which give us ground for speaking of a State in both cases; and, on the other hand, the features which differentiate them and mark the transition to the destruction of the State.

“How can the housing problem be solved? In modern society this question is solved, like every other social question, by a gradual economic equalisation of supply and demand. This, however, is a kind of solution which itself constantly creates the problem anew, that is, it gives no solution. How the social revolution will solve this question depends not only on circum-

stances of time and place, but it is bound up with questions which go much further, amongst which one of the most important is the abolition of the distinction between town and country. As we are not interested in utopian speculations on the structure of future society, it would be more than a waste of time to dwell upon this point. One thing is certain; even now there are sufficient habitable buildings in the large towns materially to relieve the real shortage of accommodation, if sensible use were made of them. This, of course, could only be brought about by the expropriation of their present possessors, and by settling in them the homeless workers or the workers who are now living in overcrowded homes. And as soon as the workers win political power, such a measure, based on the best interests of society, will be as easily carried out as all other expropriations and commandeerings by the modern State." (German Edition, 1887, p. 22.)

Here it is not the change in the form of the State which is considered, but only the character of its activity. Expropriations and the occupation of houses take place by direction even of the present State. The proletarian State, from the formal point of view, will also "direct" the occupation of houses and the expropriation of buildings. But it is clear that the old executive apparatus, the bureaucracy, connected with the bourgeoisie, would simply be useless for the carrying out of the orders of the proletarian State.

"It is necessary to state that the actual seizure of all the means of labour and of all industry by the labouring masses of the nation is the direct antithesis to the Proudhonist 'buying out.'

Under the Proudhonist system the individual worker becomes the owner of a house, of a small-holder's plot of land, of necessary tools. In the other case, however, the 'labouring people' becomes the collective owner of houses, factories and tools. The use of these houses, factories and so forth, will hardly be offered, at any rate, during the transition period, to single individuals or to companies, without covering the expenses. In the same way, the abolition of the private ownership of land does not presuppose the abolition of rent, but its handing over, although in a different form, to the whole of society. The actual appropriation of all the means of labour by the labouring masses does not exclude in any way, therefore, the preservation of the right to rent or let." (p. 69.)

In the next chapter we shall discuss the question touched on here, namely, the economic reasons for the "withering away" of the State. Engels expresses himself most cautiously here, saying that the proletarian State will "hardly" allot houses without pay, "at any rate, during the period of transition." The letting of houses, belonging to the whole nation, to separate families for rent presupposes the collection of this rent, a certain amount of control, and some standard or other to guide the allotment of the houses. All this demands a certain form of State, but it does not at all involve a special military and bureaucratic apparatus, with officials occupying privileged positions. A transition to a state of affairs when it will be possible to let houses without rent is bound up with the complete "withering away" of the State.

Speaking of the conversion of the Blanquists after the Commune, and under the influence of its experience, to the Marxist point of view, Engels, it so happens, formulates it as

“The necessity for political action by the proletariat and for proletarian dictatorship, as the transition towards the abolition of classes and, together with them, of the State . . .” (p. 55.)

Those who are addicted to hair-splitting or bourgeois “exterminators of Marxism,” will perhaps see a contradiction between this admission of the “abolition of the State” and the repudiation of a formula like that of the anarchists, contained in the quotation from the “Anti-Dühring,” given above. It would not be surprising if the opportunists wrote down Engels, too, as an “Anarchist” for the Socialist-Chauvinists are now more and more adopting the fashion of accusing the Internationalists of anarchism.

That, together with the abolition of classes, the State will also be abolished—this Marxism has always taught. The well-known passage on the “withering away of the State” in the “Anti-Dühring” does not accuse the anarchists merely of being in favour of the abolition of the State, but of spreading the theory that it is possible to accomplish this “within twenty-four hours.” In view of the complete distortion, by the present predominating “Social-Democratic” doctrine concerning the relation of Marxism to anarchism, of the question of the abolition of the State, it will be particularly useful to recall one particular controversy of Marx and Engels with the anarchists.

## 2. The Dispute with the Anarchists.

This dispute occurred in 1873. Marx and Engels then contributed articles against the Proudhonist "Autonomists" or "Anti-Authoritarians" to an Italian Socialist review, and it was only in 1913 that these articles appeared in German in the "Neue Zeit."

"If the political struggle of the working class, [wrote Marx, ridiculing the anarchists for their repudiation of political action] assumes a revolutionary form; if the workers, in place of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, set up their own revolutionary dictatorship, then they commit a terrible crime and offer an insult to principle; because, forsooth, the workers in order to meet the miserable, gross requirements of the moment, in order to crush the resistance of the capitalist class, cause the State to assume a revolutionary and transitional form, instead of laying down their arms and abolishing the State." ("Neue Zeit," 1913-4, year 32, vol. I., p. 40.)

This alone is the kind of "abolition" of the State, against which Marx protested, refuting the anarchists. He protested not against the theory of the disappearance of the State when classes disappear, or of its abolition when classes have been abolished, but only against the proposition that the workers should deny themselves the use of arms, the use of organised force, that is, **the use of the State**, for the purpose of "breaking the resistance of the capitalist class." Marx purposely emphasises, in order that the true sense of his contentions against the anarchists might not be perverted, "the

revolutionary **and transitional form**" of the State necessary for the proletariat. The proletariat only needs the State **temporarily**. We do not at all disagree with the anarchists on the question of the abolition of the State as a **final aim**. But we affirm that, for the attainment of this aim, we must make temporary use of the weapons and methods of the State **against** the exploiters, just as the temporary dictatorship of the oppressed class is necessary for the annihilation of all classes. Marx chooses the sharpest and clearest mode of stating the position against the anarchists. Having cast off the yoke of the capitalists, ought the workers "to lay down their arms," or should they use them against the capitalists in order to break their resistance? And the systematic employment of arms by one class against the other, what is that if not a "transitional form of the State"?

Let every Social-Democrat ask himself whether **that was the way** in which he examined the question of the State in his discussion with the anarchists? **Was** that the **way** in which the vast majority of the official Social-Democratic parties of the Second International treated it?

Engels develops these same ideas in even greater detail and more simply. He first of all ridicules the muddled ideas of the Proudhonists, who called themselves "Anti-Authoritarians," that is, they denied every form of authority, of subordination, of power. Take a factory, a railway, a vessel on the open seas, said Engels; is it not clear that not one of these complex technical concerns, based on the use of machines and the ordered co-operation of many people, could function without a certain

amount of subordination and consequently, of authority or power? "When I use these arguments," writes Engels, "against the most hopeless Anti-Authoritarians, they can only give me the following answer, 'Ah, that is true, but the question is not of the authority we confer on our delegates, **but of a certain commission.**' These people think that a thing can be altered by merely changing its name."

Having shown in this way that authority and autonomy are relative terms, that the sphere of their application varies with the various phases of social development, that it is absurd to regard them as absolute terms; after adding that the domain of the application of machinery and production of a large scale is ever extending, Engels passes from a general discussion of authority to the question of the State.

"If the Autonomists [he writes] merely meant to say that the social organisation of the future would admit authority only within those limits which the conditions of industry inevitably dictate, then it would be possible to come to an understanding with them. But they are blind in respect of all the facts which make authority necessary, and they fight passionately against a mere word.

"Why do not the Anti-Authoritarians limit themselves to shouting against the **political** authority, against the State? All Socialists agree that the State, and together with it, also political authority, will vanish as the result of the future Socialist Revolution, i.e., that public functions will lose their political character and

of itself lead to the gradual decay of all bureaucracy, to the gradual creation of a new order, an order without inverted commas, an order bearing no similarity to wage slavery, an order in which the constant simplification of the functions of inspection and registration will admit of their being performed by each in turn, will then become a habit, and will finally die out as **special** functions of a special class.

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#### **4. The Organisation of the Unity of the Nation.**

“In the short sketch of national organisation which the Commune had had no time to develop, it was stated quite clearly that the Commune was to become . . . the political form of even the smallest village. . . . From these Communes would be elected the “National” Delegation at Paris . . .

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“Without this last condition the Communal constitution would have been an impossibility and a delusion.”

The Utopians had busied themselves with the “discovery” of the political forms under which the Socialist reconstruction of society could take place. The Anarchists turned away from the question of political forms of any kind. The opportunists of modern Social-Democracy have accepted the capitalist political forms of a parliamentary democratic State as the limit which cannot be overstepped; they have broken their foreheads praying before this idol, and they have denounced as anarchism every attempt to destroy these forms.

Marx deduced from the whole history of Socialism and of political struggle that the State was bound to disappear, and that the transitional form of its disappearance (the transition from the political State to the non-State) would be the "proletariat organised as the ruling class." But Marx did not undertake the task of "discovering" the political "forms" of this future stage. He limited himself to an exact observation of French history, its analysis and the conclusion to which the year 1851 had led, viz., that matters were moving towards the destruction of the capitalist machinery of the State.

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

The Commune was the form "discovered at last" by the proletarian revolution, under which the economic liberation of Labour can proceed. The Commune was the first attempt of a proletarian revolution to **break up** the bourgeois State, and constitutes the political form, "discovered at last," which can and must take the place of the broken machine. We shall see below that the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, in different surroundings and under different circumstances, have been continuing the work of the Commune and have been confirming Marx's analysis of history.

## CHAPTER IV.

### CONTINUATION. SUPPLEMENTARY EXPLANATIONS BY ENGELS.

Marx gave us the fundamentals on the subject of the meaning of the Commune. Engels returned to the same question repeatedly, elucidating Marx's analysis and conclusions, sometimes explaining so clearly and forcibly **other** sides of the question that we must stop expressly to consider these explanations.

#### 1. The Housing Question.

Already in his work on the Housing Question (1872) Engels took into account the experience of the Commune, dwelling several times on the problems of the revolution in relation to the State. It is interesting to note that in the treatment of this concrete question we are shown clearly, on the one hand, those features of the proletarian State which resemble features of the present State—features which give us ground for speaking of a State in both cases; and, on the other hand, the features which differentiate them and mark the transition to the destruction of the State.

“How can the housing problem be solved? In modern society this question is solved, like every other social question, by a gradual economic equalisation of supply and demand. This, however, is a kind of solution which itself constantly creates the problem anew, that is, it gives no solution. How the social revolution will solve this question depends not only on circum-

stances of time and place, but it is bound up with questions which go much further, amongst which one of the most important is the abolition of the distinction between town and country. As we are not interested in utopian speculations on the structure of future society, it would be more than a waste of time to dwell upon this point. One thing is certain; even now there are sufficient habitable buildings in the large towns materially to relieve the real shortage of accommodation, if sensible use were made of them. This, of course, could only be brought about by the expropriation of their present possessors, and by settling in them the homeless workers or the workers who are now living in overcrowded homes. And as soon as the workers win political power, such a measure, based on the best interests of society, will be as easily carried out as all other expropriations and commandeerings by the modern State." (German Edition, 1887, p. 22.)

Here it is not the change in the form of the State which is considered, but only the character of its activity. Expropriations and the occupation of houses take place by direction even of the present State. The proletarian State, from the formal point of view, will also "direct" the occupation of houses and the expropriation of buildings. But it is clear that the old executive apparatus, the bureaucracy, connected with the bourgeoisie, would simply be useless for the carrying out of the orders of the proletarian State.

"It is necessary to state that the actual seizure of all the means of labour and of all industry by the labouring masses of the nation is the direct antithesis to the Proudhonist 'buying out.'

Under the Proudhonist system the individual worker becomes the owner of a house, of a small-holder's plot of land, of necessary tools. In the other case, however, the 'labouring people' becomes the collective owner of houses, factories and tools. The use of these houses, factories and so forth, will hardly be offered, at any rate, during the transition period, to single individuals or to companies, without covering the expenses. In the same way, the abolition of the private ownership of land does not presuppose the abolition of rent, but its handing over, although in a different form, to the whole of society. The actual appropriation of all the means of labour by the labouring masses does not exclude in any way, therefore, the preservation of the right to rent or let." (p. 69.)

In the next chapter we shall discuss the question touched on here, namely, the economic reasons for the "withering away" of the State. Engels expresses himself most cautiously here, saying that the proletarian State will "hardly" allot houses without pay, "at any rate, during the period of transition." The letting of houses, belonging to the whole nation, to separate families for rent presupposes the collection of this rent, a certain amount of control, and some standard or other to guide the allotment of the houses. All this demands a certain form of State, but it does not at all involve a special military and bureaucratic apparatus, with officials occupying privileged positions. A transition to a state of affairs when it will be possible to let houses without rent is bound up with the complete "withering away" of the State.

Speaking of the conversion of the Blanquists after the Commune, and under the influence of its experience, to the Marxist point of view, Engels, it so happens, formulates it as

“The necessity for political action by the proletariat and for proletarian dictatorship, as the transition towards the abolition of classes and, together with them, of the State . . .” (p. 55.)

Those who are addicted to hair-splitting or bourgeois “exterminators of Marxism,” will perhaps see a contradiction between this admission of the “abolition of the State” and the repudiation of a formula like that of the anarchists, contained in the quotation from the “Anti-Dühring,” given above. It would not be surprising if the opportunists wrote down Engels, too, as an “Anarchist” for the Socialist-Chauvinists are now more and more adopting the fashion of accusing the Internationalists of anarchism.

That, together with the abolition of classes, the State will also be abolished—this Marxism has always taught. The well-known passage on the “withering away of the State” in the “Anti-Dühring” does not accuse the anarchists merely of being in favour of the abolition of the State, but of spreading the theory that it is possible to accomplish this “within twenty-four hours.” In view of the complete distortion, by the present predominating “Social-Democratic” doctrine concerning the relation of Marxism to anarchism, of the question of the abolition of the State, it will be particularly useful to recall one particular controversy of Marx and Engels with the anarchists.

## 2. The Dispute with the Anarchists.

This dispute occurred in 1873. Marx and Engels then contributed articles against the Proudhonist "Autonomists" or "Anti-Authoritarians" to an Italian Socialist review, and it was only in 1913 that these articles appeared in German in the "Neue Zeit."

"If the political struggle of the working class, [wrote Marx, ridiculing the anarchists for their repudiation of political action] assumes a revolutionary form; if the workers, in place of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, set up their own revolutionary dictatorship, then they commit a terrible crime and offer an insult to principle; because, forsooth, the workers in order to meet the miserable, gross requirements of the moment, in order to crush the resistance of the capitalist class, cause the State to assume a revolutionary and transitional form, instead of laying down their arms and abolishing the State." ("Neue Zeit," 1913-4, year 32, vol. I., p. 40.)

This alone is the kind of "abolition" of the State, against which Marx protested, refuting the anarchists. He protested not against the theory of the disappearance of the State when classes disappear, or of its abolition when classes have been abolished, but only against the proposition that the workers should deny themselves the use of arms, the use of organised force, that is, **the use of the State**, for the purpose of "breaking the resistance of the capitalist class." Marx purposely emphasises, in order that the true sense of his contentions against the anarchists might not be perverted, "the

revolutionary **and transitional form**" of the State necessary for the proletariat. The proletariat only needs the State **temporarily**. We do not at all disagree with the anarchists on the question of the abolition of the State as a **final aim**. But we affirm that, for the attainment of this aim, we must make temporary use of the weapons and methods of the State **against** the exploiters, just as the temporary dictatorship of the oppressed class is necessary for the annihilation of all classes. Marx chooses the sharpest and clearest mode of stating the position against the anarchists. Having cast off the yoke of the capitalists, ought the workers "to lay down their arms," or should they use them against the capitalists in order to break their resistance? And the systematic employment of arms by one class against the other, what is that if not a "transitional form of the State"?

Let every Social-Democrat ask himself whether **that was the way** in which he examined the question of the State in his discussion with the anarchists? **Was** that the **way** in which the vast majority of the official Social-Democratic parties of the Second International treated it?

Engels develops these same ideas in even greater detail and more simply. He first of all ridicules the muddled ideas of the Proudhonists, who called themselves "Anti-Authoritarians," that is, they denied every form of authority, of subordination, of power. Take a factory, a railway, a vessel on the open seas, said Engels; is it not clear that not one of these complex technical concerns, based on the use of machines and the ordered co-operation of many people, could function without a certain

amount of subordination and consequently, of authority or power? "When I use these arguments," writes Engels, "against the most hopeless Anti-Authoritarians, they can only give me the following answer, 'Ah, that is true, but the question is not of the authority we confer on our delegates, **but of a certain commission.**' These people think that a thing can be altered by merely changing its name."

Having shown in this way that authority and autonomy are relative terms, that the sphere of their application varies with the various phases of social development, that it is absurd to regard them as absolute terms; after adding that the domain of the application of machinery and production of a large scale is ever extending, Engels passes from a general discussion of authority to the question of the State.

"If the Autonomists [he writes] merely meant to say that the social organisation of the future would admit authority only within those limits which the conditions of industry inevitably dictate, then it would be possible to come to an understanding with them. But they are blind in respect of all the facts which make authority necessary, and they fight passionately against a mere word.

"Why do not the Anti-Authoritarians limit themselves to shouting against the **political** authority, against the State? All Socialists agree that the State, and together with it, also political authority, will vanish as the result of the future Socialist Revolution, i.e., that public functions will lose their political character and

will be transformed into simple administrative functions, concerned with social interests. But the Anti-Authoritarians demand that the political State should be abolished at one blow, even before those social relations which gave birth to the State are themselves abolished. They demand that the first act of the social revolution shall be the abolition of all authority.

“These gentlemen, have they ever seen a revolution? Revolution is undoubtedly the most authoritative thing possible. Revolution is an act in which part of the population forces its will on the other part by means of rifles, bayonets, cannon, i.e., by most authoritative means. And the conquering party is inevitably forced to maintain its supremacy by means of that fear which its arms inspire in the reactionaries. Had the Paris Commune not relied on the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie, would it have lasted longer than a single day? May we not rather censure the Commune for not having made sufficient use of this authority? And so, either the Anti-Authoritarians themselves do not know what they are talking about, in which case they merely sow confusion; or they do know what they are talking about, in which case they are betraying the proletariat. In either case they serve only the interests of reaction” (p. 39).

In this discussion questions are touched on, which must be investigated in connection with the subject of the correlation of politics and economics during the “withering away” of the State. (The next chapter treats of this subject.) Such are the problems of the transformation of the nature of public functions, from political to simply adminis-

trative, and of the "political State." This last term, particularly liable to cause misunderstanding, indicates the process of the "withering away" of the State: the dying State, at a certain stage of its decay, can be called a non-political State. The most remarkable point in our quotation from Engels' work is again the way he puts the position against the anarchists. Social-Democrats, desiring to be disciples of Engels, have disputed with the anarchists thousands of times since 1873, but they have not disputed at all as Marxists can and should. The anarchist idea of the abolition of the State is muddled and **non-revolutionary**—that is how Engels put it. It is precisely the revolution, in its rise and development, with its specific problems in relation to violence, authority, power and the State, that the anarchists do not wish to see. The usual criticism of the anarchists by the modern Social-Democrats has been reduced to the purest middle class triviality: "We, forsooth, recognise the State, whereas the anarchists do not." Naturally such trivialities cannot but repel any revolutionary working men who think at all. Engels says something quite different. He emphasises that all Socialists recognise the disappearance of the State as a result of the Socialist Revolution. He then deals with the concrete question of the revolution—that very question which, as a rule, the Social-Democrats, because of their opportunism, evade, leaving it, so to speak, exclusively for the anarchists "to work out." And in thus formulating the question Engels takes the bull by the horns. Ought not the Commune to have made **more** use of the **revolutionary** power of the **State**, that is, of the proletariat armed and organised as the ruling class?

The modern predominating official Social-Democracy has generally dismissed the concrete problems facing the proletariat during the revolution, either by some inane philistine jeers, or, at the best, by the evasive sophism—"Wait and see." And the anarchists have thus gained the right to reproach such Social-Democrats with betraying their mission of educating the working class in revolution. Engels makes use of the experience of the last proletarian revolution for the direct purpose of drawing from it concrete conclusions as to what and how the proletariat should do and act concerning both banks and the State.

### 3. The Letter to Bebel.

One of the most remarkable, if not **the** most remarkable, reasoning in the works of Marx and Engels on the State is contained in the following passage in Engels' letter to Bebel on March 18th-28th, 1875. This letter, we may remark in passing, was first published, so far as we know, by Bebel, in the second volume of his memoirs ("My Life"), published in 1911, that is, thirty-six years after the writing and despatch of the letter.

Engels wrote to Bebel, criticising that same draft of the Gotha programme, which Marx criticised in his famous letter to Bracke, and, referring particularly to the question of the State, said:

"The Free People's State has been transformed into a Free State. According to the grammatical meaning of the words, the Free State is one in which the State is free in relation to its citizens, that is, a State with a despotic government. It

would be well to throw overboard all this nonsense about the State, especially after the Commune, which was already no longer a State in the proper sense of the word.

“The anarchists have too long been able to throw into our teeth this ‘People’s State,’ although already, in Marx’s works against Proudhon, and then in the “Communist Manifesto,” it was stated quite plainly that with the introduction of the Socialist order of society, the State will dissolve of itself (“sich auflöst”), and will disappear. As the State is only a transitional institution which we are obliged to use in the revolutionary struggle in order forcibly to crush our opponents, it is a pure absurdity to speak of a Free People’s State. During the period when the proletariat still **needs** the State, it does not require it in the interests of freedom, but in the interests of crushing its antagonists; and when it becomes possible really to speak of freedom, then the State, as such, ceases to exist. We should, therefore, suggest that everywhere the word **State** be replaced by “Gemeinwesen” (Commonwealth), a fine old German word, which corresponds to the French word ‘Commune.’” (p. 322, German Edition.)

One should bear in mind that this letter refers to the Party programme which Marx criticised in his letter dated only a few weeks later than the above (Marx’s letter of May 5th, 1875), and that Engels was living at the time with Marx in London. Consequently, when he says “we” Engels undoubtedly suggests to the leader of the German working class party, both in his own and in Marx’s name, that the word “State” should be struck out

of their programme and exchanged for "Commonwealth."

What a howl about "anarchism" would be raised by the leaders of present-day "Marxism" adulterated to meet the requirements of the opportunists, if such an alteration in their programme were suggested to them. Let them howl. The capitalist class will pat them on the back for it.

In the meantime, however, we shall go on with our work. In revising the programme of our Party, Engels' and Marx's advice must undoubtedly be taken into consideration in order to come nearer to the truth, to re-establish Marxism, to purge it from distortion, to direct the struggle for freedom of the working class into the right channels. Among the Bolsheviks there will certainly be none opposed to the advice of Engels and Marx. Difficulties may, perhaps, crop up regarding terminology. In German there are two words meaning "Commonwealth," of which Engels used the one which does not denote a single community, but the sum of all, a system of communities. In Russian there is no such word, and perhaps we may have to choose the French word "Commune," although this also has its drawbacks.\*

"The Commune was no longer a State in the proper sense of the word." Here is Engels' most important theoretical proposition. After what has been said above, this statement is quite intelligible. The Commune **ceased** to be a State in so far as it

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\* It will be seen that the English language possesses just the equivalent of the German "Gemeinwesen," which the Russian lacks. It is even probable that the German term was suggested to Engels by the English word.—Trans.

had to repress, not the majority, but a minority, of the population (the exploiters); it had broken the bourgeois machinery of government, and, in the place of a **special** repressive force, the whole population itself was coming on the scene. All this is a departure from the State in its proper sense. And had the Commune become consolidated, the relics of the State would of themselves have "withered away" within it; there would have been no need for the State to "abolish" its institutions, they would have ceased to function in proportion as less and less was left for them to do.

"The Anarchists throw into our teeth the 'People's State.' " In saying this, Engels has in mind especially Bakunin and his attacks on the German Social-Democrats. Engels admits these attacks to be justified **in so far** as the 'People's State' is as senseless and as far removed from Socialism as the "**Free** People's State." Engels tries to alter the character of the controversy of the German Social-Democrats with the anarchists, to make it true to principle, and to clear it from opportunist prejudice concerning the "State." Alas! Engels' letter has been stowed away for thirty-six years. We shall see below that, even after the publication of Engels' letter, Kautsky still obstinately continues to repeat those very mistakes against which Engels gave his warning.

Bebel replied to Engels in a letter, dated September 21st, 1875, in which, amongst other things, he wrote that he "fully agreed" with Engels' criticism of the projected programme, and that he had reproached Liebknecht for his readiness to make concessions (Bebel's "Memoirs," German Edition,

vol. II., p. 304). But if we take Bebel's pamphlet, "Our Aims," we shall find there absolutely wrong views of the State. "The State must be transformed from one based on **class supremacy** to a **people's State**." ("Unsere Ziele," 1886, p. 14). This is printed in the **ninth** edition of Bebel's pamphlet. Small wonder that such constantly repeated opportunist views of the State have been absorbed by the German Social-Democracy, especially as the revolutionary interpretations by Engels were safely stowed away, and all the conditions of life have been such as to wean them from revolution.

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

In a discussion of the doctrines of Marxism regarding the State, the criticism of the Erfurt Programme sent by Engels to Kautsky on June 29th, 1891, and only published ten years later in the "Neue Zeit," cannot be passed over; for this criticism is mainly concerned with the **opportunist** views of Social-Democracy on the questions of State organisation.

In passing we may note that Engels also raises an exceedingly valuable point of economics, which shows how attentively and thoughtfully he followed the various phases of the latest developments of capitalism, and how he was able, in consequence, to foresee to a certain extent the problems of our own, the imperialist, epoch. Here is this point. Touching on the words used in the draft of the programme, "the want of ordered plan" as characteristic of capitalism, Engels writes:

"If we pass from joint stock companies to

trusts, which get hold of and monopolise whole branches of industry, not only private production, but also the want of ordered plan disappears." ("Neue Zeit," year 20, vol. I., 1901-2, p. 8.)

Here we have what is most essential in the theoretical appreciation of the latest phase of capitalism, that is imperialism, viz., that capitalism becomes **monopolistic** capitalism. This fact must be emphasised because the "reformist" middle class view that monopolistic capitalism, whether private or State, is no longer capitalism, but can already be termed "State Socialism," or something of that sort, is one of the most widespread errors. The trusts, of course, have not given us, and indeed, cannot give us, full and complete order and system in production. But, however much of an ordered plan they may yield, however closely capitalist magnates may estimate in advance the required extent of production on a national and even international scale, and, however carefully and systematically they may regulate it, we still remain under capitalism—capitalism, it is true, in its latest phase, but still, undoubtedly, capitalism. The nearness of such capitalism to Socialism should be, in the mouth of real representatives of the proletariat, an argument for the nearness, ease, feasibility and urgency of the Socialist revolution, and not at all one for tolerating a repudiation of such a revolution, or the attempts to make capitalism look attractive, in which the reformists are habitually engaged.

But to return to the question of the State. Engels makes here three valuable suggestions: in the first place, on the question of a republic;

secondly, on the connection between the problems of nationalities and the form of the State; and thirdly, on local self-government.

With regard to the question of a republic, Engels made this point the gravamen of his criticism of the draft of the Erfurt programme; and when we remember what an important part the Erfurt programme has played in the International Social-Democracy, how it became the model for the whole of the Second International, it may, without exaggeration, be said that Engels criticised in this connection the opportunism of the whole Second International. "The political demands of the draft," Engels writes, "are vitiated by a great fault. **They do not mention** (Engels' black type) what ought certainly to have been said."

And, later on, he makes it clear that the German constitution is but a copy of the reactionary constitution of 1850, that the Reichstag is only, as Wilhelm Liebknecht put it, "the fig-leaf of Absolutism," and that to "wish to make all the means of production public property" on the basis of a constitution which has legalised the existence of petty States and the federation of petty German States, is an "obvious absurdity."

"It is dangerous to touch on this subject," Engels adds, knowing full well that it was impossible for police reasons to include in the programme a demand for a republic in Germany. But Engels does not simply rest content with this obvious consideration which satisfies "everybody." He continues:

“But the matter must, in one way or another, be pressed forward. To what an extent this is essential is shown particularly just now by the way opportunism is gaining ground in the Social-Democratic press. Fearing a renewal of the anti-Socialist laws, or remembering some premature declarations made when those laws were in force, some people desire now that the Party should recognise the present legal order in Germany as sufficient for the peaceful realisation of all its demands.”

Engels brings out as of prime importance the fact that German Social-Democracy was acting in fear of the renewal of the Exceptional Laws, and, without hesitation, calls this opportunism, declaring that just because of the absence of a republic and freedom in Germany, the dreams of a “peaceful” path were quite absurd. Engels is sufficiently careful not to tie his hands in advance. He admits that in republican or very free countries “one can conceive” (only “conceive”!) a peaceful development towards Socialism, but in Germany he repeats:

“In Germany, where the Government is almost omnipotent, and the Reichstag and all other representative bodies have no real power, to proclaim anything of the sort, and that without any need, is to take off the fig leaf from absolutism and to screen its nakedness by one’s own body . . . .”

The great majority of official leaders of German Social-Democracy, who “stowed away” this advice, have indeed proved the screen of absolutism.

“Such a policy can only, in the end, lead the party on to a false road. General abstract political questions are pushed to the foreground, and in this way all the immediate concrete problems which arise automatically on the order of the day at the first approach of important events, during the first political crisis, are hidden from sight. What else can result from this than that the party may suddenly, at the first critical moment, prove helpless, that on decisive questions confusion and division will arise within the party because these questions had never been discussed?”

“This neglect of great fundamental considerations for the sake of the momentary interests of the day, this chase after momentary successes, and this race after them without account of ultimate results, this sacrifice of the future movement for the present, is, perhaps, the result of ‘honest’ motives, but is and remains, none the less, opportunism, and ‘honest’ opportunism is, perhaps, more dangerous than any other . . . If there is anything about which there can be no doubt, it is that our party and the working class can only gain supremacy under a political regime like a democratic republic. This latter is, indeed, the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat, as has been demonstrated by the great French Revolution. . . .”

Engels repeats here in a particularly emphatic form the fundamental idea which, like a red thread, runs throughout all Marx’s work, viz., that the Democratic Republic is the nearest jumping-board to the dictatorship of the proletariat. For such a

republic, without in the least setting aside the domination of capital, and, therefore, the oppression of the masses and the class struggle, inevitably leads to such an extension, intensification and development of that struggle that, as soon as the chance arises for satisfying the fundamental interests of the oppressed masses, this chance is realised inevitably and solely in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of the guidance of these masses by the proletariat. These also have been, for the whole of the Second International, "forgotten words" of Marxism, and their neglect was demonstrated with particular vividness by the history of the Menshevik party during the first half of the Russian Revolution of 1917.

On the question of a Federal Republic, in connection with the national composition of the population, Engels wrote :

"What ought to arise in the place of present-day Germany (with its reactionary monarchist constitution and the equally reactionary division into small States, a division which perpetuates the peculiarities of 'Prussianism' instead of submerging them in Germany as a single whole) ? In my opinion the proletariat can only make use of the form of a one and indivisible republic. A federal republic is still, as a whole, a necessity in the enormous territory of the United States, but even so it is already becoming an impediment in the Eastern States. It would be a progressive step in England, where four nationalities live on the two islands, and where, in spite of one Parliament, three systems of legislation exist side by side. It has long since

become a hindrance in little Switzerland, and if there the Federal Republic can still be tolerated, it is only because Switzerland is content with the role of an entirely passive member of the European State system. For Germany, a federalisation on the Swiss model would be an enormous step backward. Two points differentiate a federated State from a unitary State, viz., that each individual State within the union has its own civil and criminal legislation, its own particular judicial system; and then this: that, side by side with the popular chamber, there is a chamber of representatives from the States in which every Canton votes as such, irrespective of its size."

In Germany the Federated State is the transition to the complete unitary State, and the "revolutions from above" of 1866 and 1870 must not be turned backwards, but must be completed by a "movement from below."

Engels not only shows no indifference to the question of the form of the State, but, on the contrary, analyses with the greatest possible care the transitional forms in order to establish, from the concrete historical peculiarities of each separate case, **from what and to what** the given transitional form is evolving.

Engels, like Marx, insists, from the point of view of the proletariat and the proletarian revolution, on democratic centralism, on the one and indivisible republic. The Federal Republic is considered by him to be either an exception and a hin-

drance to development, or a transitional form between a monarchy and a centralised republic, a "progressive step in certain definite conditions." And amongst these definite conditions arises the problem of nationalities.

With Engels, as with Marx, in spite of their pitiless criticism of the reactionary nature of the small States, often, in certain concrete cases, hidden from the eye under the cloak of the national question, there is nowhere a trace of any desire to ignore the national question—a desire of which the Dutch and Polish Marxists are often guilty, as a result of their most justifiable opposition to the narrow, middle class nationalism of "their" little States.

Even in England, where the geographical conditions, the common language, and the history of many centuries would seem to have put an end to the national question of the separate small divisions in England—even here Engels is cognisant of the patent fact, that the national question has not yet been overcome, and recognises, in consequence, that the establishment of a federal republic would be a "progressive" step. Of course, there is no trace here of a renunciation of criticism of the defects of the Federal Republic or of the most determined propaganda and fight for a unitary and democratically-centralised republic.

But Engels' conception of a centralised democracy is not of that bureaucratic order with which middle class ideologists (including anarchists) identify it. Centralism does not, with Engels, in the least exclude such wide local autonomy, which

combines a voluntary defence of the unity of the State by the communes and districts with the absolute abolition of all bureaucracy and all "ordering about" from above.

"And so we want a unitary republic [writes Engels, setting out the programmatic views of Marxism on the State] but not in the sense of the present French Republic, which is neither more nor less than the Empire established in 1798 without the Emperor. From 1792 to 1798 each French department, each municipality, enjoyed complete self-government on the American model, and this is what we, too, ought to have. How local self-government should be organised and how it is possible to do without a bureaucracy has been demonstrated to us by America and the first French Republic, and is still being demonstrated by Canada, Australia and other British Dominions. Such a provincial and communal self-government is a far freer institution than, for instance, the Swiss Federation under which, it is true, the Canton is very independent of the **Bund** [that is, of the Federal State as a whole] but is also independent of the district and the commune. The cantonal governments appoint the district state-holders and prefects, a feature which is quite absent in the English-speaking countries, and which we, in our own country, must in the future abolish as completely as the Prussian 'Landräte, Regierungsräte' " [that is, all officials appointed from above].

In accordance with this, Engels suggests the following wording for the clause in the programme regarding self-government: "Complete self-

government for the provinces, districts and communes through officials elected by universal suffrage, the abolition of all local and provincial authorities appointed by the State."

In the "Pravda" of May 28th, 1917, suppressed by the Government of Kerensky and other "Socialist" Ministers, I had already occasion to point out how in this connection (not by any means in this alone), our sham Socialist representatives of the sham-revolutionary sham-democracy, have scandalously departed from democracy. Naturally people who have allied themselves with the Imperialist capitalist class remained deaf to this criticism.

It is particularly important to note that Engels, armed with precise facts, disproves by a telling example the superstition very widespread, especially among the lower middle class democracy, that a Federal Republic necessarily means a larger amount of liberty than a centralised republic. This is not true. The facts cited by Engels regarding the centralised French Republic of 1792-98 and Federal Switzerland disprove this. The really democratic centralised republic gave more liberty than the federal republic—in order words, the **greatest** amount of local freedom known in history was granted by a centralised republic, and not by a Federal Republic.

Insufficient attention has hitherto been paid to this fact, as indeed, to the whole question of federal and centralised republics and local self-government in our party literature and agitation.

modern wage-slaves, in virtue of the conditions of capitalist exploitation, remain to such an extent crushed by want and poverty that they "cannot be bothered with democracy," have "no time for politics"; that, in the ordinary peaceful course of events, the majority of the population is debarred from participating in public political life.

The accuracy of this statement is perhaps most clearly proved by Germany, just because in this State constitutional legality has lasted and remained stable for a remarkably long time—for nearly half a century (1871-1914); and the Social-Democracy during this time has been able, far better than has been the case in other countries, to make use of "legality" in order to organise into a political party a larger proportion of the working class than has occurred anywhere else in the world.

What, then, is this highest proportion of politically conscious and active wage-slaves that has so far been observed in capitalist society? One million members of the Social-Democratic Party out of fifteen millions of wage-workers! Three millions industrially organised out of fifteen millions!

Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich—that is the democracy of capitalist society. It we look more closely into the mechanism of capitalist democracy, everywhere—in the so-called "petty" details of the suffrage (the residential qualification, the exclusion of women, etc.), in the technique of the representative institutions, in the actual obstacles to the right of meeting (public buildings are not for the "poor"), in

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

In his preface to the third edition of the "Civil War in France" (this preface is dated March 18th, 1891, and was originally published in the "Neue Zeit") Engels, side by side with many other interesting questions in connection with the State, gives a remarkably striking resumé of the lessons of the Commune. This resumé, confirmed by all the experience of the period of twenty years separating the author from the Commune, and directed particularly against the "superstitious faith in the State" so widely diffused in Germany, can, quite justly, be called the **last word** of Marxism on the question here dealt with.

In France, Engels notes, the workers were armed after every revolution. "Consequently the first commandment for every bourgeois at the head of the State was the disarmament of the workers. Accordingly, after every revolution won by the workers, a new struggle arose which ended with their defeat. . . ."

This is a summing up of the experience of bourgeois revolutions, which is as short as it is expressive. The essence of the whole matter—also, by the way, of the question of the State—viz., **has** the oppressed class arms? is here wonderfully well expressed. It is just this essential thing which, more often than not, is ignored both by professors under the influence of capitalist ideology and by the lower middle class democrats. In the Russian Revolution of 1917 it was to the "Menshevik," a so-called "Marxist," Tseretelli, that the Cavaignac

honour fell of babbling out this secret of bourgeois revolutions. In his "historic" speech of June 9th (22nd) Tseretelli blundered out the decision of the bourgeoisie to disarm the Petrograd workers—referring, of course, to this decision as his own, and as a vital necessity for the State.

Tseretelli's historic speech of June 9th (22nd) will certainly constitute for every historian of the revolution of 1917 one of the clearest illustrations of how the "bloc" of Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, led by Mr. Tseretelli, went over to the side of the capitalist class **against** the revolutionary proletariat.

Another incidental remark of Engels' also connected with the question of the State, dealt with religion. It is well known that the German Social-Democracy, in proportion as it began to decay and to become more and more opportunist, slid down more and more frequently to the philistine misinterpretation of the celebrated formula, that "religion is a private matter." That is, this formula was twisted to mean that even for the party of the revolutionary proletariat the question of religion was a private matter. It was against this complete betrayal of the revolutionary programme of the proletariat that Engels revolted. In 1891 he only saw the **very feeble** beginnings of opportunism in his party, and, therefore, he expressed himself on the subject most cautiously:

"Corresponding with the fact that in the Commune there sat, almost without exception, only workmen or the recognised representatives of the workers, its decisions were distinguished by their

resolute proletarian character. These decisions either decreed such reforms as the republican bourgeoisie had rejected only out of base cowardice, but which formed a necessary foundation for the free activity of the working class. Such, for instance, was the adoption of the principle that in **relation to the State** religion is simply a private matter. Or the Commune promulgated decrees directly in the interests of the working class and, to a certain extent, inflicting deep wounds on the old body social."

Engels deliberately emphasised the words "in relation to the State," not as a mere hint, but as a straight thrust at German opportunism which had declared religion to be a private matter in **relation to the party**; thus lowering the party of the revolutionary proletariat to the level of the most superficial "freethinkers" of the middle class, ready to admit a non-religious State, but renouncing all **party** struggle against the religious opium which stupefies the people.

The future historian of the German Social-Democracy investigating the root causes of its shameful collapse in 1914, will find no little material of interest on this question, beginning with the evasive declarations in the articles of the intellectual leader of the party, Kautsky, opening the door wide to opportunism, and ending with the attitude of the party towards the "Los-von-Kirche Bewegung" (the movement for the disestablishment of the Church) in 1913.

But let us pass on to the manner in which, twenty years after the Commune, Engels summed up its lessons for the struggling proletariat.

Here are the lessons to which Engels attached prime importance :

“It was just this oppressive power of the former centralised government, the army, the political police, the bureaucracy which Napoleon created in 1798, and which, from that time onwards, every new government had taken over as a desirable weapon for use against its opponents—it was just this power which should have fallen throughout France as it had fallen in Paris.

“The Commune was compelled to recognise from the very first that the working class, having obtained supremacy, could no longer carry on the business of government by means of the old machinery: that, in order that the working class might not lose again its newly-won supremacy, it must, on the one hand, sweep aside the whole of the old machine of oppression which had hitherto been used against it, and on the other, secure itself against its own deputies and officials by declaring them all, without exception, revocable at any time.”

Engels emphasises again and again that not only in a monarchy, **but also in a democratic republic**, the State remains the State, that is, it retains its fundamental and characteristic feature, viz., the transformation of officials—“the servants of society”—and of its organs into the rulers of society.

“Against this inevitable feature of all systems of government that have existed hitherto, viz., the transformation of the State and its organs from servants into the lords of society, the Com-

mune used two unfailing remedies. First, it appointed to all posts, administrative, legal, educational, persons elected by universal suffrage; introducing at the same time the right of recalling those elected at any time by the decision of their electors. Secondly, it paid all officials, both high and low, only such pay as was received by any other worker. The highest salary paid by the Commune was 6,000 francs (about £240).\*

“Thus was created an effective barrier to place-hunting and career-making, even apart from the imperative mandates of the deputies in representative institutions introduced by the Commune over and above this.”

Engels touches here on the interesting boundary where a consistent democracy is, on the one hand, **transformed** into Socialism, and on the other, Socialism. For, in order to destroy the State, it is necessary to convert the functions of the public service into such simple operations of control and book-keeping as are within the reach of the vast majority of the population, and, ultimately, of every single individual. And, in order to do away completely with the political adventurer, it must be

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\* Nominally this means about 2,400 roubles per annum. According to the present rates of exchange in Russia this would be equal to 6,000 roubles. Those Bolsheviki are making quite an unpardonable error who are proposing a salary of 9,000 roubles for members of the Town Duma, for instance, instead of suggesting a maximum salary of 6,000 roubles for the whole of the State—a sum quite sufficient for anybody. [As a matter of fact, the salaries of People's Commissars after the Bolsheviki Revolution were fixed at 500 roubles per month. Since then, however, the value of the rouble has still further decreased, so the salaries had to be raised.—Trans.]

made impossible for an "honourable," though unsalaried, sinecure in the public service to be used as a jumping-off ground for a highly profitable post in a bank or a joint stock company, as happens **constantly** in the freest capitalist countries.

But Engels does not make the mistake made, for instance, by some Marxists on the question of the right of a nation to self-determination, viz., that, forsooth, this is impossible under capitalism and will be unnecessary under Socialism. Such an apparently clever, but really incorrect statement might be repeated of **any** democratic institution, amongst others, of the payment of moderate salaries to officials; for, during the lifetime of capitalism a completely consistent democracy is impossible, whilst under Socialism all political democracy **disappears**.

This is a sophism, comparable to the old humorous problem of at what point a man will become bald if he loses his hair one by one.

The development of democracy to its logical conclusion, the investigation of the **forms** of this development, **testing** them by practice, and so forth—all this is part of the objects in the struggle for the Social Revolution. Taken separately, no kind of democracy will yield Socialism. But in actual life democracy will never be "taken by itself"; it will be "taken together" with other things, it will exert its influence also on economics, helping on its re-organisation; it will be subjected, in its turn, to the influence of economic development, and so on. That is the dialectical process of actual living history. Engels continues:

“This disruption (“Sprengung”) of the old machinery of government and its replacement by a new and really democratic one, is described in detail in the third part of the “Civil War.” But it was necessary to dwell once more in brief on this point, that is, on one or two features of this replacement, because in Germany the superstitious faith in the State has left the realm of philosophy and passed into the general consciousness of the bourgeoisie and even of many workers. According to the teaching of the philosophers, the State is the ‘realisation of Idea,’ or translated into theological language, the Kingdom of God on earth; the State is the field in which is, or should be, realised eternal Truth and Justice. And from this follows a superstitious reverence for the State and for everything appertaining to the State—a superstitious reverence which takes root the more readily as people are accustomed, from their childhood, to think that the affairs and interests common to the whole of society cannot be carried out and protected in any other way than in the one in existence—that is, by means of the State and its well-paid officials. People think they are making an extraordinarily big step forward if they rid themselves of faith in a hereditary monarchy and become partisans of a democratic republic. Whereas, in reality, the State is nothing more than an apparatus for the oppression of one class by another, in a democratic republic, not a whit less than in a monarchy. At best the State is an evil inherited by the proletariat after coming out victorious in the struggle for class supremacy. The victorious proletariat, just like the Commune, will be obliged immediately to amputate the

worst features of this evil, until such time as a new generation, brought up under new and free social conditions, will prove capable of throwing on the dust-heap all the useless old rubbish of State organisation."

Engels cautioned the Germans, in the event of the monarchy being replaced by a republic, not to forget the fundamentals of Socialism on the question of the State in general. His warnings now read like a direct lesson to Messrs. Tseretelli and Tchernoff who revealed in their coalition tactics a superstitious faith in, and respect towards, the State!

Two more points. (1) When Engels says that in a democratic republic, "not a whit less" than in a monarchy, the State remains an "apparatus for the oppression of one class by another," this by no means signifies that the **form** of oppression is a matter of indifference to the proletariat, as some anarchists "teach." A wider, more free and open form of the class struggle and class oppression enormously assists the proletariat in its struggle for the annihilation of all classes. (2) Why only a new generation will be able completely to scrap the ancient lumber of the State—this question is bound up with the question of the supersession of democracy, to which we now turn.

## 6. Engels on the Supersession of Democracy.

Engels had occasion to speak on this subject in connection with the question of the "scientific" incorrectness of the term "Social-Democrat."

In the introduction to his edition of his articles of the 'seventies on various subjects, mainly on international questions ("Internationales aus dem Volkstaat"), dated January 3rd, 1894 (that is, a year and a-half before his death) Engels wrote that in all his articles he used the word "Communist," not "Social-Democrat"; because at that time it was the Proudhonists in France and the Lassalleans in Germany who called themselves Social-Democrats.

"For Marx and for me [Engels continues] it was, therefore, quite impossible to use such an elastic term to describe our particular point of view. At the present time things are different, and this word ('Social-Democrat') may, perhaps, pass muster, although it remains inexact ("unpassend" literally 'unsuitable') for a party whose economic programme is not simply a general Socialist one, but definitely Communist—for a party whose final political aim is the supersession of the whole State and, therefore, also of democracy. But the names of **real** (the black type is Engels') political parties never completely correspond with fact: the party develops, the name remains."

The dialectician Engels remains true to dialectics to the last day of his life. Marx and I, he says, had a splendid, scientific, exact name for the party, but there was no real party, that is, no mass-proletarian party. Now, at the end of the 19th century, there is a real party; but its name is scientifically incorrect. Never mind, "it will pass muster," only let the party grow, only let not the scientific inexactness of its name be hidden from it, and let it not hinder its development in the right direction.

Perhaps, indeed, some humorist might comfort us Bolsheviks à la Engels: we have a real party, it is developing splendidly; even such a meaningless and barbarous term as "Bolshevik" "will pass muster," although it expresses nothing but the purely accidental fact that at the Brussels-London Conference of 1903 we had a majority (Bolshinstvo). Perhaps now, when the July and August persecutions of our party by the republican and "revolutionary" middle class democracy have made the word "Bolshevik" such a universally respected name; when, in addition, these persecutions have signalised such a great historical step forward made by our party in its **actual** development, perhaps now even I should hesitate to repeat my April suggestion to change the name of our Party. Perhaps I would propose a "compromise" to our comrades, to call ourselves the Communist Party, but to retain "Bolsheviks" in brackets\* . . . But the question of the name of the party is incomparably less important than the question of the relation of the revolutionary proletariat to the State.

In the usual debates about the State the mistake is constantly made against which Engels cautions us here, and which we have indicated above. Namely, it is constantly forgotten that the destruction of the State involves also the destruction of democracy; that the "withering away" of the State also means the "withering away" of democracy. At first sight such a statement seems exceedingly strange and incomprehensible. Indeed, perhaps some one or other may begin to fear lest we be ex-

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\* This was actually done after the November Revolution: The Bolshevik Party now officially styles itself: "Communist Party (of the Bolsheviks)".—Trans

pecting the advent of such an order of society in which the principle of majority rule will not be respected—for is not a democracy just the recognition of this principle?

No, democracy is not identical with majority rule. No, democracy is a **State** which recognises the subjection of the minority to the majority, that is, an organisation for the systematic use of **violence** by one class against the other, by one part of the population against another.

We set ourselves, as our final aim, the task of the destruction of the State, that is, of every organised and systematic violence, every form of violence against man in general. We do not expect the advent of an order of society in which the principle of submission of the minority to the majority will not be observed. But, striving for Socialism, we are convinced that it will develop further into Communism, and, side by side with this, there will vanish all need for force, for the **subjection** of one man to another, of one section of society to another, since people will **grow accustomed** to observing the elementary conditions of social existence **without force and without subjection**.

In order to emphasise this element of habit, Engels speaks of a **new** generation, “brought up under new and free social conditions which will prove capable of throwing on the dustheap all the useless old rubbish of State organisation”—**every** sort of State, including even the democratic republican State.

For the elucidation of this, we must examine the question of the economic foundations of the withering away of the State.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATION OF THE "WITHERING AWAY" OF THE STATE.

A most detailed elucidation of this question is given by Marx in his "Criticism of the Gotha Programme" (letter to Bracke, May 15th, 1875, printed as late as 1891 in the "Neue Zeit," ix., 1). The polemical part of this remarkable work consisting of a criticism of Lassalleanism has, so to speak, overshadowed its positive part, namely the analysis of the connection between the development of Communism and the "withering away" of the State.

#### 1. The Formulation of the Question by Marx.

From a superficial comparison of the letter of Marx to Bracke (May 15th, 1875) with Engels' letter to Bebel (March 28th, 1875), discussed above, it might appear that Marx was much more of an upholder of the State than Engels, and that the difference of opinion between them on the question of the State is very considerable.

Engels suggests to Bebel that all the chatter about the State should be thrown overboard; that the word "State" should be eliminated from the programme and replaced by "Commonwealth"; Engels even declares that the Commune was really no longer a State in the proper sense of the word. Whereas Marx even speaks of the "future State

in Communist society," that is, apparently recognising the necessity of a State even under Communism.

But such a view would be fundamentally incorrect; and a closer examination shows that Marx's and Engels' views on the State and its decay were completely identical, and that Marx's expression quoted above refers merely to the **decaying** State.

It is clear that there can be no question of defining the exact moment of the **future** "withering away"—the more so as it must obviously be a prolonged process. The apparent difference between Marx and Engels is due to the different subjects they dealt with, the different aims they were pursuing. Engels set forth the problem in a plain, bold and large outline in order to show Bebel all the absurdity of the current superstitions concerning the State, shared to no small degree by Lassalle himself. Marx only touches upon **this** question in passing, being interested mainly in another subject—the **evolution** of Communist society. The whole theory of Marx is an application of the theory of evolution—in its most consistent, complete, well-thought-out and fruitful form—to modern Capitalism. Naturally, for Marx there arose the question of the application of this theory both to the **coming** crash of capitalism and to the **future** development of **future** Communism.

On what foundation of facts can the future development of future Communism be based? It can be based on the fact that **it has its origin** in capitalism, that is develops historically from capitalism, that it is the result of the action of social forces to which capitalism **has given birth**.

There is no shadow of an attempt on Marx's part to fabricate a utopia, idly to guess that which cannot be known. Marx treats the question of Communism in the same way as a naturalist would treat the question of the development of, say a new biological variety, if he knew that such and such was its origin, and such and such is the direction in which it changes its form.

Marx, first of all, brushes aside the confusion which is introduced by the Gotha programme into the question of the mutual relations of State and Society.

“Contemporary society [he writes] is capitalist society, which exists in all civilised countries, freed, to a greater or lesser extent, from admixture of mediævalism, more or less varying in type according to the peculiar historical conditions of development of each country, more or less fully developed. The ‘contemporary State,’ on the contrary, varies with every State boundary. In the Prusso-German Empire it is quite a different thing from that in Switzerland; in England quite different from that in the United States. The ‘contemporary State’ is, therefore a fiction.

“However, in spite of the motley variety of their forms, the different forms of the State in the different civilised countries have this in common—they are all based on contemporary bourgeois society, more or less capitalistically developed. They have, therefore, certain fundamental traits in common. In this sense one can speak of the ‘contemporary State’ in contradistinction to that future time when its present root, namely, capitalist society, will have perished.

“The question is then put thus: To what transformation will the forms of government be subjected in Communist society? In other words what social functions will there remain, then, analogous to the present functions of the State? This question can only be answered with the help of the scientific method; and, however many thousands of times the word ‘people’ is combined with the word ‘State,’ this will not bring us one iota nearer its solution. . . .”

Having thus ridiculed all the talk of a “People’s State,” Marx formulates the question and warns us, as it were, that for a scientific answer to it one can only rely on firmly established scientific facts.

The first fact that has been established with complete exactness by the whole theory of evolution, indeed, by the whole of science—a fact which the utopians forgot, however, and which is now forgotten by the present opportunists, afraid of the Socialist revolution—is that, historically, there must undoubtedly be a special stage or epoch of **transition** from capitalism to Communism.

## 2. The Transition from Capitalism to Communism.

“Between capitalist and Communist society [Marx continues], there lies a period of revolutionary transformation from the former to the latter. A stage of political transition corresponds to this period, and the State during this period can be no other than the **revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.**”

This conclusion Marx bases on an analysis of the role played by the proletariat in modern capitalist

society, on the facts of the development of this society and on the irreconcilability of the antagonistic interests of the proletariat and the capitalist class.

Earlier the question was put thus: To attain its emancipation the proletariat must overthrow the capitalist class, conquer political power and establish its own revolutionary dictatorship. Now the question is put somewhat differently: The transition from capitalist society developing towards Communism, to a Communist society, is impossible without a period of "political transition," and the State in this period can only be the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

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

We saw that "The Communist Manifesto" simply places side by side the two ideas: the "conversion of the proletariat into the ruling class" and the "conquest of democracy." On the basis of all that has been said above, one can define more exactly how democracy changes in the transition of capitalism to Communism.

In capitalist society, under the conditions most favourable to its development, we have a more or less complete democracy in the form of a democratic republic. But this democracy is always bound by the narrow framework of capitalist exploitation, and consequently always remains, in reality, a democracy only for the minority, only for the possessing classes, only for the rich. Freedom in capitalist society always remains more or less the same as it was in the ancient Greek republics, that is, freedom for the slave owners. The

the purely capitalist organisation of the daily press, etc., etc.—on all sides we shall see restrictions upon restrictions of democracy. These restrictions, exceptions, exclusions, obstacles for the poor, seem slight—especially in the eyes of one who has himself never known want, and has never lived in close contact with the oppressed classes in their hard life, and nine-tenths, if not ninety-nine hundredths, of the bourgeois publicists and politicians are of this class! But in their sum these restrictions exclude and thrust out the poor from politics and from an active share in democracy. Marx splendidly grasped the **essence** of capitalist democracy, when, in his analysis of the experience of the Commune, he said that the oppressed are allowed, once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class are to represent and repress them in Parliament!

But from this capitalist democracy—inevitably narrow, stealthily thrusting aside the poor, and therefore, to its core, hypocritical and treacherous—progress does not march along a simple, smooth and direct path to “greater and greater democracy,” as the Liberal professors and the lower middle class opportunists would have us believe. No, progressive development—that is, towards Communism—marches through the dictatorship of the proletariat; and cannot do otherwise, for there is no one else who can **break the resistance** of the exploiting capitalists, and no other way of doing it.

And the dictatorship of the proletariat—that is, the organisation of the advance-guard of the oppressed as the ruling class, for the purpose of crushing the oppressors—cannot produce merely an

expansion of democracy. **Together** with an immense expansion of democracy—for the first time becoming democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the rich folk—the dictatorship of the proletariat will produce a series of restrictions of liberty in the case of the oppressors, exploiters and capitalists. We must crush them in order to free humanity from wage-slavery; their resistance must be broken by force. It is clear that where there is suppression there must also be violence, and there cannot be liberty or democracy.

Engels expressed this splendidly in his letter to Bebel when he said, as the reader will remember, that “the proletariat needs the State, not in the interests of liberty, but for the purpose of crushing its opponents; and, when one will be able to speak of freedom, the State will have ceased to exist.”

Democracy for the vast majority of the nation, and the suppression by force—that is, the exclusion from democracy—of the exploiters and oppressors of the nation; this is the modification of democracy which we shall see during the **transition** from capitalism to Communism.

Only in Communist society, when the resistance of the capitalists has finally been broken, when the capitalists have disappeared, when there are no longer any classes (that is, when there is no difference between the members of society in respect of their social means of production) **only then** “does the State disappear **and one can speak of freedom.**” Only then will be possible and will be realised a really full democracy, a democracy without any exceptions. And only then will democracy itself be

gin to wither away in virtue of the simple fact that, freed from capitalist slavery, from the innumerable horrors, savagery, absurdities and infamies of capitalist exploitation, people will gradually **become accustomed** to the observation of the elementary rules of social life, known for centuries, repeated for thousands of years in all sermons. They will become accustomed to their observance without force, without constraint, without subjection, without the **special apparatus** for compulsion which is called the State.

The expression "the State withers away," is very well chosen, for it indicates the gradual and elemental nature of the process. Only habit can, and undoubtedly will, have such an effect: for we see around us millions of times how readily people get accustomed to observe the necessary rules of life in common, if there is no exploitation, if there is nothing that causes indignation, that calls forth protest and revolt and has to be suppressed.

Thus, 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, produce a democracy for the people, for the majority, side by side with the necessary suppression of the minority constituted by the exploiters. Communism alone is capable of giving a really complete democracy, and the fuller it is the more quickly will it become unnecessary and wither away of itself. In other words, under capitalism we have a State in the proper sense of the word: that is, a special instrument for the suppression of one class by another,

and of the majority by the minority at that. Naturally, for the successful discharge of such a task as the systematic suppression by the minority of exploiters of the majority of exploited, the greatest ferocity and savagery of suppression is required, and seas of blood are needed, through which humanity has to direct its path, in a condition of slavery, serfdom and wage labour.

Again, during the **transition** from capitalism to Communism, suppression is **still** necessary; but in this case it is suppression of the minority of exploiters by the majority of exploited. A special instrument, a special machine for suppression—that is, the “State”—is necessary, but this is now a transitional State, no longer a State in the ordinary sense of the term. For the suppression of the minority of exploiters, by the majority of those who were **but yesterday** wage slaves, is a matter comparatively so easy, simple and natural that it will cost far less bloodshed than the suppression of the risings of the slaves, serfs or wage labourers, and will cost the human race far less. And it is compatible with the diffusion of democracy over such an overwhelming majority of the nation that the need for any **special machinery for suppression** will gradually cease to exist. The exploiters are unable, of course, to suppress the people without a most complex machine for performing this duty; but **the people** can suppress the exploiters even with a very simple “machine”—almost without any “machine” at all, without any special apparatus—by the simple **organisation of the armed masses** (such as the Councils of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, we may remark, anticipating a little).

Finally, only under Communism will the State become quite unnecessary, for there will be **no one** to suppress—"no one" in the sense of a **class**, in the sense of a systematic struggle with a definite section of the population. We are not utopians, and we do not in the least deny the possibility and inevitability of excesses by **individual persons**, and equally the need to suppress such excesses. But, in the first place, for this no special machine, no special instrument of repression is needed. This will be done by the armed nation itself, as simply and as readily as any crowd of civilised people, even in modern society, parts a pair of combatants or does not allow a woman to be outraged. And, secondly, we know that the fundamental social cause of excesses which violate the rules of social life is the exploitation of the masses, their want and their poverty. With the removal of this chief cause, excesses will inevitably begin to "wither away." We do not know how quickly and in what stages, but we know that they will be withering away. With their withering away, the State will also wither away. Marx, without plunging into Utopia, defined more fully what can **now** be defined regarding this future epoch: namely, the difference between the higher and lower phases (degrees, stages) of Communist society.

### 3. The First Phase of Communist Society.

In the "Criticism of the Gotha Programme," Marx disproves in detail the Lassalleian idea of the receipt by the workers under Socialism of the "undiminished" or "full product of their labour." Marx shows that out of the whole of the social labour of society, it will be necessary to deduct a

reserve fund, a fund for the expansion of industry, the replacement of "worn-out" machinery, and so on; then, also, out of the collective product a fund for the expenses of management, for schools, hospitals, homes for the aged, and so forth.

Instead of the hazy, obscure, general phrase of Lassalle—"the full product of his labour for the worker"—Marx gives a sober estimate as to how exactly a Socialist society will have to manage its affairs. Marx takes up a **concrete** analysis of the conditions of life of a society in which there will be no capitalism, and says: "We have to deal here" (analysing the programme of the Party), "not with a Communist society which has **developed** on its own foundations, but with one which has just **issued** actually from capitalist society, and which, in consequence, in all respects—economic, moral and intellectual—still bears the stamp of the old society, from the womb of which it came." And it is this Communist society—a society which has just come into the world out of the womb of capitalism, and which, in all respects, bears the stamp of the old society—that Marx terms the first, or lower, phase of Communist society.

The means of production are now no longer the private property of individuals. The means of production belong to the whole of society. Every member of society, performing a certain part of socially-necessary labour, receives a certificate from society that he has done such and such a quantity of work. According to this certificate, he receives from the public stores of articles of consumption a corresponding quantity of products. After the deduction of that proportion of labour which goes to the public fund, every worker, there-

fore, receives from society as much as he has given it.

“Equality” seems to reign supreme. But when Lassalle, having in view such a social order (generally called “Socialism,” but termed by Marx the first phase of Communism) speaks of this as “just distribution,” and says that this is “the equal right of each to an equal share of the products of labour,” Lassalle is mistaken, and Marx explains his error.

“Equal right [says Marx], we indeed have here; but it is **still** a ‘bourgeois right’ which, like every right, **pre-supposes inequality**. Every ‘right’ is an application of the **same** measure to **different** people who, as a matter of fact, are not similar and are not equal to one another; and, therefore, ‘equal right’ is really a violation of equality, and an injustice. In effect, every man having done as much social labour as every other, receives an equal share of the social products (with the above-mentioned deductions). Notwithstanding this, different people are not equal to one another. One is strong, another is weak; one is married, the other is not. One has more children, another has less, and so on.

“With equal labour [Marx concludes] and, therefore, with an equal share in the public stock of articles of consumption, one will, in reality, receive more than another, will find himself richer, and so on. To avoid all this, ‘rights,’ instead of being equal, should be unequal.”

The first phase of Communism, therefore, still cannot produce justice and equality; differences and unjust differences, in wealth will still exist, but

the **exploitation** of one man by many. will have become impossible, because it will be impossible to seize as private property the **means of production**, the factories, machines, land, and so on. While tearing to tatters Lassalle's small bourgeois, confused phrase about "equality" and "justice" **in general**, Marx at the same time shows the **line of development** of Communist society, which is forced at first to destroy **only** the "injustice" that the means of production are in the hands of private individuals. **It is not capable** of destroying at once the further injustice which is constituted by the distribution of the articles of consumption according to "work performed" (and not according to need).

The vulgar economists, including the bourgeois professors (such as "our" Tugan-Baranowsky), constantly reproach the Socialists with forgetting the inequality of mankind and with "dreaming" of destroying this inequality. Such a reproach, as we see, only proves the extreme ignorance of the bourgeois ideologists.

Marx not only, with the greatest care, takes into account the inevitable inequalities of men; he also takes cognisance of the fact that the mere conversion of the means of production into the common property of the whole of society—"Socialism" in the generally accepted sense of the word—**does not remove** the shortcomings of distribution and the inequality of "bourgeois justice," which continue to exist as long as the products are divided according to the quantity of "work performed."

"But these defects [Marx continues] are unavoidable in the first phase of Communist

society, in the form in which it comes forth, after the prolonged travail of birth, from capitalist society. Justice can never be in advance of its stage of economic development, and of the cultural development of society conditioned by the latter."

And so, in the first phase of Communist society (generally called Socialism) "bourgeois justice is **not** abolished in its entirety, but only in part, only in proportion to the economic transformation so far attained, that is, only in respect of the means of production. "Bourgeois law" recognises them as the private property of separate individuals. Socialism converts them into common property, and to that extent, and only to that extent, does "bourgeois law" die out. But it continues to live as far as its other part is concerned, in the capacity of regulator or adjuster dividing labour and allotting the products amongst the members of society.

"He who does not work neither shall he eat"—this Socialist principle is **already** realised. "For an equal quantity of labour an equal quantity of products"—this Socialist principle is also already realised. Nevertheless, this is not yet Communism, and this does not abolish "bourgeois law," which gives to unequal individuals, in return for an unequal (in reality) amount of work, an equal quantity of products.

This is a "defect," says Marx, but it is unavoidable during the first phase of Communism; for, if we are not to land in Utopia, we cannot imagine that, having overthrown capitalism, people will at once learn to work for society **without any regulations by law**; indeed, the abolition of capitalism

does not **immediately** lay the economic foundations for such a change.

And there is no other standard yet than that of "bourgeois law." To this extent, therefore, a form of State is still necessary, which, whilst maintaining the public ownership of the means of production, preserves the equality of labour and equality in the distribution of the products. The State is withering away in so far as there are no longer any capitalists, any classes, and, consequently, any **class** whatever to suppress. But the State is not yet dead altogether, since there still remains the protection of "bourgeois law," which sanctifies actual inequality. For the complete extinction of the State complete Communism is necessary.

#### 4. The Highest Phase of Communist Society.

Marx continues :

"In the highest phase of Communist society, after the disappearance of the enslavement of man caused by his subjection to the principle of division of labour ; when, together with this, the opposition between brain and manual work will have disappeared ; when labour will have ceased to be a mere means of supporting life and will itself have become one of the first necessities of life ; when, with the all-round development of the individual, the productive forces, too, will have grown to maturity, and all the forces of social wealth will be pouring an uninterrupted torrent—only then will it be possible wholly to pass beyond the narrow horizon of bourgeois laws, and only then will society be able to inscribe on its

banner: 'From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs.' "

Only now can we appreciate the full justice of Engels' observations when he mercilessly ridiculed all the absurdity of combining the words "freedom" and "State." While the State exists there can be no freedom. When there is freedom there will be no State.

The economic basis for the complete withering away of the State is that high stage of development of Communism when the distinction between brain and manual work disappears; consequently, when one of the principal sources of modern **social** inequalities will have vanished—a source, moreover, which it is impossible to remove immediately by the mere conversion of the means of production into public property, by the mere expropriation of the capitalists.

This expropriation will make it possible gigantically to develop the forces of production. And seeing how incredibly, even now, capitalism **retards** this development, how much progress could be made even on the basis of modern technique at the level it has reached, we have a right to say, with the fullest confidence, that the expropriation of the capitalists will result inevitably in a gigantic development of the productive forces of human society. But how rapidly this development will go forward, how soon it will reach the point of breaking away from the division of labour, of the destruction of the antagonism between brain and manual work, of the transformation of work into a "first necessity of life"—this we do not and **cannot** know.

Consequently, we are right in speaking solely of the inevitable withering away of the State, emphasising the protracted nature of this process, and its dependence upon the rapidity of development of the **higher phase** of Communism; leaving quite open the question of lengths of time, or the concrete forms of this withering away, since material for the solution of such questions is not available.

The State will be able to wither away completely when society has realised the formula: "From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs"; that is, when people have become accustomed to observe the fundamental principles of social life, and their labour is so productive, that they will voluntarily work **according to their abilities**. "The narrow horizon of bourgeois law," which compels one to calculate, with the pitilessness of a Shylock, whether one has not worked half-an-hour more than another, whether one is not getting less pay than another—this narrow horizon will then be left behind. There will then be no need for any exact calculation by society of the quantity of products to be distributed to each of its members; each will take freely "according to his needs."

From the capitalist point of view, it is easy to declare such a social order "a pure Utopia," and to sneer at the Socialists for promising each the right to receive from society, without any control of the labour of the individual citizens, any quantity of truffles, motor cars, pianos, and so forth. Even now, most bourgeois "savants" deliver themselves of such sneers, but thereby they only display at once their ignorance and their material interest in defending capitalism. Ignorance—for

it has never entered the head of any Socialist "to promise" that the highest phase of Communism will actually arrive, while the **anticipation** of the great Socialists that it **will** arrive, assumes **neither the present** productive powers of labour, **nor the present** unthinking "man in the street" capable of spoiling, without reflection, the stores of social wealth and of demanding the impossible. As long as the "highest" phase of Communism has not arrived, the Socialists demand the **strictest** control, **by society and by the State**, of the quantity of labour and the quantity of consumption; only this control must **start** with the expropriation of the capitalists, with the control of the workers over the capitalists, and must be carried out, not by a government of bureaucrats, but by a government of the **armed workers**.

The interested defence of capitalism by the capitalist ideologists (and their hangers-on like Tseretelli, Tchernoff and Co.) consists just in that they **substitute** their disputes and discussions about the far future for the essential, imperative questions **of the day**: the expropriation of the capitalists, the conversion of **all** citizens into workers and employees of **one** huge "syndicate"—the whole State—and the complete subordination of the whole of the work of this syndicate to a really democratic State—to the **State consisting of the Councils of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies**. In reality, when a learned professor, and in his train, some philistine, and in his wake, Messrs. Tseretelli and Tchernoff, talk of unreasonable Utopias, of the demagogic promises of the Bolsheviks, of the impossibility of "bringing in" Socialism, it is the highest stage or phase of Communism which they

have in mind, and which no one has not only promised, but ever even thought of trying to "bring in," because, in any case, it is altogether impossible to "bring it in."

And here we come to that question of the scientific difference between Socialism and Communism, upon which Engels touched in his discussion cited above on the incorrectness of the name "Social-Democrat." The political difference between the first, or lower, and the higher phase of Communism will in time, no doubt, be tremendous; but it would be ridiculous to emphasise it now, under capitalism, and only, perhaps, some isolated anarchist could invest it with primary importance—that is, if there are still people amongst the anarchists who have learnt nothing from the Plekanoff-like conversion of the Kropotkins, the Graves, the Cornelisens, and other "leading lights" of anarchism to Social-Chauvinism or Anarcho-"Jusquaboutism" as one of the few anarchists still preserving their honour (Gay) has expressed it.

But the scientific difference between Socialism and Communism is clear. That which is generally called Socialism is termed by Marx the first or lower phase of Communist society. In so far as the means of production become public property, the word Communism is also applicable here, providing that we do not forget that it is not full Communism. The great importance of Marx's explanation is this: that here, too, he consistently applies materialist dialectics, the theory of evolution, looking upon Communism as something which evolves **out of** capitalism.

Instead of artificially elaborate and scholastic definitions and profitless disquisitions on the mean-

ings of words ("what Socialism is," "what Communism is"), Marx gives us an analysis of what may be called the stages in the economic growth of Communism.

In its first phase or first stage Communism **cannot** as yet be economically mature and quite free of all tradition and of all taint of capitalism. Hence we see the interesting phenomenon of the first phase of Communism retaining "the narrow horizon of bourgeois law." Bourgeois law, in respect of the distribution of articles of consumption, presupposes inevitably the capitalist State, for law is nothing without the organisation for **forcing** people to obey it. Consequently, for a certain time not only bourgeois law, but even the capitalist State may remain under Communism without the capitalist class.

This may appear to some a paradox, a piece of intellectual subtlety of which Marxism is often accused by people who would not put themselves out to study its extraordinarily profound teachings. But, as a matter of fact, the Old surviving in the New confronts us in life at every step in nature as well as in Society. It is not Marx's own sweet will which smuggled a scrap of bourgeois law into Communism; he simply indicated what is economically and politically inevitable in a society issuing from the **womb of capitalism**.

Democracy is of great importance in the working class struggle for freedom against the capitalists. But democracy is not a limit one may not overstep; it is merely one of the stages in the course of development from feudalism to capitalism, and from capitalism to Communism.

Democracy implies equality. The immense sig-

nificance of the struggle of the proletariat for equality and the power of attraction of such a battle-cry are obvious, if we but rightly interpret it as meaning the **annihilation of classes**. But the equality of democracy is **formal** equality—no more; and immediately after the attainment of the equality of all members of society in respect of the ownership of the means of production, that is, of equality of labour and equality of wages, there will inevitably arise before humanity the question of going further from equality which is formal to equality which is real, and of realising in life the formula "From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs." By what stages, by means of what practical measures humanity will proceed to this higher aim—this we do not and cannot know. But it is important that one should realise how infinitely mendacious is the usual capitalist representation of Socialism as something lifeless, petrified, fixed once for all. In reality, it is only with Socialism that there will commence a rapid, genuine, real mass advance, in which first the majority and then the **whole** of the population will take part—an advance in all domains of social and individual life.

Democracy is a form of the State—one of the varieties of the State, and, consequently, like every State, it stands as an organised, systematic application of force against mankind. That is its one aspect. But, on the other hand, it is the formal recognition of the equality of all citizens, the equal right of all to determine the structure and administration of the State. Out of this formal recognition there arises, in its turn, a stage in the development

of democracy, when it first rallies the proletariat as a revolutionary class against capitalism, and gives it an opportunity to crush, to break to atoms, to wipe off the face of the earth the capitalist government machine—even the republican variety: the standing army, police, and bureaucracy. Second, it enables it to substitute for all this a more democratic, but still a **State** machinery in the shape of armed masses of the working class, which then become transformed into a universal participation of the people in a militia.

Here “quantity passes into quality.” Such a degree of democracy carries with it the abandonment of the framework of capitalist society, and the beginning of its Socialist reconstruction. If **everyone** really takes part in the administration of the State, capitalism cannot retain its hold. As a matter of fact, capitalism, as it develops, itself prepares the ground for everyone to be able really to take part in the administration of the State.

We may class as part of this preparation of the ground the universal literacy of the population, already realised in most of the more progressive capitalist countries, then the education and discipline inculcated upon millions of workers by the huge, complex, and socialised apparatus of the post, railways, big factories, large-scale commerce, banking and so on, and so forth.

With such an **economic** groundwork it is quite possible, immediately, within twenty-four hours, to pass to the overthrow of the capitalists and bureaucrats, and to replace them, in the control of

production and distribution, in the business of apportioning labour and products, by the armed workers, or the people in arms. The question of control and book-keeping must not be confused with the question of the scientifically educated staff of engineers, agriculturists and so on. These gentlemen work to-day owing allegiance to the capitalists: they will work even better to-morrow, owing it to the armed workers. Book-keeping and control—these are the chief things necessary for the smooth and correct functioning of the **first phase** of Communist society. **All** the citizens are here transformed into the hired employees of the State, which then is the armed workers. **All** the citizens become the employees and workers of **one** national State “syndicate.” It simply resolves itself into a question of all working to an equal extent, of all carrying out regularly the measure of work apportioned to them, and of all receiving equal pay.

The book-keeping and control necessary for this have been simplified by capitalism to the utmost, till they have become the extraordinarily simple operations of watching, recording and issuing receipts, within the reach of anybody who can read and write and knows the first four arithmetical rules.\* When the majority of the citizens themselves begin everywhere to keep such accounts and

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\* When most of the functions of the State are reduced to this book-keeping and control by the workers themselves it ceases to be a “political” State. Then “the public functions are converted from political into simple administrative functions” (cf. above, chap. iv. par. 2, on the dispute of Engels with the anarchists).

maintain such control over the capitalists, now converted into employees, and over the intellectual gentry, who still retain capitalist habits, this control will, indeed, become universal, pervading, rational: it will be ubiquitous, and there will be no way of escaping it.

The whole of society will have become one office and one factory, with equal work and equal pay. But this "factory" discipline, which the proletariat will extend to the whole of society on the defeat of capitalism and the overthrow of the exploiters, is by no means our ideal, and is far from our final aim. It but a foothold as we press on to the radical cleansing of society from all the brutality and foulness of capitalist exploitation: we leave it behind as we move on.

When all, or be it even only the greater part of society, have learnt how to govern the State, have taken this business into their own hands, have established a control over the insignificant minority of capitalists, over the gentry with capitalist leanings, and workers thoroughly demoralised by capitalism—from this moment the need for any government begins to vanish. The more complete the democracy, the nearer the moment when it ceases to be necessary. The more democratic the "State" consisting of armed workers, which is "no longer really a State in the ordinary sense of the term," the more rapidly does every form of the State begin to decay. For when all have learnt to manage, and really do manage, socialised production, when all really do keep account and control of the idlers, gentlefolk, swindlers and such like "guardians of capitalist traditions," the es-

cape from such general registration and control will inevitably become so increasingly difficult, so much the exception, and will probably be accompanied by such swift and severe punishment (for the armed workers are very practical people, not sentimental intellectuals, and they will scarcely allow anyone to trifle with them), that very soon the **necessity** of observing the simple, fundamental rules of any kind of social life will become a habit. The door will then be wide open for the transition from the first phase of Communist society to its second higher phase, and along with it to the complete withering away of the State.



## CHAPTER VI.

### **THE VULGARISATION OF MARX BY THE OPPORTUNISTS.**

The question of the relation of the State to the Social Revolution, and of the Social Revolution to the State, like the question of revolution generally, occupied very little the best known theoreticians of the Second International (1889-1914). But the most characteristic thing in that process of the gradual growth of opportunism, which led to the collapse of the Second International in 1914, is this, that even when they actually came into contact with this question they did their best to evade it or else passed it by unnoticed.

It may, in general, be said that the evasiveness on this question of the relation of the proletarian revolution to the State, an evasiveness which was both convenient to the opportunists and bred and fed them—resulted in a distortion of Marxism and in its complete vulgarisation.

To characterise, if only in brief, this lamentable process, let us take the best-known theoreticians of Marxism: Plekhanoff and Kautsky.

#### **1. The Controversy between Plekhanoff and the Anarchists.**

Plekhanoff devoted a special pamphlet to the question of the relation of Socialism to anarchism

entitled "Anarchism and Socialism," published in German in 1894. He managed somehow to treat this question without touching on the most vital, controversial point, the essential point **politically**, in the struggle with the anarchists: the relation of the revolution to the State, and the question of the State in general. His pamphlet may be divided into two parts: one, historico-literary, containing valuable material for the history of the ideas of Stirner, Proudhon and others; the second, ignorant and narrow-minded, containing a clumsy disquisition on the theme "that an anarchist cannot be distinguished from a bandit," an amusing combination of subjects and most characteristic of the entire activity of Plekhanoff on the eve of revolution and during the revolutionary period in Russia. Indeed, in the years 1908 to 1917, Plekhanoff showed himself to be half doctrinaire and half philistine, walking politically in the wake of the bourgeoisie.

We saw how Marx and Engels, in their polemics against the anarchists, explained most thoroughly their views on the relation of the revolution to the State. Engels, when editing in 1891 Marx's "Criticism of the Gotha Programme," wrote that "we"—that is, Engels and Marx—"were then in the fiercest phase of our battle with Bakunin and his anarchists: hardly two years had then passed since the Hague Congress of the International" (the First). The anarchists had tried to claim the Paris Commune as their "own," as a confirmation of their teachings, thus showing that they had not in the least understood the lessons of the Commune or the analysis of those lessons by Marx. Anar-

chism has given nothing approaching a true solution of the concrete political problems: are we to **break** up the old State machine, and what shall we put in its place?

But to speak of "Anarchism and Socialism," leaving the whole question of the State out of account and taking no notice at all of the whole development of Marxism before and after the Commune—that meant an inevitable fall into the pit of opportunism. For that is just what opportunism wants—to keep these two questions in abeyance. To secure this is, in itself, a victory for opportunism.

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

Undoubtedly an immeasurably larger number of Kautsky's works have been translated into Russian than into any other language. It is not without some justification that German Social-Democrats make sometimes the joke that Kautsky is more read in Russia than in Germany—and we may say, in parentheses, that there is deeper historical significance in this joke than those who first made it suspected. For in 1905 the Russian workers manifested an extraordinarily strong, an unexampled demand for the best works, the best Social-Democratic literature in the world, and translations and editions of these works appeared in quantities unheard of in other countries. Thereby with one sweep the immense experience of the neighbouring, more advanced, country, was transplanted on to the almost virgin soil of our proletarian movement.

Besides his popularisation of Marxism, Kautsky

is particularly well known in our country by his controversies with the opportunists, with Bernstein at their head. But one fact is almost unknown, which, however, cannot be passed over if we are to apply ourselves to the task of investigating how it was that Kautsky rolled down into the disgraceful morass of confusion and defence of social chauvinism at the time of greatest crisis in 1914-15. This fact is that before he came forward against the best-known representatives of opportunism in France (Millerand, Jaurès), and Germany (Bernstein), Kautsky had shown very great vacillation.

The Russian Marxist journal, "The Dawn," which was published at Stuttgart in 1901-2, and advocated revolutionary proletarian doctrines, had to call Kautsky to account, denouncing his resolution at the Paris International Socialist Congress of 1900 as a "piece of elastic," because of its evasive, temporising and conciliatory attitude towards the opportunists. Letters have been published from Kautsky's pen in Germany revealing no less hesitancy before he took the field against Bernstein. Of immeasurably greater importance, however, is the circumstance that, in his very debates with the opportunists, in his formulation of the question and his method of treating it, we can observe now that we are investigating the **history** of his latest betrayal of Marxism, his systematic gravitation towards opportunism, and that precisely on this question of the State.

Let us take Kautsky's first big work against opportunism: "Bernstein and the Social-Democratic Programme." Kautsky refutes Bernstein in

detail: but the characteristic thing about it is this: Bernstein, in his famous, or infamous, "Socialist Fundamentals," accuses Marxism of Blanquism, an accusation since repeated thousands of times by the opportunists and liberals of Russia against the representatives of revolutionary Marxism, the Bolsheviks. In this connection Bernstein dwells particularly on Marx's "Civil War in France," and tries—as we saw, quite unsuccessfully—to identify Marx's view of the lessons of the Commune with that of Proudhon. He also pays particular attention to Marx's conclusion, emphasised by him in his preface of 1872 to the "Communist Manifesto" to the effect that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machine, and set it going for its own purposes." The dictum pleased Bernstein so much that he repeated it no less than three times in his book—interpreting it in the most distorted opportunist sense. We have seen what Marx means—that the working class must **shatter, break up, blow up (sprengen, explode, is the expression used by Engels)** the whole State machine; whereas according to Bernstein it would appear as though Marx by these words warned the working class **against** excessive revolutionary zeal when seizing power.

One cannot imagine a more vulgar and discreditable perversion of Marx's ideas. How, then, did Kautsky act in his detailed refutation of Bernsteinism?

He avoided the examination of the entire enormity of the perversion of Marxism on this point. He cited the above-quoted passage from Engels'

preface to Marx's "Civil War in France," saying that, according to Marx, the working class cannot **simply** take possession of the ready-made State machine, but, generally speaking, it **can** take possession of it—and that is all. . . . As for the fact that Bernstein attributed to Marx the direct opposite of the latter's real views, and that the real task of the proletarian revolution, as formulated by Marx ever since 1852, was the **shattering** of the State machine—not a word of all this is to be found in Kautsky. The result was that the most important distinction between Marxism and opportunism on the question of the proletarian revolution was glossed over! "The solution of the problem of the proletarian dictatorship," wrote Kautsky, "in opposition" to Bernstein, "we can safely leave to the future," (p. 172, German edition).

This is not a polemic **against** Bernstein, but really a concession to him, a surrender of the position to opportunism: for at present the opportunists ask nothing better than "safely to leave to the future" all the fundamental questions of the proletarian revolution.

Marx and Engels, from 1852 to 1891—for forty years—had taught the proletariat that it must **break** the State machine; but Kautsky, in 1899, confronted on this point with the complete betrayal of Marxism by opportunists, fraudulently substitutes the question as to the concrete forms of the destruction of the State machine in the place of the more general one about the necessity of destroying it, and then saves himself behind the screen of

the "indisputable"—and barren—truth, that concrete forms cannot be known in advance. . .

Between Marx and Kautsky, between their respective attitudes to the problem before the proletarian party as to how to prepare the working class for revolution, there is a wide abyss.

Let us take the next, more mature, work by Kautsky, also devoted, to a large extent, to a refutation of opportunist errors. This is his pamphlet on the "Social Revolution." The author chose here as his special theme the question of "the proletarian revolution" and the "proletarian regime." He gave us here much valuable matter; but just this question of the State was **ignored**. Throughout the pamphlet the author speaks of the conquest of the power of the State—and that is all. That is to say, the question is so formulated as to constitute a concession to opportunism, since the possibility of the conquest of power is admitted **without** the destruction of the State machine. The very thing which Marx, in 1872, had declared to be out of date in the programme of the "Communist Manifesto" is revived by Kautsky in 1902!

The pamphlet also contains a special paragraph on "the forms and weapons of the social revolution." Here he treats of the general political strike, of the question of civil war, and of "the instruments of force at the disposal of the modern large States such as the bureaucracy and the Army"; but of that which the Commune had already taught the workers, not a syllable. Evidently Engels had issued no idle warning, for the

German Social-Democrats particularly, against "superstitious reverence" for the State.

Kautsky propounds the matter thus: the victorious proletariat "will realise the democratic programme," and he formulates its clauses; but of what the year 1871 has taught us about the middle class democracy being replaced by a proletarian one—not a word. He disposes of the question by such plausible banalities as: "It is obvious that we shall not attain supremacy under the present order of things. Revolution itself presupposes a prolonged and far-reaching struggle which, as it proceeds, will change our political and social structure."

"Obvious" this undoubtedly is: as much as that horses eat oats, or the Volga flows into the Caspian Sea. The only pity is that he should use this empty and bombastic phrase "far-reaching" to slur over the essential question for the revolution proletariat as to **wherein** exactly lies this "far-reaching" nature of its revolution in respect of the State and democracy, as distinguished from the non-proletarian revolutions of the past.

Here is a most important point, by ignoring which Kautsky, in point of fact, gives over the whole position to the opportunists, whilst declaring war against them in awe-inspiring words, emphasising the importance of the "idea of revolution"—how much is this "idea" worth, if one is afraid to propagate it among the workers?—or "revolutionary idealism above all. . .," declaring that the English workers represent now little more than a lower middle class. . . .

“In a Socialist society [Kautsky writes] there can exist, side by side, the most varied forms of industrial undertakings—bureaucratic [??] trade unionist, co-operative, individual.” “There are, for instance, such enterprises as cannot do without a bureaucratic [??] organisation: such are the railways. Here democratic organisation might take the following form: The workers elect delegates, who form something in the nature of a parliament, and this parliament determines the conditions of work, and superintends the management of the bureaucratic apparatus. Other enterprises might be handed over to the workers’ unions, which again could be organised on a co-operative basis.”

This view is erroneous, and represents a step backward by comparison with the deductions of Marx and Engels in the 'seventies from the example of the Commune.

So far as this assumed necessity of “bureaucratic” organisation is concerned, there is no difference whatever between railways and any other form of big industry, any factory, great commercial undertaking or extensive capitalist farm. The conduct of all such enterprises requires the strictest discipline, the nicest accuracy in the apportionment of the work, under peril of damage to mechanism or product, or even the confusion and stoppage of the whole business. In such such enterprises the works will, of course, “choose delegates who will form something in the nature of a parliament.”

But herein lies the crux: this “something in

the nature of a parliament" will not be a parliament in the middle class sense. Kautsky's ideas do not go beyond the boundaries of middle class parliamentarism. "This something in the nature of a parliament" will not merely "determine the conditions of work, and superintend the management of the bureaucratic apparatus," as imagined by Kautsky. In a Socialist society, this "something in the nature of a parliament," consisting of workers' delegates, will determine the conditions of work, and superintend the management of the "apparatus"—but this apparatus will not be "bureaucratic." The workers, having conquered political power, will break up the old bureaucratic apparatus, they will shatter it from its foundations up, until not one stone is left standing upon another; and the new machine which they will fashion to take its place will be found out of these same workers and employees themselves. To guard against their transformation into bureaucrats, measures will be taken at once, which have been analysed in detail by Marx and Engels: (1) Not only will they be elected, but they will be subject to recall at any time. (2) They will receive payment no higher than that of ordinary workers. (3) There will be an immediate preparation for a state of things when **all** shall fulfil the functions of control and superintendence, so that **all** shall become "bureaucrats" for a time, and no one should, therefore, have the opportunity of becoming "bureaucrats" at all.

Kautsky has not reflected at all on Marx's words: "The Commune was not a parliamentary, but a working corporation, at one and the same

time making the laws and executing them." He has not in the least understood the difference between a middle class parliament combining democracy (not for the people) with bureaucracy (against the people), and proletarian democracy, which will take immediate steps to cut bureaucracy down at the roots, and which will be able to carry out measures to their logical conclusion, to the complete destruction of bureaucracy, and the final establishment of democracy for the people. Kautsky reveals here again the same old "superstitious respect" for the State, and "superstitious faith" in bureaucracy.

Let us pass to the last and best of Kautsky's works against the opportunists, his pamphlet, "The Road to Power," published in 1909. This pamphlet constitutes a considerable step in advance inasmuch as it does not treat of the revolutionary programme in general (as in the book of 1899 against Bernstein), nor of the problems of a social revolution independently of the time of its occurrence (as in the pamphlet "The Social Revolution," of 1902), but of the concrete conditions which compel us to recognise that the revolutionary era is **approaching**.

The author distinctly points out the intensification of class antagonisms in general and the growth of imperialism, which plays a particularly important part in this connection. After the "revolutionary period of 1789-1871" in Western Europe, an analogous period begins for the East in 1905. A world war is coming nearer with threatening rapidity. "The proletariat can no

longer talk of a premature revolution." "We have entered upon a revolutionary period." "The revolutionary era is beginning."

These declarations are perfectly clear. The pamphlet offers us a measure of comparison between the high promise of German Social-Democracy before the imperialist war and the depth of degradation to which it fell—carrying with it Kautsky himself—when the war broke out. "The present situation," Kautsky wrote in the pamphlet under review, "contains this danger, that we, the German Social-Democracy, may easily be considered more moderate than we are in reality." But when it came to the test, the German Social-Democratic Party turned out even more moderate and opportunist than it had seemed. It is the more characteristic that, side by side with such definite declarations regarding the revolutionary era already upon us, Kautsky, in the pamphlet which he says himself is devoted to precisely the "political revolution," again quite passes over the question of the State.

The sum total of these evasions of the subject, omissions and shufflings inevitably led to that complete surrender to opportunism of which we shall soon have to speak.

German Social-Democracy, as it were, in the person of Kautsky, declared: I still uphold revolutionary views (1899); I recognise, in particular, the inevitability of the social revolution of the proletariat (1902); I recognise that a new revolutionary era is upon us (1909); still I disavow that

which Marx said so early as 1852—if once the question is definitely raised as to the tasks confronting a proletarian revolution in respect to the State (1913).

It was precisely in this bald form that the question was put in the debate with Pannekoek.

### **3. The Debate between Kautsky and Pannekoek.**

Pannekoek came out against Kautsky as one of the representatives of the "Left Radical" group, which counted in its ranks Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Radek, and others, which, while upholding revolutionary tactics, was united in the conviction that Kautsky was passing over to a "central" position, wavering, without principle, between Marxism and opportunism. The correctness of this view has been fully proved by the war, when this "central" current of Kautskianism, wrongly called Marxist, revealed itself in all its pitiful helplessness.

In an article touching on the question of the State, entitled "Mass Action and Revolution," ("Neue Zeit," 1912, xxx., 2), Pannekoek characterised Kautsky's position as an attitude of "passive radicalism," as "a theory of inactive expectancy." "Kautsky does not want to see the process of revolution" (p. 616). In treating this subject, Pannekoek approached the problem which interests us, of the tasks of a proletarian revolution in relation to the State.

"The struggle of the proletariat [he wrote] is not merely a struggle against the capitalist class

to control the State, but a struggle against **the State** . . . The essence of a proletarian revolution is the destruction of the organised forces of the State, and their forcible suppression ("ablösung") by the organised forces of the proletariat. . . . Until the entire State organisation is destroyed, the struggle will not end. That is its aim. The organisation of the majority demonstrates its superiority by destroying the organised force of the ruling minority" (p. 548).

Pannekoek did not expound his ideas very skilfully, but the ideas are sufficiently clear; and it is interesting to note how Kautsky combatted them. "Up till now," he wrote, 'the difference between Social-Democrats and anarchists has consisted in this: the first desired to conquer the State authority, while the anarchists' aim was to destroy it: Pannekoek wants to do both'" (p. 724). If Pannekoek's exposition lacks precision and concreteness—not to speak of other defects which have no bearing on the present subject—Kautsky seized on just that one point in Pannekoek's article which is the essence of the whole matter; and **on this fundamental question of principle** Kautsky forsakes the Marxian position entirely and surrenders himself without reserve to the opportunists. His definition of the difference between Social-Democrats and anarchists is absolutely wrong; and Marxism is finally vulgarised and distorted.

This is what the difference between the Marxists and anarchists is: (1) The Marxists aim at

the complete destruction of the State, but recognise that this aim is only attainable after the extinction of classes by a Socialist revolution as the result of the establishment of Socialism, leading to the withering away of the State. The anarchists, on the other hand, want the complete destruction of the State within twenty-four hours, and do not understand the conditions under which alone such a destruction can be carried out.

(2) The Marxists recognise that when once the proletariat has won political power it must utterly break up the old machinery of the State, and substitute for it a new machinery of organised armed workers, after the type of the Commune. Anarchists on the other hand, while advocating the destruction of the State, have no clear idea as to **what** the proletariat will put in its place and how it will use its revolutionary power; they even deny that the revolutionary proletariat has any necessity to make use of the State and to establish its revolutionary dictatorship. (3) Marxists insist upon making use of the modern State as a means of preparing the workers for revolution; anarchists reject all this.

In this controversy it is Pannekoek, not Kautsky who represents Marxism, seeing that it was Marx himself who taught that the mere transference of the State machine into new hands is no conquest of power at all: the proletariat must smash up this apparatus and replace it by something altogether new. Kautsky rats from Marxism to the opportunists, because, under his hands, this destruction of the State, which is utterly repugnant to the opportunists, completely disappears. Nothing remains but an opportunist loophole in his

interpretation of "conquest" as the gaining of a majority.

In order to cover up his distortion of Marxism, Kautsky radiates erudition, offering us "quotations" from Marx himself. Marx wrote in 1850 of the necessity of "a decisive centralisation of force in the hands of the State"; and Kautsky triumphantly asks: Does Pannekoek want to destroy 'Centralism'? This is nothing but a conjuring trick. It is the same sort of thing as Bernstein's identification of the views of Marx and Proudhon on Federation versus Centralism.

Kautsky's "quotation" is neither here nor there. The new form of the State admits Centralism as much as the old; if the workers voluntarily unify their armed forces, this will be centralism: but it will be based on the complete destruction of centralised government apparatus—the army, police, bureaucracy. Kautsky's behaviour is certainly not honest here; the well-known dissertations of Marx and Engels on the Commune are ignored in favour of a quotation which has no relevance at all.

"Perhaps Pannekoek wants to destroy the State functions of the officials? [Kautsky continues]. But we cannot do without officials even in our party and trade union organisations, much less in the State administration. For State officials our programme demands, not annihilation, but election by the people. It is not a question as to the precise form which the administrative apparatus will take in the future State, but as to whether our political struggle destroys

(literally : dissolves, "auflöst") the State **before we have conquered it** [Kautsky's black type]. What Ministry with its officials, could be destroyed? [Here follows an enumeration of the Ministries of Education, Justice, Finance and War]. No, not one of the present Ministries will be abolished in our political struggles against the Government . . . I repeat, to avoid misunderstanding, it is not here a question as to what form a victorious Social-Democracy will give to the 'future State,' but as to how our opposition changes the present State" (p. 725).

This is an obvious trick: **Revolution** was the question Pannekoek raised. Both the title of his article and the passages quoted above clearly enough show that. But Kautsky shifts and changes the point of view from one of revolution to one of opportunism, when he jumps over to the question of "opposition." According to him, we must for the present confine ourselves to opposition; **after** we have won power we can have a talk about other things. **The revolution has vanished**: that is precisely what the opportunists wanted.

Opposition and general political struggle is beside the point; we are concerned with the **revolution**. And revolution is when the administrative apparatus and the whole machinery of government are destroyed, and a new proletarian power of the armed workers has filled their place.

Kautsky reveals a "superstitious respect" for the Ministries: but why cannot they be replaced, say by committees of specialists working under

sovereign all-powerful councils of workers' and soldiers' delegates? The essence of the matter is not at all whether the Ministries shall remain or be turned into committees of specialists or any other kind of institution; all this is quite unimportant. The main thing is, whether we are still to have the old machinery of government, saturated through and through with routine and inertia, and connected by thousands of threads with the capitalist class; or shall it be broken up and replaced by something altogether new? The essence of revolution is not that a new class shall govern by means of the old governmental machinery, but that it shall smash up this machinery and govern by means of a new machine.

This is a fundamental idea of Marxism, which Kautsky either conceals or has not understood at all. This question of his about officials makes it plain how little he has understood the lessons of the Commune or the teachings of Marx. "We cannot do without officials even in our party and trade union organisation"—we cannot do without officials under "capitalism," the domination of the middle class. The proletariat is oppressed, the labouring masses are enslaved by capitalism; democracy is narrowed, crushed, curtailed, mutilated by capitalism, wage-slavery, the poverty and misery of the masses. It is precisely the conditions of life under capitalism which are the cause, and there is no other, why the officials of our political parties and trade unions are corrupt—or, rather, have the tendency to become corrupt, to become bureaucrats, that is, privileged persons detached from the masses, **and standing above it.**

That is just the essence of bureaucracy, and until the capitalists have been expropriated and the bourgeoisie overthrown, nothing can prevent even workers' officials from being to some extent "bureaucratised."

From what Kautsky says, one might think that a Socialism with elected employees would still tolerate bureaucrats and bureaucracy. That is the grand falsehood. Marx took the example of the Commune to show that under Socialism the workers' employees will cease to be "bureaucrats" and "officials"—especially when election is supplemented by the right of immediate recall; still more, when their pay is brought down to the level of the pay of the average worker; and still more again, when parliamentary institutions are replaced by "working bodies which both make and apply the laws."

All Kautsky's arguments against Pannekoek, and particularly his triumphant point that we cannot do without officials even in our parties and trade unions, show nothing so much as that Kautsky has adopted the old "arguments" of Bernstein against Marxism itself. Bernstein's renegade book, "Socialist Fundamentals," is an attack on "primitive" democracy—"doctrinaire democracy" as he calls it—on imperative mandates, functionaries who receive no remuneration, impotent central representative bodies, and so on. British trade union experience, as interpreted by the Webbs, is Bernstein's proof of how untenable "primitive democracy" is. Seventy odd years of development "in absolute freedom" (p. 137, Ger-

man edition), have, forsooth, convinced the trade unions that primitive democracy is useless, and led them to replace it by ordinary parliamentarism combined with bureaucracy.

But the "absolute freedom" in which the trade unions developed was in reality **complete capitalist enslavement** under which—what more natural?—"one cannot do without" concessions to the evil power of force and falsehood by which the "lower" orders are excluded from the affairs of the "higher" administration.

Under Socialism much of the primitive democracy will inevitably be revived. For the first time in the history of civilised nations, the **mass** of the population will rise, beyond voting and elections, to a direct control of the every-day administration of the affairs of the nation. Under Socialism, **all** will take a turn in management, and will soon become accustomed to the idea of no managers at all.

Marx's wonderful critico-analytical mind perceived that the practical measures of the Commune contained that revolutionary departure of which the opportunists are afraid, and which they do not want to recognise, out of cowardice, out of reluctance to break irrevocably with the bourgeoisie; and which the anarchists do not want to perceive either through haste or a general want of comprehension of the conditions of great social transformations. "One must not even think of such a thing as the break up of the old machinery of government, for how shall we do without ministries and without officials?"—thus argues the

opportunist, saturated through and through with philistinism, and in reality not merely bereft of faith in revolution, in the creative power of revolution, but actually in deadly fear of it (like our Social-revolutionaries and Mensheviks). "One must **only** think of the destruction of the old machinery of government: never mind searching for concrete lessons in earlier proletarian revolutionary movements, or analysing **by what and how** to replace what has been destroyed"—thus argues the anarchist: that is, the best of the anarchists, not those who followed, with Kropotkin and Co., in the train of the bourgeoisie; and consequently, the tactics of the anarchist become the tactics of despair instead of a revolutionary grappling with concrete problems—ruthless, courageous and, at the same time, cognisant of the conditions under which the masses progress.

Marx teaches us to avoid both classes of error. He teaches us dauntless courage to destroy the old machinery of government, and at the same time shows us how to put the question concretely: The Commune was able, within a few weeks, to **start** the building of a new proletarian State machinery by introducing the measures indicated above to secure a wider democracy, in which bureaucracy should be uprooted. Let us learn revolutionary courage from the Communards. In their practical measures we can see **an indication** of practical, everyday and immediately possible measures: it is along such a path that we shall arrive at the complete destruction of bureaucracy.

It can be destroyed. When Socialism has

shortened the working day, raised the masses to a new life, created such conditions for the majority of the population as to enable everybody, **without exception**, to perform the functions of government, then every form of the State will completely wither away.

“To destroy the State [Kautsky wrote] can never be the object of a general strike, but only to wring concessions from the government on some particular question, or to replace a hostile government by one willing to meet the proletariat half way. . . . But never, under no conditions, can it [a proletarian victory over a hostile government] lead to the destruction of the State. It can lead only to a certain re-arrangement (“Verschiebung”) of forces **within the State** . . . . The aim of our political struggle, then remains as before, the conquest of power within the State by the gaining of a majority in Parliament, and the conversion of Parliament into the master of the government” (pp. 726, 727, 732).

This is nothing but the most vulgar opportunism: a repudiation of revolution in deeds, whilst upholding it in words. Kautsky’s imagination goes no further than a ‘government willing to meet the proletariat half way’—further backwards towards philistinism than we were in 1847, when the “Communist Manifesto” proclaimed “the organisation of the proletariat as the ruling class.” Kautsky will have to realise his beloved “unity” with the Scheidemanns, Plekhanoffs and Vanderfeldes: all the lot will agree to fight for a government “meeting the proletariat half way.”

But we shall go forward to a break with these traitors to Socialism. We are working for a complete destruction of the old machinery of government, in such a way that the armed workers themselves **shall be the government**, which will be a very different thing. Kautsky may enjoy the pleasant company of the Legiens, Davids, Plekhanoffs, Potressoffs, Tseretellis and Tchernoffs, who are quite willing to work for the "re-arrangement of forces within the State . . . the gaining of a majority in Parliament, and the supremacy of Parliament over the government." A most worthy object, wholly acceptable to the opportunists, in which everything remains within the framework of a middle class parliamentary republic.

We, however, shall go forward to a break with the opportunists. And the whole of the class conscious proletariat will be with us—not for a "re-arrangement of forces," **but for the overthrow of the capitalist class**, the **destruction** of bourgeois parliamentarism, the building up of a democratic republic after the type of the Commune or a republic of Soviets (Councils) of workers' and soldiers' deputies—the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

. . . . .

Further to the "right" of Kautsky there are, in international Socialism, such tendencies as the "Socialist Monthly" ("Sozialistische Monatshefte") in Germany (Legien, David, Kolb and many others, including the Scandinavians, Staun-

ing and Branting); the followers of Jaurès and Vandervelde in France and Belgium; Turati, Treves and other representatives of the right-wing of the Italian party; the Fabians and "Independents" (the Independent Labour Party, dependent, as a matter of fact, always on the Liberals) in England; and similar sections. All these gentry, while playing a great, very often a predominant role, in parliamentary work and in the journalism of the party, decisively reject the dictatorship of the proletariat and carry out a policy of unconcealed opportunism. In the eyes of these gentry, the dictatorship of the proletariat "contradicts" democracy! There is really nothing seriously to distinguish them from lower middle class democrats.

Taking these circumstances into consideration, we have a right to conclude that the Second International, in the persons of the overwhelming majority of its official representatives, has completely sunk down into opportunism. The experience of the Commune has been not only forgotten, but distorted. So far from making vivid in the workers' minds the near approach of the time when they are to smash the old machinery of the State and substitute a new one, thereby making their political domination the foundation for a Socialist reconstruction of society, they have actually taught the workers the direct opposite of this, and represented the "conquest of power" in a way that left thousands of loopholes to opportunism.

It was a fateful thing to have confused and hushed up the question of the relation of a proletarian revolution to the State at a time when the

States, with their swollen military apparatus in a whirlwind of Imperialist rivalry, had become monstrous beasts devouring the lives of millions of peoples, in order to decide whether England or Germany—this or that group of financial capitalists—should dominate the world.

END OF PART I.



## AFTERWORD.

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This little book was written in August and September, 1917. I had already drawn up the plan for the next, the seventh chapter, on the experiences of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917. But, apart from the title, I had not succeeded in writing a single line of the chapter, being prevented therefrom by a political crisis—the eve of the November Revolution of 1917. Such a hindrance can only be welcomed. However, this final part of the book devoted to the lessons of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, will probably have to be put off for a long time. It is more pleasant and more useful to live through the experience of a revolution than to write about it.

—THE AUTHOR.

Petrograd,

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**THE STATE AND REVOLUTION**

**V. I. ULIANOV (N. Lenin)**