Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) was organiser of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia and founding leader of the Soviet Union. State and Revolution, a criticism of counter-revolutionary trends within marxism, is among his most important and widely-read works.
democratic state as the limit which should not be overstepped; they battered their foreheads praying before this “model”, and denounced as anarchism every desire to break these forms.

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

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

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

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

We shall see further on that the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, in different circumstances and under different conditions, continue the work of the Commune and confirm Marx's brilliant historical analysis.
"Breaking state power", which as a "parasitic excrescence"; its "amputation", its "smashing"; "state power, now become superfluous" – these are the expressions Marx used in regard to the state when appraising and analyzing the experience of the Commune.

All this was written a little less than half a century ago; and now one has to engage in excavations, as it were, in order to bring the conclusions from the observation of the last great revolution which Marx lived through, when all previous political forms were expressions in the knowledge of the class contradictions of the bourgeois political form. If the utopians busied themselves with "discovering" political forms, the anarchists dismissed the question of political forms, the opportunists of present-day Social-Democracy propagated the possibility of the "communal constitution" under which the socialist transformation of society was to take place, while Marx's conclusions about the Commune were forgotten just when the time for the next great proletarian revolution has arrived.

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

Except on this last condition, the "communal constitution" would have been an impossibility and a delusion...

The state, when appraising and analyzing the experience of the Commune, was the state which appeared in the expression "state power" in contrast to its superstitious role. The expressions "amputation", "smashing", "state power" now became "amputation", "state power", "smashing", "state power", now became "state power", which as a "parasitic excrescence", is...
5. Abolition of the Parasite State

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

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

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

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

* The Girondists – a political grouping during the French bourgeois revolution of the late eighteenth century, expressed the interests of the moderate bourgeoisie. They wavered between revolution and counter-revolution, and made deals with the monarchy.
that be the most consistent democratic centralism and, moreover, proletarian centralism? Bernstein simply cannot conceive of the possibility of voluntary centralism, of the voluntary fusion of the proletarian communes, for the sole purpose of destroying bourgeois rule and the bourgeois state machine. Like all philistines, Bernstein pictures centralism as something which can be imposed and maintained solely from above, and solely by the bureaucratic and military clique, something which can be imposed and maintained solely from above, and solely by the bureaucratic and military clique, something which can be imposed and maintained solely from above, and solely by the bureaucratic and military clique, something which can be imposed and maintained solely from above, and solely by the bureaucratic and military clique.

As though foreseeing that his views might be distorted, Marx expressed emphasis that the charge that the Commune had wanted to destroy national unity, to abolish the central authority, was a deliberate fraud. Marx expressly emphasized that the charge that the Commune had wanted to destroy national unity, to abolish the central authority, was a deliberate fraud. Marx expressly emphasized that the charge that the Commune had wanted to destroy national unity, to abolish the central authority, was a deliberate fraud. Marx expressly emphasized that the charge that the Commune had wanted to destroy national unity, to abolish the central authority, was a deliberate fraud. Marx expressly emphasized that the charge that the Commune had wanted to destroy national unity, to abolish the central authority, was a deliberate fraud. Marx expressly emphasized that the charge that the Commune had wanted to destroy national unity, to abolish the central authority, was a deliberate fraud. Marx expressly emphasized that the charge that the Commune had wanted to destroy national unity, to abolish the central authority, was a deliberate fraud. Marx expressly emphasized that the charge that the Commune had wanted to destroy national unity, to abolish the central authority, was a deliberate fraud. Marx expressly emphasized that the charge that the Commune had wanted to destroy national unity, to abolish the central authority, was a deliberate fraud.

But there are none so deaf as those who will not hear. And the very thing the opportunists of present-day Social-Democracy do not want to hear about is the destruction of state power, the amputation of the parasitic excrescence.
Experience of the Paris Commune

Written: August - September, 1917
First published: 1918

the extreme vulgarization of the views on the difference between Marxism and anarchism, which is characteristic of both the Kautskyites and the opportunists, and which we shall discuss again later.

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

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

Marx disagreed both with Proudhon and Bakunin precisely on the question of federalism (not to mention the dictatorship of the proletariat). Federalism as a principle follows logically from the petty-bourgeois views of anarchism. Marx was a centralist. There is no departure whatever from centralism in his observations just quoted. Only those who are imbued with the philistine "superstitious belief" in the state can mistake the destruction of the bourgeois state machine for the destruction of centralism!

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

Complete transformation [Umwandlung] of their organization as is visualized by Marx and Proudhon (the formation of a National Assembly from delegates of the provincial or district assemblies, which, in their turn, would consist of delegates from the communes), so that consequently the previous mode of national representation would disappear.” (Bernstein, *Premises*, German edition, 1899, pp. 134 and 136)

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

The opportunist has so much fogotten how to think in a revolutionary way and to dwell on revolution that he attributes “federalism” to Marx, whom he confuses with the founder of anarchism, Proudhon. As for Kautsky and Plekhanov, who claim to be orthodox Marxists and defenders of the theory of revolutionary Marxism, they are silent on this point. This is one of the roots of the fogotten. The opportunist has forgotten that Marx, when he speaks of the smashing of the bourgeois state machine, visualized by Marx and Proukhin (the formation of a National Assembly) as the destruction of state power, a parasitic excrescence, with Proudhon’s federalism is positively monstrous! But it is no accident, for it never occurs to the opportunist that Marx does not speak here at all about federalism as opposed to centralism, but about smashing the old, bourgeois state machine, which exists in all bourgeois countries.

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suppressed, as had been deliberately mis-stated, but were to be transferred to communal, i.e., strictly responsible, officials.

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

The extent to which the opportunists of present-day Social-Democracy have failed – perhaps it would be more true to say, have refused – to understand these observations of Marx is best shown by that book of Herostratean fame of the renegade Bernstein, *The Premises of Socialism and the Tasks of the Social-Democrats*. It is in connection with the above passage from Marx that Bernstein wrote that "as far as its political content", this programme "displays, in all its essential features, the greatest similarity to the federalism of Proudhon.... In spite of all the other points of difference between Marx and the 'petty-bourgeois' Proudhon [Bernstein places the word "petty-bourgeois" in inverted commas, to make it sound ironical] on these points, their lines of reasoning run as close as could be." Of course, Bernstein continues, the importance of the municipalities is growing, but "it seems doubtful to me whether the first job of democracy would be such a dissolution [Auflosung] of the modern states and such a

* Civil War in France, op. cit., Chapter III, paragraph 11.
Lenin wrote The State and Revolution in August and September 1917, when he was in hiding from persecution of the Provisional Government. The need for such a theoretical work as this was mentioned by Lenin in a note to A. M. Kollontai on February 17 (N.S.), 1917, he said that he had almost got ready material on that question.

Lenin had collected quotations from the works of Marx and Engels, and extracts from the books by Kautsky, Pannekoek and Bernstein. These are a number of remarks, notes and formulae. There are also a number of Kautsky's phrases and formulae. These are collected here, along with those from Marx and Engels. All the quotations and notes are collected here. It is bound in a blue cover. The original manuscript, which was written in a small blue-covered notebook headed "Marxism on the State", is now lost.

When Lenin left Switzerland for Russia in April 1917, he feared arrest by the Provisional Government and left the manuscript of "Marxism on the State" behind – as it would have been destroyed had he been caught. When in hiding after the July events, Lenin wrote in a note:

"Entre nous, if I am knocked off, I ask you to publish my notebook 'Marxism on the State' (it got held up in Stockholm). It is bound in a blue cover. All the quotations from Marx and Engels are collected there, also those from Kautsky against Pannekoek. There are a number of remarks, notes and formulae. It is bound in a blue cover. All the quotations and notes are collected here. It is bound in a blue cover."

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When Lenin received his notebook from Stockholm, he used the material he had collected as a basis for his book The State and Revolution.

According to Lenin's plan, The State and Revolution was to have consisted of seven chapters, but he did not write the seventh, "The Experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917", and only a detailed plan has remained. In a note to the publisher Lenin wrote that if he "was too slow in competing this, the seventh chapter, or should it turn out to be too bulky, the first six chapters should be published separately as Book One."

Originally, the name F.F. Ivanovsky is shown on the first page of the notebook manuscript as that of the author. Lenin intended to publish the book under that pseudonym, otherwise the Provisional Government would have confiscated it for his name alone. The book, however, was not printed until 1918, when there was no longer any need for the pseudonym. The second edition appeared in 1919; in this revision Lenin added to Chapter II a new section "The Presentation of the Question by Marx in 1852".

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

A witty German Social-Democrat of the seventies of the last century called the postal service an example of the socialist economic system. This is very true. At the present the postal service is a business organized on the lines of state-capitalist monopoly. Imperialism is gradually transforming all trusts into organizations of a similar type, in which, standing over the "common" people, who are overworked and starved, one has the same bourgeois bureaucracy. But the mechanism of social management is here already to hand. Once we have overthrown the capitalists, crushed the resistance of these exploiters with the iron hand of the armed workers, and smashed the bureaucratic machinery of the modern state, we shall have a splendidly-equipped mechanism, freed from the "parasite", a mechanism which can very well be set going by the united workers themselves,
The subordination, however, must be in the armed vanguard of all people.

The whole of society, with which will the "workers', "foremen and accountants", in the name of the proletariat, the Communist, the direct and immediate task of the revolutionary proletariat, this is to make people, in the experience of the Commune, the direct and immediate task of the revolution, is a question. But in order the old bureaucratic administration is abolished, the bureaucracy is to put an end to all subordination, with all subordination. These anarchist dreams, based upon innopression of the classes of the proletariat, serve only to postpone the socialist revolution until people are more conscious of their own freeness and independence, are fully alien to Marxism, and, as a matter of fact, serve only to postpone the socialist revolution until people are more conscious of their own freeness and independence.

We are not utopians; we do not dream of dispensing with administration.
Preface to the First Edition

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

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

The elements of opportunism that accumulated over the decades of comparatively peaceful development have given rise to the trend of social-chauvinism which dominated the official socialist parties throughout the world. This trend - socialism in words and chauvinism in deeds (Plekhanov, Potresov, Breshkovskaya, Rubanovich, and, in a slightly veiled form, Tsereteli, Chernov and Co. in Russia; Scheidemann. Legien, David and others in Germany; Renaudel, Guesde and Vandervelde in France and Belgium; Hyndman and the Fabians* in England, etc., etc.) - is tape to "gladden the hearts" of the capitalists – that is the essence of the “honest” coalition.

The Commune substitutes for the venal and rotten parliamentarism of bourgeois society institutions in which freedom of opinion and discussion does not degenerate into deception, for the parliamentarians themselves have to work, have to execute their own laws, have themselves to test the results achieved in reality, and to account directly to their constituents. Representative institutions remain, but there is no parliamentarism here as a special system, as the division of labor between the legislative and the executive, as a privileged position for the deputies. We cannot imagine democracy, even proletarian democracy, without representative institutions, but we can and must imagine democracy without parliamentarism, if criticism of bourgeois society is not mere words for us, if the desire to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie is our earnest and sincere desire, and not a mere “election” cry for catching workers' votes, as it is with the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, and also the Scheidemanns and Legiens, the Smblats and Vanderveldes.

It is extremely instructive to note that, in speaking of the function of those officials who are necessary for the Commune and for proletarian democracy, Marx compares them to the proletarian class struggle and for the socialist revolution. They contended that the transition from capitalism to socialism could only be effected through minor social reforms, that is, gradual changes. Lenin described Fabian ideas as

* Fabians – members of the Fabian Society, a British reformist organisation founded in 1884. It grouped mostly bourgeois intellectuals – scholars, writers, politicians – including Sydney and Beatrice Webb, Ramsay MacDonald and Bernard Shaw. The Fabians denied the necessity for the proletarian class struggle and for the socialist revolution. They contended that the transition from capitalism to socialism could only be effected through minor social reforms, that is, gradual changes. Lenin described Fabian ideas as
... conspicuous for the base, servile adaptation of the "leaders of socialism" to the interests not only of "their" national bourgeoisie, but of "their" state, for the majority of the so-called Great Powers have long been exploiting and enslaving a whole number of small and weak nations. And the imperialist war is a war for the division and redivision of this kind of booty. The struggle to free the working people from the influence of the bourgeoisie in general, and of the imperialist bourgeoisie in particular, is impossible without a struggle against opportunist prejudices concerning the "state".

First of all we examine the theory of Marx and Engels of the state, and dwell in particular detail on those aspects of this theory which are ignored or have been distorted by the opportunists. Then we deal specially with the one who is chiefly responsible for these distortions, Karl Kautsky, the best-known leader of the Second International (1889-1914), which has met with such miserable bankruptcy in the present war. Lastly, we sum up the main results of the experience of the Russian revolutions of 1905 and particularly of 1917.

[Preface to the First Edition]


In 1900 the Fabian Society became part of the British Labour Party. "Fabian socialism" is a source of the Labour Party's ideology. During the First World War the Fabians took a social-chauvinist stand. For Lenin's characterisation of Fabian principles, see Lenin's article "British Pacifism and the British Dislike of Theory" (Collected Works, 4th ed., Vol. 21, pp. 260-65).
Preface to the Second Edition

August 1917) completing the first stage of its development; but this revolution as a whole can only be understood as a link in a chain of socialist proletarian revolutions being caused by the imperialist war. The question of the relation of the socialist proletarian revolution to the state, therefore, is acquiring not only practical political importance, but also the significance of a most urgent problem of the day, the problem of explaining to the masses what they will have to do before long to free themselves from capitalist tyranny.

The Author

August 1917

The present, second edition is published virtually unaltered, except that section 3 had been added to Chapter II.

The Author

Moscow
December 17, 1918

Experience of the Paris Commune

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ruthlessly for its inability to make use even of the “pigsty” of bourgeois parliamentarism, especially when the situation was obviously not revolutionary; but at the same time he knew how to subject parliamentarism to genuinely revolutionary proletarian criticism.

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

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

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

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

"A working, not a parliamentary body" – this is a blow straight from the shoulder at the present-day parliamentarian country, from America to Switzerland, from France to Britain, Norway and so forth – in these countries the real business of “state” is
Chapter I

Class Society and the State

Class Society and the State

1. The State: A Product of Class Antagonisms

2. Abolition of Parliamentarism

3. Abolition of Parliamentarism

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

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. We have to translate the quotations from the German originals, as the Russian translations, while very numerous, are for the most part either incomplete or very unsatisfactory.

Summing up his historical analysis, Engels says:

“...The state is, therefore, by no means a power forced on society from without; just as little is it ‘the reality of the ethical idea’, ‘the image and reality of reason’, as Hegel maintains. Rather, it is a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel. But in order that these antagonisms, these classes with conflicting economic interests, might not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, it became necessary to have a power,

All officials, without exception, elected and subject to recall at any time, their salaries reduced to the level of ordinary "workmen's wages" – these simple and "self-evident" democratic measures, while completely uniting the interests of the workers and the majority of the peasants, at the same time serve as a bridge leading from capitalism to socialism. These measures concern the reorganization of the state, the purely political reorganization of society; but, of course, they acquire their full meaning and significance only in connection with the "expropriation of the expropriators" either bring accomplished or in preparation, i.e., with the transformation of capitalist private ownership of the means of production into social ownership.

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

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

* Ibid., paragraph 12.
seemingly standing above society, that would alleviate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of ‘order’; and this power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it, and alienating itself more and more from it, is the state.” (Pp.177-78, sixth German edition)*

This expresses with perfect clarity the basic idea of Marxism with regard to the historical role and the meaning of the state. The state is a product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms. The state only exists where there are class antagonisms and a class struggle, “controlled” by the general force of the majority of the people – the “class antagonisms” of the capitalists and the “class struggle” of the workers and the peasants. And it is on this particularly striking point, perhaps the most important as far as the problem of the state is concerned, that the ideas of Marx have been most completely ignored! In popular commentaries, the number of which is legion, this is not mentioned. The thing done is to keep silent about it as if it were a piece of old-fashioned “naive” nonsense, just as Christians, after their religion had been given the status of state religion, “forgot” the “naive” character of primitive Christianity with its democratic revolutionary spirit.

The reduction in the remuneration of high state officials seems “simply” a demand of naive, primitive democracy. One of the “founders” of modern opportunism, the ex-Social-Democrat Eduard Bernstein, has more than once repeated the vulgar bourgeois jeers at “primitive” democracy. Like all opportunists, and like the present Kautskyites, he did not understand at all that, first of all, the transition from capitalism to socialism is impossible without a certain “reversion” to “primitive” democracy (for how else can the majority, and then the whole population, get hold of all the functions of the old “state power” and discharge them?); and, secondly, “primitive democracy” based on capitalism and capitalist culture is not the same as primitive democracy in a socialist society and the State and Revolution
moderating the conflict between classes. In the opinion of the petty-bourgeois politicians, however, order means the reconciliation of classes, and not the oppression of one class by another; to alleviate the conflict means reconciling classes and not depriving the oppressed classes of definite means and methods of struggle to overthrow the oppressors.

For instance, when, in the revolution of 1917, the question of the significance and role of the state arose in all its magnitude as a practical question demanding immediate action, and, moreover, action on a mass scale, all the Social-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks descended at once to the petty-bourgeois theory that the “state” “reconciles” classes. Innumerable resolutions and articles by politicians of both these parties are thoroughly saturated with this petty-bourgeois and philistine “reconciliation” theory. That the state is an organ of the rule of a definite class which cannot be reconciled with its antipode (the class opposite to it) is something the petty-bourgeois democrats will never be able to understand. Their attitude to the state is one of the most striking manifestations of the fact that our Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks are not socialists at all (a point that we Bolsheviks have always maintained), but petty-bourgeois democrats using near-socialist phraseology.

On the other hand, the “Kautskyite” distortion of Marxism is far more subtle. “Theoretically”, it is not denied that the state is an organ of class rule, or that class antagonisms are irreconcilable. But what is overlooked or glossed over is this: if the state is the product of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms, if it is a power standing above society and “alienating, itself more and more from it”, it is clear that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution, but also without the destruction of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class and which is the embodiment of this

as a matter of fact this “only” signifies a gigantic replacement of certain institutions by other institutions of a fundamentally different type. This is exactly a case of "quantity being transformed into quality": democracy, introduced as fully and consistently as is at all conceivable, is transformed from bourgeois into proletarian democracy; from the state (= a special force for the suppression of a particular class) into something which is no longer the state proper.

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

In this connection, the following measures of the Commune, emphasized by Marx, are particularly noteworthy: the abolition of all representation allowances, and of all monetary privileges to officials, the reduction of the remuneration of all servants of the state to the level of "workmen's wages". This shows more clearly than anything else the turn from bourgeois to proletarian democracy, from the democracy of the oppressors to that of the oppressed classes, from the state as a "special force" for the suppression of a particular class to the suppression of the
As we shall see later, Marx very explicitly drew this theoretically self-evident conclusion on the strength of a concrete historical analysis of the tasks of the revolution. And – as we shall show in detail further on – it is this conclusion which Kautsky has "forgotten" and distorted.

Engels continues:

"As distinct from the old gentile order, the state, first, divides its subjects according to territory; the division seems "natural" to us, but it costs a prolonged struggle against the old organisation according to generations or tribes. The division of territory was brought about by the new economic relations of the class society. The state is a self-governing association of society – the primitive communal system, or the first socio-economic formation in history. The tribal commune was a community of blood relatives linked by economic and social ties. The tribal system went through the matriarchal and the patriarchal periods. The patriarchate culminated in primitive society becoming a class society and in the rise of the state. Relations of production under the primitive communal system were based on social ownership of the means of production and equalitarian distribution of all products. This corresponded in the main to the low level of the productive forces and to their character at the time."

The second distinguishing feature is the establishment of a public power which no longer directly coincides with the interests of a single agent or the old organisation according to generations or tribes. The division seems "natural" to us, but it costs a prolonged struggle against the old organisation, and the interests of the single agent or the old organisation according to generations or tribes, are distinct from the old gentile order.

Enfeebled commune:

Prisons, etc.

2. Special Bodies of Armed Men.

For gotten and disdained, the Armies of the Ancien Régime, the Standing Army, were the instrument of the power of the old government. The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at any time. The majority of its members were naturally working men, and it was the agents of the new government, the Commune, that carried out the demand now figures in the programme of every party calling itself socialist: the need of a public power which no longer directly coincides with the interests of a single agent or the old organisation according to generations or tribes. The division seems "natural" to us, but it costs a prolonged struggle against the old organisation, and the interests of the single agent or the old organisation according to generations or tribes, are distinct from the old gentile order.

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

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

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

From the viewpoint of the vast majority of Europeans of the end of the 19th century, whom Engels was addressing, and who had not gone through or closely observed a single great revolution, it class would assume and as to the exact manner in which this organisation would be combined with the most complete, most consistent “winning of the battle of democracy.”

Marx subjected the experience of the Commune, meagre as it was, to the most careful analysis in The Civil War in France. Let us quote the most important passages of this work.

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

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

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

"The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people."
could not have been otherwise. They could not understand at all what a "self-acting armed organization of the population" was. When asked why it became necessary to have special bodies of armed men placed above society and alienating themselves from it (police and a standing army), the West-European and Russian philistines are inclined to utter a few phrases borrowed from Spencer or Mikhailovsky, to refer to the growing complexity of social life, the differentiation of functions, and so on. Such a reference seems "scientific", and effectively lulls the ordinary person to sleep by obscuring the important and basic fact, namely, the split of society into irreconcilable antagonistic classes. Were it not for this split, the "self-acting armed organization of the population" would differ from the primitive organization of a stick-wielding herd of monkeys, or of primitive men, or of men united in clans, by its complexity, its high technical level, and so on. But such an organization would still be possible.

Marx did not indulge in utopias; he expected the experience of the mass movement to provide the reply to the question as to the specific forms this organization of the proletariat must assume in practice, when this organization is to replace the smashed state machine.

In the above argument, Engels raises theoretically the very same question which every great revolution raises before us in practice, namely, the question of the relationship between "special" bodies of armed men and the State. As is well known, the Paris Commune was actually working its way toward such an alliance, although it did not reach its goal.

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

By what exactly?

"Proletarian" and of replacing it by something new, Marx did not indulge in utopias; he expected the experience of the mass movement to provide the reply to the question as to the specific forms this organization of the proletariat as the ruling class must assume in practice, when this organization is to replace the smashed state machine.
men and the “self-acting armed organization of the population”. We shall see how this question is specifically illustrated by the experience of the European and Russian revolutions.

But to return to Engels’ exposition.

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

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

This was written not later than the early nineties of the last century, Engels’ last preface being dated June 16, 1891. The turn towards imperialism – meaning the complete domination of the trusts, the omnipotence of the big banks, a grand-scale colonial policy, and so forth – was only just beginning in France, and was even weaker in North America and in Germany. Since then “rivalry in conquest” has taken a gigantic stride, all the more because by the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century the world had been completely divided up among these “rivals in conquest”, i.e., among the predatory Great Powers. Since then,

* Ibid., continuing in same paragraph.
military and naval armaments have grown fantastically and the predatory war of 1914-17 for the domination of the world by Britain or Germany, for the division of the spoils, has brought the "swallowing" of all the forces of society by the rapacious state power close to complete catastrophe.

Engels' could, as early as 1891, point to "rivalry in conquest" as one of the most important distinguishing features of the foreign policy of the Great Powers, while the social-chauvinist scoundrels have ever since 1914, when this rivalry, many times intensified, gave rise to an imperialist war, been covering up the predatory interests of "their own" bourgeoisie with phrases about "defence of the fatherland", "defence of the republic and the revolution", etc.!

The State: an Instrument for the Exploitation of the Oppressed Class

The maintenance of the special public power standing above society requires taxes and state loans. "Having public power and the right to levy taxes," Engels writes, "the officials now stand, as organs of society, above society..." Special laws are enacted proclaiming the sanctity and immunity of the military, naval and police power and the right to levy taxes. Engels could, as early as 1862, point to the German military revolution, etc.

Class Society and the State

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

It is interesting to note, in particular, two points in the above-quoted argument of Marx. First, he restricts his conclusion to the Continent. This was understandable in 1871, when Britain was still the model of a purely capitalist country, but without a militarist clique and bureaucracy, and without a "people's revolution" in the sense that it was possible. When the precondition of destroying the bureaucratic-military state machine is the precondition for every real people's revolution, this idea of a "people's revolution" seems strange. Today, in 1917, at the time of the first great imperialist war, this restriction made by Marx is no longer valid. Both Britain and America, the biggest and the last representatives — in the whole world — of Anglo-Saxon "liberty", in the sense that they had no militarist cliques and bureaucracy, have completely sunk into the all-European filthy, bloody morass of bureaucratic-military institutions which subordinate everything to themselves, and suppress everything. Today, in Britain and America, too, "the precondition for every real people's revolution" is the smashing, the destruction of the "ready-made state machinery" (made and brought up to the "European", general imperialist, perfection in those countries in the years 1914-17).

Secondly, particular attention should be paid to Marx's extremely profound idea that the destruction of the bureaucratic-military state machine is "the precondition for every real people's revolution". This idea of a "people's revolution" seems strange coming from Marx, so that the Russian Plekhanovites and Mensheviks, those followers of Struve who wish to be regarded as Marxists, might possibly declare such an expression to be a "slip of the pen" on Marx's part. They have reduced Marxism to such a mediocrity;
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The question of the privileged position of the officials as organs of state power is raised here. The main point indicated is: what is it that places them above society? We shall see how this theoretical question was answered in practice by the Paris Commune in 1871 and how it was obscured from a reactionary standpoint by Kautsky in 1912.

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

"interpretation" of Marx's famous statement just quoted is that Marx here allegedly emphasizes the idea of slow development in contradistinction to the seizure of power, and so on.

As a matter of fact, the exact opposite is the case. Marx's idea is that the working class must break up, smash the "ready-made state machinery", and not confine itself merely to laying hold of it. On April 12, 1871, i.e., just at the time of the Commune, Marx wrote to Kugelmann:

"If you look up the last chapter of my Eighteenth Brumaire, you will find that I declare that the next attempt of the French Revolution will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic-military machine from one hand to another, but to smash it [Marx's italics – the original is zerbrechen], and this is the precondition for every real people's revolution on the Continent. And this is what our heroic Party comrades in Paris are attempting." (Neue Zeit, Vol.XX, 1, 1901-02, p. 709.) *

(The letters of Marx to Kugelmann have appeared in Russian in no less than two editions, one of which I edited and supplied with a preface.)

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

* See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Correspondence. Moscow, 1965, pp. 262-63; or Collected Works (avail. online), Vol. 44.

* Ibid., next paragraph but one. † Ibid., next paragraph.
Another reason why the omnipotence of “wealth” is more certain in a democratic republic is that it does not depend on defects in the government. The “direct” or only the indirect allies of the millionaire趣味 is bankers and stockbrokers, who play a key role in the government. The commune of Paris, for instance, under the leadership of the petty-bourgeois democrats, was able to direct its policies through the influence of the “direct” allies of the government, the bankers and stockbrokers. Since the end of the commune, its leaders have been replaced by the petty-bourgeois democrats, who have now turned to the capitalists for their support. The only “correction” Marx thought it necessary to make to the Communist Manifesto was on this point. The authors took the words that are in single quotation marks in this passage from Marx’s book, The Civil War in France, and inserted them into the Communist Manifesto as an important correction into the text. This passage from Marx’s book, The Civil War in France, is an important correction into the Communist Manifesto. The authors took the words that are in single quotation marks in this passage from Marx’s book, The Civil War in France, and inserted them into the Communist Manifesto as an important correction into the text. This passage from Marx’s book, The Civil War in France, is an important correction into the Communist Manifesto. The authors took the words that are in single quotation marks in this passage from Marx’s book, The Civil War in France, and inserted them into the Communist Manifesto as an important correction into the text. This passage from Marx’s book, The Civil War in France, is an important correction into the Communist Manifesto.
the political machinery or on the faulty political shell of capitalism. A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism, and, therefore, once capital has gained possession of this very best shell (through the Palchinsky, Chernovs, Tseretelis and Co.), it establishes its power so securely, so firmly, that no change of persons, institutions or parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic can shake it.

We must also note that Engels is most explicit in calling universal suffrage as well an instrument of bourgeois rule. Universal suffrage, he says, obviously taking account of the long experience of German Social-Democracy, is

"the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more in the present-day state."

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

Here, we can only indicate this false notion, only point out that Engels’ perfectly clear statement is distorted at every step in the propaganda and agitation of the “official” (i.e., opportunist) socialist parties. A detailed exposure of the utter falsity of this notion which Engels brushes aside here is given in our further account of the views of Marx and Engels on the “present-day” state.
"The state, then, has not existed from all eternity. There have been societies that did without it, that had no idea of the state and state power. At a certain stage of economic development, which was necessarily bound up with the split of society into classes, the state became a necessity owing to this split. We are now rapidly approaching a stage in the development of production at which the existence of these classes not only will have ceased to be a necessity, but will become a positive hindrance to production. They will fall as they arose at an earlier stage. Along with them the state will inevitably fall. Society, which will reorganize production on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers, will put the whole machinery of state where it will then belong: into a museum of antiquities, by the side of the spinning-wheel and the bronze axe."

We do not often come across this passage in the propaganda and agitation literature of the present-day Social-Democrats. Even when we do come across it, it is mostly quoted in the same manner as one bows before an icon, i.e., it is done to show official respect for Engels, and no attempt is made to gauge the breadth and depth of the revolution that this relegation of the whole state machinery of society into a museum of antiquities implies. In most cases we do not even come across this passage in the propaganda and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same: the dictatorship of the proletariat.
4. The "Withering Away" of the State, and Violent Revolution

Engels’ words regarding the “withering away” of the state are so widely known, they are often quoted, and so clearly reveal the essence of the customary adaptation of Marxism to opportunism that we must deal with them in detail. We shall quote the whole argument from which they are taken.

“The proletariat seizes state power and turns the means of production into state property to begin with. But thereby it abolishes itself as the proletariat, abolishes all class distinctions and class antagonisms, and abolishes also the state as state. Society thus far, operating amid class antagonisms, needed the state, that is, an organization of the particular exploiting class, for the maintenance of its external conditions of production, and, therefore, especially, for the purpose of forcibly keeping the exploited class in the conditions of oppression determined by the given mode of production (slavery, serfdom or bondage, wage-labor). The state was the official representative of society as a whole, its concentration in a visible corporation. But it was this only insofar as it was the state of that class which itself represented, for its own time, society as a whole: in ancient times, the state of slave-owning citizens; in the Middle Ages, of the feudal nobility; in our own time, of the bourgeoisie. When at last it becomes the real representative of the whole of society, it renders itself unnecessary. As soon as there is no longer any social class to be

Dictatorship of the Proletariat, published in August 1918, i.e., long after the first edition of the present book, is a perfect example of petty-bourgeois distortion of Marxism and base renunciation of it in deeds, while hypocritically recognizing it in words (see my pamphlet, The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky, Petrograd and Moscow, 1918).

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

Further. The essence of Marx's theory of the state has been mastered only by those who realize that the dictatorship of a single class is necessary not only for every class society in general, not only for the proletariat which has overthrown the bourgeoisie, but also for the entire historical period which separates capitalism from "classless society", from communism. Bourgeois states are most varied in form, but their essence is the same: all these states, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The transition from capitalism to communism is certainly bound to yield a tremendous abundance
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It is safe to say that of this argument of Engels', which is so remarkably rich in ideas, only one point has become an integral part of socialist thought among modern socialist parties, namely, that the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The state is not 'abolished'. It withers away. This gives the measure of the value of the phrase 'a free people's state', both as to its justifiable use for a long time from an agitational point of view, and as to its ultimate scientific insufficiency; and also of the so-called anarchists' demand that the state be abolished overnight. (Herr Eugen Duhring's Revolution in Science [Anti-Duhring], pp.301-03, third German edition.)

It is often said and written that the main point in Marx's theory is the class struggle. But this is wrong. And this wrong notion very often results in an opportunist distortion of Marxism and its falsification in a spirit acceptable to the bourgeoisie. For the theory of the class struggle was created not by Marx, but by the bourgeoisie before Marx, and, generally speaking, it is acceptable to the bourgeoisie. Only he who extends the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat to the recognition of bourgeois policies (Marxism without the dictatorship of the proletariat), is the true Marxist who understands Marxism in its entirety. To combine Marxism of bourgeois thinking and bourgeois policies, is to confuse Marx with a philistine and petty-bourgeois democrat. Kautsky's pamphlet, The Abolition of Classes and the State, should be read and studied. It is a test of understanding and recognition of Marxism. And it is not surprising that when this question came before the working class, as a practical issue, not only all the opportunists and reformists, but all the Kautskyites (people who vacillate between reformism and Marxism) proved to be miserable philosophers and petty-politicians demagogues, reduced to being all the opportunists and reformists, but all the Kautskyites (people who vacillate between reformism and Marxism) reduced to being traitors to the working class. It is only by considering the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society, that the essence of this theory of the state is fully understood. Marx succeeded in expressing with striking clarity, first, the chief and radical difference between his theory and that of the foremost and most profound thinkers of the bourgeoisie; and, secondly, the essence of his theory of the state. Marx succeeded in expressing this difference between his theory and that of the foremost and most profound thinkers of the bourgeoisie; and, in these words, Marx succeeded in expressing, with striking clarity, the class struggle and a classless society.

State and Revolution

that according to Marx that state “withers away” – as distinct from the anarchist doctrine of the “abolition” of the state. To prune Marxism to such an extent means reducing it to opportunism, for this “interpretation” only leaves a vague notion of a slow, even, gradual change, of absence of leaps and storms, of absence of revolution. The current, widespread, popular, if one may say so, conception of the “withering away” of the state undoubtedly means obscuring, if not repudiating, revolution.

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

In the first place, at the very outset of his argument, Engels says that, in seizing state power, the proletariat thereby “abolishes the state as state”. It is not done to ponder over the meaning of this. Generally, it is either ignored altogether, or is considered to be something in the nature of “Hegelian weakness” on Engels’ part. As a matter of fact, however, these words briefly express the experience of one of the greatest proletarian revolutions, the Paris Commune of 1871, of which we shall speak in greater detail in its proper place. As a matter of fact, Engels speaks here of the proletarian revolution “abolishing” the bourgeois state, while the words about the state withering away refer to the remnants of the proletarian state after the socialist revolution. According to Engels, the bourgeois state does not “wither away”, but is “abolished” by the proletariat in the course of the revolution. What withers away after this revolution is the proletarian state or semi-state.

Secondly, the state is a “special coercive force”. Engels gives this

* Die Neue Zeit (New Times) – theoretical journal of the German Social-Democratic Party, published in Stuttgart from 1883 to 1923. It was edited by Karl Kautsky till October 1917 and by Heinrich Cunow in the subsequent period. It published some of Marx's and Engels's writings for the first time. Engels offered advice to its editors and often criticised them for departures from Marxism.

In the second half of the nineties, upon Engels's death, the journal began systematically to publish revisionist articles, including a serial by Bernstein entitled "Problems of Socialism", which initiated a revisionist campaign against Marxism. During the First World War the journal adhered to a Centrist position, and virtually hacked the social-chauvinists.
Thirdly, in speaking of the state “withering away”, or “dying down of itself”, Engels refers quite clearly and definitely to the period after “the state has taken possession of the means of production in the name of the whole of society”, that is, after the socialist revolution. We all know that the political form of the “state” at that time is the most complete democracy. But it never enters the head of any of the opportunists, who shamelessly distort Marxism, that Engels is consequently speaking here of democracy “dying down of itself”, or “withering away”. This seems very strange at first sight. But it is incomprehensible only to those who have not thought about democracy also being a state and, consequently, also disappearing when the state disappears. Revolution alone can “abolish” the bourgeois state. The state in general, i.e., the most complete political form of the state “at that time”, is the most complete democracy. But, as long as the state remains in existence, the state will always and everywhere express, in a general way, the interests of the ruling class and the relations of production that express it. Engels refers more figuratively and colossally “withering away” to the end of the “proletarian state” and the even more extensive and extraordinary process of disintegration which ensues from it. And from it follows that the “special coercive force” for the support of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, or millions of people by handfuls of the rich, must be replaced by a “special coercive force” for the support of the bourgeoisie by the proletarians, or millions of the rich by handfuls of the poor. And from it follows that the “special coercive force” for the support of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie (class society and the state, 17)
One can wager that out of every 10,000 persons who have read or heard about the “withering away” of the state, 9,990 are completely unaware, or do not remember, that Engels directed his conclusions from that proposition not against anarchists alone. And of the remaining 10, probably nine do not know the meaning of a “free people’s state” or why an attack on this slogan means an attack on opportunists. This is how history is written! This is how a great revolutionary teaching is imperceptibly falsified and adapted to prevailing philistinism. The conclusion directed against the anarchists has been repeated thousands of times; it has been vulgarized, and rammed into people’s heads in the shallowest form, and has acquired the strength of a prejudice, whereas the conclusion directed against the opportunists has been obscured and “forgotten”!

The “free people’s state” was a programme demand and a catchword current among the German Social-Democrats in the seventies. This catchword is devoid of all political content except that it describes the concept of democracy in a pompous philistine fashion. Insofar as it hinted in a legally permissible manner at a democratic republic, Engels was prepared to “justify” its use “for a time” from an agitational point of view. But it was an opportunist catchword, for it amounted to nothing more than prettifying bourgeois democracy, and was also a failure to understand the socialist criticism of the state in general. We are in favor of a democratic republic as the best form of state for the proletariat under capitalism. But we have no right to forget that wage slavery is the lot of the people even in the most democratic bourgeois republic. Furthermore, every state is a “special force” for the suppression of the oppressed class. Consequently, every state is not “free” and not a ‘people’s state’. Marx and Engels explained this repeatedly to their party comrades in the seventies.

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

Let us, however, cast a general glance over the history of the advanced countries at the turn of the century. We shall see that the same process went on more slowly, in more varied forms, in a much wider field: on the one hand, the development of "parliamentary power" both in the republican countries (France, America, Switzerland), and in the monarchies (Britain, Germany to a certain extent, Italy, the Scandinavia countries, etc.); on the other hand, a struggle for power among the various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties which distributed and redistributed the “spoils” of office, with the foundations of bourgeois society unchanged; and, lastly, the perfection and consolidation of the "executive power", of its bureaucratic and military apparatus.

There is not the slightest doubt that these features are common to the whole of the modern evolution of all capitalist states in general. In the last three years 1848-51 France displayed, in a swift, sharp, concentrated form, the very same processes of development which are peculiar to the whole capitalist world.

Imperialism – the era of bank capital, the era of gigantic capitalist monopolies, of the development of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism – has clearly shown an unprecedented growth in its bureaucratic and military apparatus in connection

"That force, however, plays yet another role [other than that of a diabolical power] in history, a revolutionary role; that, in the words of Marx, it is the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with a new one, that is the instrument with which the proletariat of every old society which is pregnant with the midwife of every old society which is pregnant

Here is Engels’ argument:

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Thirty Years’ War.* And this person’s mode of thought – dull, insipid, and impotent – presumes to impose itself on the most revolutionary party that history has ever known!” (P.193, third German edition, Part II, end of Chap. IV.)

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

Usually the two are combined by means of eclecticism, by an unprincipled or sophistic selection made arbitrarily (or to please the powers that be) of first one, then another argument, and in 99 cases out of 100, if not more, it is the idea of the “withering away” that is placed in the forefront. Dialectics are replaced by eclecticism – this is the most usual, the most wide-spread practice to be met with in present-day official Social-Democratic literature in relation to Marxism. This sort of substitution is, of course,

* Thirty Years’ War (1618-48), the first European war, resulted from an aggravation of the antagonisms between various alignments of European states, and took the form of a struggle between Protestants and Catholics. It began with a revolt in Bohemia against the tyranny of the Hapsburg monarchy and the onslaught of Catholic reaction. The states which then entered the war formed two camps. The Pope, the Spanish and Austrian Hapsburgs and the Catholic princes of Germany, who rallied to the Catholic Church, opposed the Protestant countries – Bohemia, Denmark, Sweden, the Dutch Republic, and a number of German states that had accepted the Reformation. The Protestant countries were backed by the French kings, enemies of the Hapsburgs. Germany became the chief battlefield and object of military plunder and predatory claims. The war ended in 1648 with the signing of the Peace Treaty of Westphalia, which completed the political dismemberment of Germany.

It was not logical reasoning, but actual developments, the actual official posts which formerly were given by preference to the Black Hundreds have now become the spoils of the Cadets, Mensheviks, and Social-Revolutionaries.Nobody has really thought of introducing any serious reforms. Every effort has been made to put them off "until the Constituent Assembly meets", and to steadily put off its convocation until after the war! But there has been no delay, no waiting for the Constituent Assembly, in the matter of dividing the spoils of getting the lucrative jobs of ministers, deputy ministers, governors-general, etc., etc.! The game of combinations that has been played in forming the government has been, in essence, only an expression of this division and redivision of the “spoils”, which has been going on above and below, throughout the country, in every department of central and local government. The six months between February 27 and August 27, 1917, can be summed up, objectively summed up beyond all dispute, as follows: reforms shelved, distribution of official jobs accomplished and “mistakes” in the distribution corrected by a few redistributions.

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

The process of social development all through history is profound in its Hegelian and revolutionary conception of development. The Hegelian influence and so forth were a decisive factor in the development of these institutions on a million of threads. Every worker's experience illustrates this connection in a manifold fashion. Russia during the six months following February 27, 1917, The raising the holders above the people. Consider what happened in Russia during the six months following February 27, 1917. The raising the holders above the people. Consider what happened in...
opportunist character of that programme) – this panegyric is by no means a mere “impulse”, a mere declamation or a polemical sally. The necessity of systematically imbuing the masses with this and precisely this view of violent revolution lies at the root of the entire theory of Marx and Engels. The betrayal of their theory by the now prevailing social-chauvinist and Kautskyite trends expresses itself strikingly in both these trends ignoring such propaganda and agitation.

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

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

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

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

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

The centralized state power that is peculiar to bourgeois society came into being in the period of the fall of absolutism. Two institutions most characteristic of this state machine are the bureaucracy and the standing army. In their works, Marx and Engels repeatedly show that the bourgeoisie are connected with
The Experience of 1848-51

Chapter II

1. The Eve of Revolution

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

In The Poverty of Philosophy, Marx wrote:

"The working class, in the course of development, will substitute for the old bourgeois society an association which will preclude classes and their antagonism, and there will be no more political power groups, since the political power is precisely the official expression of class antagonism in bourgeois society." (p.182, German edition, 1885)

1885

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It is instructive to compare this general exposition of the idea of the state with the exposition contained in the Communist Manifesto, written by Karl Marx.

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

This conclusion is entirely practice, definite, practical and palpable: all revolutions perfected the state machine in an extraneously abstract manner; whereas it must be broken, smashed, abolished.


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Marx and Engels a few months later – in November 1847, to be exact:

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

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

"The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degree, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible." (pp.31 and 37, seventh German edition, 1906)*

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

* Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Communist Manifesto (1848); Chapter I: "Bourgeois and Proletarians"; 3rd-last paragraph; and Chapter II: "Proletarians and Communists"; near the end of the chapter. (Pp. 118-19 and p. 126 in Selected Works, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1973.)
The Experience of 1848-51

This definition of the state has never been explained in the prevailing propaganda and agitation literature of the official Social-Democratic parties. More than that, it has been deliberately ignored, for it is absolutely irreconcilable with reformism, and is a slap in the face of the vast majority of all people. It expresses the interests of an insignificant minority against the interests of the vast majority of people. The exploited classes need political power to maintain exploitation.

The state is a special organization of force, it is an organization of violence for the suppression of some class. What class must the proletariat suppress? Naturally, only the exploiting class, i.e., the bourgeoisie. The working people need the state only to suppress the resistance of the exploiters, and only the proletariat can direct this suppression, can carry it out. For the proletariat is the only class that is consistently revolutionary, the only class that can unite all the working and exploited people in the struggle against the bourgeoisie, in completely removing it.

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

The bourgeois state is a relic of the past, a relic of the evil which is no more, a relic of the past which is being seized upon by the exploiters, a relic of the past which is being seized upon only to suppress the revolt of the exploited. The proletariat needs a state, i.e., the proletariat organized as the ruling class.

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

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

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

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

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

By educating the workers’ party, Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat, capable of assuming power and leading the whole people to socialism, of directing and organizing the new system, of being the teacher, the guide, the leader of all the working and exploited people in organizing their social life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie. By contrast, the opportunism now prevailing trains the members of the workers’ party to be the representatives of the better-paid workers, who lose touch with the masses, "get along" fairly well under capitalism, and sell their birthright for a mass of pottage, i.e., renounce their role as revolutionary leaders of the people against the bourgeoisie.

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

But since the proletariat needs the state as a special form of organization of violence against the bourgeoisie, the following
This pamphlet was written in August and September 1917. I had already drawn up the plan for the next, the seventh chapter, "The Experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917". Apart from the title, however, I had no time to write a single line of the chapter; I was "interrupted" by a political crisis – the eve of the October revolution of 1917. Such an "interruption" can only be welcomed; but the writing of the second part of this pamphlet ("The Experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917") will probably have to be put off for a long time. It is more pleasant and useful to go through the "experience of revolution" than to write about it.

The Author

Petrograd
November 30, 1917
Chapter IV
Supplementary Explanations
by Engels

1. The Housing Question

Marx gave the fundamentals concerning the significance of the experience of the Commune. Engels returned to the same subject time and again, and explained Marx's analysis and conclusions, sometimes elucidating other aspects of the question with such power and vividity that a second reading is necessary to deal with this explanation specifically. Engels already took into account the experience of the Commune, and dealt several times with the question in the book, The Housing Question (1872).

"How is the housing question to be settled then? In present-day society, it is settled just as any other social question: by the gradual economic levelling of demand and supply, a settlement which reproduces the question itself again and again and therefore is no settlement. How a social settlement which reproduces the question itself again and again, a social settlement which reproduces the question itself again and again, a social settlement which reproduces the question itself again and again, a social settlement which reproduces the question itself again and again, a social settlement which reproduces the question itself again and again, a social settlement which reproduces the question itself again and again, a social settlement which reproduces the question itself again and again, a social settlement which reproduces the question itself again and again, a social settlement which reproduces the question itself again and again, a social settlement which reproduces the question itself again and again, a social settlement which reproduces the question itself again and again, a social settlement which reproduces the question itself again and again, a social settlement which reproduces the question itself again and again, a social settlement which 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State and Revolution

connected with much more far-reaching questions, one of the most fundamental of which is the abolition of the antithesis between town and country. As it is not our task to create utopian systems for the organization of the future society, it would be more than idle to go into the question here. But one thing is certain: there is already a sufficient quantity of houses in the big cities to remedy immediately all real 'housing shortage', provided they are used judiciously. This can naturally only occur through the expropriation of the present owners and by quartering in their houses homeless workers or workers overcrowded in their present homes. As soon as the proletariat has won political power, such a measure prompted by concern for the common good will be just as easy to carry out as are other expropriations and billetings by the present-day state." (German edition, 1887, p. 22)*

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

"... It must be pointed out that the 'actual seizure' of all the instruments of labor, the taking possession of industry as a whole by the working people, is the exact opposite of the Proudhonist 'redemption'. In the latter case the individual


The Vulgarisation of Marxism by the Opportunists

“shift the balance of forces”, but to overthrow the bourgeoisie, to destroy bourgeois parliamentarism, for a democratic republic after the type of the Commune, or a republic of Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, for the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

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

Taking this circumstance into consideration, we are justified in drawing the conclusion that the Second International, that is, the overwhelming majority of its official representatives, has completely sunk into opportunism. The experience of the Commune has been not only ignored but distorted. Far from inculcating in the workers’ minds the idea that the time is nearing

* *Socialist Monthly* (Sozialistische Monatshefte) – the principal journal of the opportunists among the German Social-Democrats, a periodical of international opportunism. It was published in Berlin from 1897 to 1933. During the world imperialist war of 1914-18 it took a social-chauvinist stand.
The class-conscious proletariat will be with us in the fight – not to

Speaker's proclamatory republic.

A most wonky aspirant, which is wholly acceptable to the

Kautsky will have to enjoy the pleasant company of the Legiens
and Davids, Pirkunulos, Piroetals, and Creemos, who

high on a government "willing to meet the proletarian half-way.

Kautsky will have to achieve this beloved "unity" with the

We, however, shall break with the opportunists and the entire

portraits patrimonial republic.

portraits patrimonial republic.

We, however, shall break with the opportunists and the entire

Speaker's proclamatory republic.

These are two vastly different things.

These are two vastly different things.

The organization of the proletariat as the ruling class.

The organization of the proletariat as the ruling class.

This is nothing but the peace and most vulgar opportunism:

Government (pp. 495, 727, 732)

Government (pp. 495, 727, 732)

Read only to a certain shifting [verschiebung] of the

"... Necessity of political action by the proletariat and of its dictatorship as the transition to the abolition of classes and, with them, of the state...." (p.55)*

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

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

As the now prevailing "Social-Democratic" doctrine completely distorts the relation of Marxism to anarchism on the question of the abolition of the state, it will be particularly useful to recall a certain controversy in which Marx and Engels came out against the anarchists.

2. Controversy with the Anarchists

This controversy took place in 1873. Marx and Engels contributed articles against the Proudhonists, "autonomists" or "anti-authoritarians", to an Italian socialist annual, and it was not until 1913 that these articles appeared in German in Neue Zeit.

* Ibid., Part 3; Section I; paragraph 5. (P. 355 in Selected Works, op. cit.)
"If the political struggle of the working class assumes revolutionary form," wrote Marx, ridiculing the anarchists for their repudiation of politics, "and if the workers set up their revolutionary dictatorship in place of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, they commit the terrible crime of violating principles, for in order to satisfy their wretched, vulgar everyday needs and to crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie, they give the state a revolutionary and permanent character. They give the state a revolutionary and permanent character, instead of laying down their arms and passing over to voluntary associations, they give the state a revolutionary and permanent character to crush the resistance of the state. The proletariat needs the state only temporarily. The state is a product of the development of capitalism, not of the development of human society. The state is the organization of production on a capitalist basis, not the general development of human society. The state is the organization of production on a capitalist basis, not the general development of human society.

To prevent the true meaning of his struggle against anarchism from being distorted, Marx expressly emphasized the "revolutionary and transient form" of the state which the proletariat needs. The proletariat needs the state only temporarily. We do not differ with the anarchists on the question of the abolition of the state as the aim. We maintain that, to achieve this aim, we must temporarily make use of the instruments of state power in the interests of the revolution. We do not give up our revolutionary struggle against capitalism as long as capitalist society exists. The proletariat strives to become the master of the state and to use the state to crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie. The state is an instrument of the bourgeoisie to crush the resistance of the proletariat. The proletariat must use the state as an instrument against the bourgeoisie. The state is not the organ of the bourgeoisie to crush the resistance of the proletariat, but of the proletariat to crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie. The state is a product of the development of capitalism, not of the development of human society. The state is the organization of production on a capitalist basis, not the general development of human society.

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

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

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

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

Having thus shown that authority and autonomy are relative terms, that the sphere of their application varies with the various phases of development, Engels concludes:

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

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

As a matter of fact, the whole of Kautsky’s argument against Pannekoek, and particularly the former’s wonderful point that we cannot do without officials even in our party and trade union organizations, is merely a repetition of Bernstein’s old “arguments” against Marxism in general. In his renegade book, *The Premises of Socialism*, Bernstein combats the ideas of “primitive” democracy, combats what he calls “doctrinaire democracy”: binding mandates, unpaid officials, impotent central representative bodies, etc. to prove that this “primitive” democracy is unsound, Bernstein refers to the experience of the British trade unions, as interpreted by the Webbs.* Seventy years

* Frederick Engels, "Del Autorita", *Almanacco Republicanoper l'anno 1874.*

* This refers to Sydney and Beatrice Webb, *Industrial Democracy.*
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The authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie.

The social revolution shall be the abolition of authority.

The point at issue is neither opposition nor political struggle in general, but revolution. Revolution consists in the proletariat destroying the "administrative apparatus" and the whole state machine, replacing it by a new one, made up of the armed workers. Kautsky displays a "superstitious reverence" for "ministries"; but why can they not be replaced, say, by committees of specialists working under sovereign, all-powerful Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies?

The point is not at all whether the "ministries" will remain, or whether the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies will be set up; that is quite immaterial. The point is whether the old state machine shall be destroyed and replaced by a new one. Revolution consists not in the new class commanding, governing with the aid of the old state machine, but in this class smashing this machine and commanding, governing with the aid of a new one, made up of the armed workers. Kautsky slurs over this basic idea of Marxism, or he does not understand it at all. His question about officials clearly shows that he does not understand the lessons of the Commune or the teachings of Marx.
Cannot we, on the contrary, blame it for having made too little use of that authority? Therefore, one of two things: either that anti-authoritarians don't know what they are talking about, in which case they are creating nothing but confusion. Or they do know, and in that case they are betraying the cause of the proletariat. In either case they serve only reaction." (p.39)*

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

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

The usual criticism of anarchism by present-day Social-Democrats has boiled down to the purest philistine banality: "We recognize the state, whereas the anarchists do not!" Naturally, such banality cannot but repel workers who are at all capable of thinking and

* Ibid.
revolutionary-minded. What Engels says is different. He stresses that all socialists recognize that the state will disappear as a result of the socialist revolution. He then deals specifically with the question of the revolution — the very question which, as a rule, the Social-Democrats evade out of opportunism, leaving it, so to speak, exclusively for the anarchists "to work out". And when dealing with this question, Engels takes the bull by the horns; he asks: should not the Commune have made more use of the revolutionary power of the state, that is, of the proletariat armed and organized as the ruling class?

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

To cover up his distortion of Marxism, Kautsky "quoting" from Marx himself, asks: does Pannekoek want to destroy "Centralism"? This is simply a trick, the Bernsteinian identification of the views of Marx and Proudhonism on the subject of federalism as

and Pannekoek want to destroy "Centralism", whereas Pannekoek, who represents Marxism, claims that a "resolute centralization of power in the hands of the state authority" was necessary and that Kautsky's "Centralism" is simply a trick, like Bernstein's identification of the views of Marx and Proudhonism on the subject of federalism as

In this controversy, it is not Kautsky but Pannekoek who represents Marxism for the opportunists' camp. For this apparent non-revolutionary element in Pannekoek's views is merely the opportunists' attempt to cover up their opportunism.

Kautsky's "Centralism" is neither more nor less than opportunism.

Kautsky's "Centralism" is neither more nor less than opportunism.
Engels wrote to Bebel criticizing the same draft of the Gotha Programme which Marx criticized in his famous letter to Bracke. Referring specially to the question of the state, Engels said:

"The free people's state has been transferred into the free state. Taken in its grammatical sense, a free state is one where the state is free in relation to its citizens, hence a state with a despotic government. The whole talk about the state should be dropped, especially since the Commune, which was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word. The 'people's state' has been thrown in our faces by the anarchists to the point of disgust, although already Marx's book against Proudhon and later the Communist Manifesto say plainly that with the introduction of the socialist order of society the state dissolves of itself [sich auflost] and disappears. As the state is only a transitional institution which is used in the struggle, in the revolution, to hold down one's adversaries by force, it is sheer nonsense to talk of a 'free people's state'; so long as the proletariat still needs the state, it does not need it in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist. We would therefore propose replacing the state everywhere by Gemeinwesen, a good old German word which can very well take the place of the French word commune." (pp.321-22 of the German original.)*

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

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

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

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

* The quotation is a complete paragraph near the middle of the letter (https://marxists.architexturez.net/archive/marx/works/1875/letters/75_03_18.htm). Also in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Correspondence, Moscow, 1965, pp. 293-94.
It should be borne in mind that this letter refers to the party programme which Marx criticized in a letter dated only a few weeks later than the above (Marx's letter is dated May 5, 1875), and that the time Engels was writing with Marx in London, Engels was living with Marx in London. Consequently, when he says "we", in the last two weeks Engels refers only to Engels, not Marx. Marx's letter is dated May 5, 1875. Engels, who was living with Marx in London, wrote this letter on the advice of Marx during a period of the writing of his supplementary explanation of the party programme. The letter is dated February 1876.

Engels suggests to the leader of the German workers' party that the word "state" be struck out of the programme and replaced by the word "community". He does this because he believes that the word "state" is being used in a way that is too narrow and too limited. Engels argues that the word "community" is a broader and more inclusive term that can be used to encompass a wider range of social and political issues. Engels believes that the word "community" is more appropriate for the programme of the workers' party because it reflects the idea of a collective and shared identity that is based on solidarity and cooperation.

Engels argues that the word "state" is too narrow and too limited because it only refers to the political institution of the state, while the word "community" refers to a broader range of social and political relationships. Engels believes that the workers' party should focus on building a strong and united community of workers, rather than simply fighting for the overthrow of the state. Engels argues that the word "community" is more appropriate for the programme of the workers' party because it reflects the idea of a collective and shared identity that is based on solidarity and cooperation.

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clear. The Commune was ceasing to be a state since it had to suppress, not the majority of the population, but a minority (the exploiters). It had smashed the bourgeois state machine. In place of a special coercive force the population itself came on the scene. All this was a departure from the state in the proper sense of the word. And had the Commune become firmly established, all traces of the state in it would have "withered away" of themselves; it would not have had to “abolish” the institutions of the state – they would have ceased to function as they ceased to have anything to do.

"The 'people's state' has been thrown in our faces by the anarchists". In saying this, Engels above all has in mind Bakunin and his attacks on the German Social-Democrats. Engels admits that these attacks were justified insofar as the "people's state" was as much an absurdity and as much a departure from socialism as the "free people's state". Engels tried to put the struggle of the German Social-Democrats against the anarchists on the right lines, to make this struggle correct in principle, to ride it of opportunist prejudices concerning the “state”. Unfortunately, Engels' letter was pigeon-holed for 36 years. We shall see farther on that, even after this letter was published, Kautsky persisted in virtually the same mistakes against which Engels had warned.

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

"The state must... be transformed from one based on *class rule* into a *people's state.*" (*Unsere Ziele*, 1886, p.14)
This was printed in the ninth (ninth!) edition of Bebel's pamphlet! It is not surprising that opportunist views on the state, so persistently repeated, were absorbed by the German Social-Democrats, especially as Engels' revolutionary interpretations had been safely pigeon-holed, and all the conditions of life were such as to "wean" them from revolution for a long time.

Criticism of the Draft of the Erfurt Programme

In analyzing Marxist teachings on the state, the criticism of the draft of the Erfurt Programme, sent by Engels to Kautsky on June 29, 1891, and published only 10 years later in Neue Zeit, cannot be ignored; for it is with the opportunist views of the Social-Democrats on questions of state organization that this criticism is mainly concerned.

The Erfurt Programme – the programme adopted by the German Social-Democratic Party at its Erfurt Congress in October 1891. A step forward compared with the Gotha Programme (1875), it was based on Marx's doctrine of the inevitable downfall of the capitalist mode of production and its replacement by the socialist mode. It stressed the necessity for the working class to wage a political struggle, pointed out the party's role as the leader of that struggle, and so on. But it also made serious concessions to opportunism. Engels criticised the original draft of the programme in detail in his work, A Critique of the Draft Social-Democratic Programme of 1891. It was virtually a critique of the opportunism of the Second International as a whole. Engels' comments were concealed from the rank and file, and disregarded his highly important comments in drawing up the final text of the programme. Lenin considered the fact that the Erfurt Programme said nothing about the dictatorship of the proletariat to be its chief defect and a cowardly concession to opportunism.

The author explicitly points to the aggravation of class antagonisms in general and to imperialism, which plays a particularly important part in this respect. After a period of revolution in Western Europe, he says, "The revolutionary era is beginning." These statements are perfectly clear. This pamphlet of Kautsky's should serve as a measure of comparison of what the German Social-Democrats promised before the imperialist war and the depth of degradation to which they sank when the war broke out. "The present situation," Kautsky wrote in the pamphlet under survey, "is fraught with the danger that we may easily appear to be more 'moderate', than we really are." Lenin, more accurately, that the German Social-Democrats may easily appear to be more 'moderate', than we really are. If the proletariat can no longer talk of revolution, it means that the "era of revolutions" is setting in. After all, "we have entered a revolutionary period of great magnitude."

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Let us now pass to the last and best of Kautsky's works against the opportunists, his pamphlet The Road to Power, which appeared in 1909, when reaction was at its height in Russia. It is not even published in Russian, and it is stated in politics, not even published in Russian, that it appeared in politics. This is his pamphlet The Road to Power, which I
We shall note in passing that Engels also makes an exceedingly valuable observation on economic questions, which shows how attentively and thoughtfully he watched the various changes occurring in modern capitalism, and how for this reason he was able to foresee to a certain extent the tasks of our present, the imperialist, epoch. Here is that observation: referring to the word “planlessness” (Planlosigkeit), used in the draft programme, as characteristic of capitalism, Engels wrote:

"When we pass from joint-stock companies to trusts which assume control over, and monopolize, whole industries, it is not only private production that ceases, but also planlessness." (Neue Zeit, Vol. XX, 1, 1901-02, p.8)

Here we have what is most essential in the theoretical appraisal of the latest phase of capitalism, i.e., imperialism, namely, that capitalism becomes monopoly capitalism. The latter must be emphasized because the erroneous bourgeois reformist assertion that monopoly capitalism or state-monopoly capitalism is no longer capitalism, but can now be called "state socialism" and so on, is very common. The trusts, of course, never provided, do not now provide, and cannot provide complete planning. But however much they do plan, however much the capitalist magnates calculate in advance the volume of production on a national and even on an international scale, and however much they systematically regulate it, we still remain under capitalism – at its new stage, it is true, but still capitalism, without a doubt. The "proximity" of such capitalism to socialism should serve genuine representatives of the proletariat as an argument proving the proximity, facility, feasibility, and urgency of the socialist revolution, and not at all as an argument for tolerating the repudiation of such a revolution and the efforts to make capitalism look more attractive, something which all reformists are trying to do.

The whole point, however, is that this “sort of parliament” will not be a parliament in the sense of a bourgeois parliamentary institution. The whole point is that this “sort of parliament” will not merely “establish the working regulations and supervise the management of the bureaucratic apparatus,” as Kautsky, whose thinking does not go beyond the bounds of bourgeois parliamentarianism, imagines. In socialist society, the “sort of parliament” consisting of workers’ deputies will, of course, “establish the working regulations and supervise the management” of the “apparatus,” but this apparatus will not be “bureaucratic.”

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

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

Kautsky here displays the same old “superstitious reverence” for the state, and “superstitious belief” in bureaucracy.
But to return to the question of the state. In his letter Engels makes three particularly valuable suggestions: first, in regard to the republic; second, in regard to the connection between the national question and state organization; and, third, in regard to local self-government.

In regard to the republic, Engels made this the focal point of his criticism of the draft of the Erfurt Programme. And when we recall the importance which the Erfurt Programme acquired for all the Social-Democrats of the world, and that it became the model for the whole Second International, we may say without exaggeration that Engels thereby criticizes the opportunism of the whole Second International.

"The political demands of the draft," Engels wrote, "have one great fault. It lacks precisely what should have been said."*

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

"To touch on that is dangerous, however," Engels added, knowing only too well that it was impossible legally to include in the programme the demand for a republic in Germany. But he refused to merely accept this obvious conclusion, which recognizes the existence of petty states and the constitutional form of the state in Germany as "absolutism" and that to wish to transform all the institutions of labor into common property on the basis of a constitution which legalized the existence of petty states and the federation of petty German states is an "obvious absurdity".

This and the following seven quotations are from A Critique of the Draft Social-Democratic Program of 1891; section II: "Political Demands"; paragraphs 1-9.

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Deep-going in relation to the state, to democracy, as distinct from prior, non-proletarian revolutions, the social-democratic programme of 1891 may be contrasted to the programme of the Social-Democracy of the 1870s, using the Commune as an example.

By avoiding this question, Kautsky in practice makes a concession to opportunism on this most essential point, although in words he declares stern war against it and stresses the importance of the "idea of revolution" (how much is this "idea" worth when one is afraid to teach the workers the concrete lessons of revolution?), or says, "revolutionary idealism before everything else", or announces that the English workers are now "many more than an echo of revolution" (how much is this "echo" worth when one is deep-going in relation to the state, to democracy, as distinct

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consideration which satisfied “everybody”. He continued: "Nevertheless, somehow or other, the thing has to be attacked. How necessary this is is shown precisely at the present time by opportunism, which is gaining ground [eine reissende] in a large section of the Social-Democrat press. Fearing a renewal of the Anti-Socialist Law,29 or recalling all manner of overhasty pronouncements made during the reign of that law, they now want the Party to find the present legal order in Germany adequate for putting through all Party demands by peaceful means...."

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

29 The Anti-Socialist Law (Exceptional Law Against the Socialists) was enacted in Germany by the Bismarck government in 1878 to combat the working-class and socialist movement. Under this law, all Social-Democratic Party organisations, all mass organisations of the workers, and the working-class press were banned, socialist literature was confiscated and the Social-Democrats were persecuted, to the point of banishment. These repressive measures did not, however, break the Social-Democratic Party, which readjusted itself to illegal conditions. Der Sozial-Demokrat, the party's Central Organ, was published abroad and party congresses were held at regular intervals (1880, 1883 and 1887). In Germany herself, the Social-Democratic organisations and groups were coming back to life underground, an illegal Central Committee leading their activities. Besides, the Party widely used legal opportunities to establish closer links with the working people, and its influence was growing steadily. At the Reichstag elections in 1890, it polled three times as many votes as in 1878. Marx and Engels did much to help the Social-Democrats. In 1890 popular pressure and the growing working-class movement led to the annulment of the Anti-Socialist Law.
conceive" (only "conceive"!) of a peaceful development towards socialism, but in Germany, he repeated, "... in Germany, where the government is almost omnipotent and the Reichstag and all other representative bodies have no real power, to advocate such a thing in Germany, where, moreover, there is no need to do so, is like putting the fig leaf from absolutism and becoming oneself a screen for its nakedness."

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

"... In the long run such a policy can only lead one's own party astray. They push general, abstract political questions into the foreground, thereby concealing the immediate concrete questions, which at the moment of the first great events, the first political crisis, automatically pose themselves. What can result from this except that at the decisive moment the party suddenly proves helpless and in the hour of truth such a policy can only lead one's own revolution into the wreckage. Nobody, everybody conscious of the immediate party interests, everybody conscious of the immediate party party interests, they push general, abstract political questions into the foreground."

"... From 1852 to 1891, or for 40 years, Marx and Engels taught the proletariat that it must smash the state machine. Yet, in 1899, Kautsky, confronted with the complete betrayal of Marxism by the opportunists, no longer considered the question whether it is necessary to smash this machine the question for the concrete forms in which it is to be smashed, and then sought refuge behind the "indisputable" and barren philistine truth that concrete forms cannot be known in advance!! Kautsky's pamphlet, The Social Revolution, also contained a concession to the opportunists: it called for the working class to prepare itself, not for the dictatorship of the proletariat, but for its defeat and its replacement by a republic.

From 1852 to 1891, or for 40 years, Marx and Engels taught the proletariat that it must smash the state machine. The result was that the most essential distinction between Marxism and opportunism on the subject of the tasks of the proletarian revolution was slurred over by Kautsky! The result was that the most essential distinction between Marxism and opportunism on the subject of the tasks of the proletarian revolution was slurred over by Kautsky! The result was that the most essential distinction between Marxism and opportunism on the subject of the tasks of the proletarian revolution was slurred over by Kautsky!
"If one thing is certain it is that our party and the working class can only come to power in the form of the democratic republic. This is even the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the Great French Revolution has already shown...."

Engels realized here in a particularly striking form the fundamental idea which runs through all of Marx's works, namely, that the democratic republic is the nearest approach to the dictatorship of the proletariat. For such a republic, without in the least abolishing the rule of capital, and, therefore, the oppression of the masses and the class struggle, inevitably leads to such an extension, development, unfolding, and intensification of this struggle that, as soon as it becomes possible to meet the fundamental interests of the oppressed masses, this possibility is realized inevitably and solely through the dictatorship of the proletariat, through the leadership of those masses by the proletariat. These, too, are "forgotten words" of marxism for the whole of the Second International, and the fact that they have been forgotten was demonstrated with particular vividness by the history of the Menshevik Party during the first six months of the Russian revolution of 1917.

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

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

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

Approaching the matter from the standpoint of the proletariat and the proletarian revolution, Engels, like Marx, upheld democratic centralism, the republic – one and indivisible. He regarded the federal republic either as an exception and a hindrance to development, or as a transition from a monarchy to a centralized republic, as an exception and a hindrance to federal republic, etc. In Great Britain, Engels upheld democratic centralism, the republic – one and indivisible. He regarded the federalism of the Western states as a hindrance that can be tolerated only because Switzerland is content to be a purely passive member of the European state system. For Germany, federalization on the Swiss model would be an enormous step backward. Two points distinguish a union state from a completely unified state: first, that each member state, each canton, has its own civil and criminal legislative and judicial system, and, second, that alongside a popular chamber there is also a federal chamber in which each canton, whether large or small, votes as such.
Although mercilessly criticizing the reactionary nature of small states, and the screening of this by the national question in certain concrete cases, Engels, like Marx, never betrayed the slightest desire to brush aside the national question – a desire of which the Dutch and Polish Marxists, who proceed from their perfectly justified opposition to the narrow philistine nationalism of “their” little states, are often guilty.

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

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

"So, then, a unified republic – but not in the sense of the present French Republic, which is nothing but the Empire established in 1798 without the Emperor. From 1792 to 1798 each French department, each commune

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 reason that some German Social-Democrats say in jest that Kautsky is read more in Russia than in Germany (let us say, in parenthesis, that this jest has a far deeper historical meaning than those who first made it suspect. The Russian workers, by making in 1905 an unusually great and unprecedented demand for the best works of the best Social-Democratic literature and editions of these works in quantities unheard of in other countries, rapidly transplanted, so to speak, the enormous experience of a neighboring, more advanced country to the young soil of our proletarian movement).

Besides his popularization of Marxism, Kautsky is particularly known in our country for his controversy with the opportunists, with Bernstein at their head. One fact, however, is almost unknown, one which cannot be ignored if we set out to investigate how Kautsky drifted into the morass of unbelievably disgraceful confusion and defence of social-chauvinism during the supreme crisis of 1914-15. This fact is as follows: shortly before he came out against the most prominent representatives of opportunism in France (Millerand and Jaures) and in Germany (Bernstein), Kautsky betrayed very considerable vacillation. The Marxist Zarya,* which was published in Stuttgart in 1901-02, and advocated revolutionary proletarian views, was forced to enter into controversy with Kautsky and describe as “elastic” the half-hearted, evasive resolution, conciliatory towards the opportunists,

* Zarya (Dawn) – a Marxist scientific and political journal published in Stuttgart in 1901-02 by the editors of Iskra. Four issues appeared in three installments.
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Gemeinde], enjoyed complete self-government on the American model, and this is what we too must have. How self-government is to be organized and how we can manage, without a bureaucracy, has been shown to us by America and the first French Republic, and is being shown even today by Australia, Canada and the other English colonies. And a provincial [regional] and communal self-government of this type is far freer than, for instance, Swiss federalism, under which it is true, the canton is very independent in relation to the Bund [i.e., the federated state as a whole], but is also independent in relation to the district [Bezirk] and the commune. The cantonal governments appoint the district governors [Bezirksstatthalter] and prefects – which is unknown in English-speaking countries and which we want to abolish here as resolutely as the Prussian Landrat and Regierungsrat, and in general all officials appointed from above. Accordingly, Engels proposes the following words for the self-government clause in the programme:

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

I have already had occasion to point out – in Pravda (No. 68, May 28, 1917), which was suppressed by the government of Kerensky – how on this point (of course, not on this point alone by any means) our pseudo-socialist representatives of pseudo-revolutionary pseudo-democracy have made glaring departures from democracy. Naturally, people who have bound themselves by a “coalition” to the imperialist bourgeoisie have remained deaf to this criticism.

State and Revolution

hardly two years after the Hague Congress of the [First] International,* engaged in the most violent struggle against Bakunin and his anarchists.

The anarchists had tried to claim the Paris Commune as their “own”, so to say, as a collaboration of their doctrine; and they completely misunderstood its lessons and Marx’s analysis of these lessons. Anarchism has given nothing even approximating true answers to the concrete political questions: Must the old state machine be smashed? And what should be put in its place? But to speak of “anarchism and socialism” while completely evading the question of the state, and disregarding the whole development of Marxism before and after the Commune, meant inevitably slipping into opportunism. For what opportunism needs most of all is that the two questions just mentioned should not be raised at all. That in itself is a victory for opportunism.

The Hague Congress of the First International sat from September 2-7, 1872. It was attended by 65 delegates, among whom were Marx and Engels. The powers of the General Council and the political activity of the proletariat were among the items on the agenda. The Congress deliberations were marked by a sharp struggle against the Bakuninists. The Congress passed a resolution extending the General Council’s powers. Its resolution “On the Political Activity of the Proletariat” stated that the proletariat should organise a political party of its own to ensure the triumph of the social revolution and that the winning of political power was becoming its principal task. The Congress expelled Bakunin and Guillaume from the International as disorganisers and founders of a new, anti-proletarian party.

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

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

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

In his preface to the third edition of The Civil War in France (this preface is dated March 18, 1891, and was originally published in Neue Zeit), Engels, in addition to some interesting incidental remarks on questions concerning the attitude towards the state, gave a remarkably vivid summary of the lessons of the Commune.* This summary, made more profound by the entire experience of the 20 years that separated the author from the Commune, and directed expressly against the "superstitious belief in the state" so widespread in Germany, may justly be called the last word of Marxism on the question under consideration.


1. Plekhanov’s Controversy with the Anarchists

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

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

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

We have now seen how, in their controversy with the anarchists, Marx and Engels with the utmost thoroughness explained their views on the relation of revolution to the state. In 1891, in his foreword to Marx’s Critique of the Gotha Programme, Engels wrote that “we” – that is, Engels and Marx – "were at that time,
In France, Engels observed, the workers emerged with arms from every revolution: "therefore the disarming of the workers was the first commandment for the bourgeois, who were at the helm of the state. Hence, after every revolution won by the workers, a new struggle, ending with the defeat of the workers." This summary of the experience of bourgeois revolutions is as concise as it is expressive. The essence of the matter, among other things, on the question of the state (has the oppressed class arms?) is here remarkably well-grasped. It is precisely this essence that is most often evaded by both professors influenced by bourgeois ideology, and by petty-bourgeois democrats. In the Russian revolution of 1917, the honor (Cavaignac honor) of blabbing this secret of bourgeois revolutions fell to the Menshevik, would-be Marxist, Tsereteli. In his "historic" speech of June 11, Tsereteli blurted out that the bourgeoisie were determined to disarm the Petrograd workers—presenting, of course, this decision as his own, and as a necessity for the "state" in general! Tsereteli's historical speech of June 11 will, of course, serve every historian of the revolution of 1917 as a graphic illustration of how the Social-Revolutionary and Menshevik bloc, led by Mr. Tsereteli, deserted to the bourgeoisie against the revolutionary proletariat.

Another incidental remark of Engels', also connected with the question of the state, deals with religion. It is well-known that the German Social-Democrats, as they degenerated and became increasingly opportunist, slipped more and more frequently into the philistine misinterpretation of the celebrated formula: Paragraph 7. (Pp. 179-80 in Selected Works, op. cit.)
"Religion is to be declared a private matter." That is, the formula was twisted to mean that religion was a private matter even for the party of the revolutionary proletariat!! It was against this complete betrayal of the revolutionary programme of the proletariat that Engels vigorously protested. In 1891 he saw only the very feeble beginnings of opportunism in his party, and, therefore, he expressed himself with extreme caution:

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

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

The future historian of the German Social-Democrats, in tracing the roots of their shameful bankruptcy in 1914, will find a fair amount of interesting material on this question, beginning with the

* Just past halfway through the Introduction. (P. 184 in Selected Works, op. cit.)
Engels took note of the discussion when working on material for his book "The Los-von-Kirche-Bewegung" (the "Leave-the-Church" movement) in 1913. He wrote:

> The Los-von-Kirche-Bewegung (the "Leave-the-Church" movement) assumed a vast scale in Germany before the First World War. In January 1914, *Neue Zeit* began, with the revisionist Paul Göhre's article "Kirchenaustrittsbewegung und Sozialdemokratie" ("The Movement to Secede from the Church and Social-Democracy"), to discuss the attitude of the German Social-Democratic Party to the movement. During that discussion, prominent German Social-Democratic leaders failed to rebut Göhre, who affirmed that the party should remain neutral towards the Movement to Secede from the Church and forbid its members to engage in operations – which any literate person can perform – of supervising and recording, knowledge of the four rules of arithmetic, and issuing appropriate receipts.

When the majority of the people begin independently and everywhere to keep such accounts and exercise such control over the capitalists (now converted into employees) and over the intellectual gentry who preserve their capitalist habits, this control will really become universal, general, and popular; and there will be no getting away from it, there will be "nowhere to go". The whole of society will have become a single office and a single factory, with equality of labor and pay.

But if this "factory" discipline, which the proletariat will be exercising after defeating the capitalists, is by no means our ideal, or our ultimate goal, it is only a necessary step for thoroughly cleansing society of all the infamies and abominations of capitalist exploitation, and for further progress.
lose again its only just-gained supremacy, this working class must, on the one hand, do away with all the old machinery of oppression previously used against it itself, and, on the other, safeguard itself against its own deputies and officials, by declaring them all, without exception, subject to recall at any time...."*

Engels emphasized once again that not only under a monarchy, but also under a democratic republic the state remains a state, i.e., it retains its fundamental distinguishing feature of transforming the officials, the 'servants of society", its organs, into the masters of society.

"Against this transformation of the state and the organs of the state from servants of society into masters of society – an inevitable transformation in all previous states – the Commune used two infallible means. In the first place, it filled all posts – administrative, judicial, and educational – by election on the basis of universal suffrage of all concerned, subject to recall at any time by the electors. And, in the second place, it paid all officials, high or low, only the wages received by other workers. The highest salary paid by the Commune to anyone was 6,000 francs.†

In this way a dependable barrier to place-hunting and careerism was set up, even apart from the binding

* 5th - and 4th-last paragraphs of Introduction. (P. 187 in Selected Works, op. cit.)

† Nominally about 2,400 rubles or, according to the present rate of exchange, about 6,000 rubles. The action of those Bolsheviks who propose that a salary of 9,000 rubles be paid to members of municipal councils, for instance, instead of a maximum salary of 6,000 rubles – quite an adequate sum – throughout the state, is inexcusable.
mandates to delegates to representative bodies, which were added besides...

Engels here approached the interesting boundary line at which consistent democracy, on the one hand, is transformed into socialism and, on the other, demands socialism. For, in order to abolish the state, it is necessary to convert the functions of the civil service into the simple operations of control and accounting that are within the scope and ability of the vast majority of the population, and, subsequently, of every single individual. And if careerism is to be abolished completely, it must be made impossible for "honorable" though profitless posts in the Civil Service to be used as a springboard to highly lucrative posts in banks or joint-stock companies, as constantly happens in all the freest capitalist countries.

Engels, however, did not make the mistake some Marxists make in dealing, for example, with the question of the right of nations to self-determination, when they argue that it is impossible under capitalism and will be superfluous under socialism. This seemingly clever but actually incorrect statement might be made in regard to any democratic institution, including moderate salaries for officials, because fully consistent democracy is impossible under capitalism, and under socialism all democracy will wither under capitalism and under socialism all democracy is impossible for officials, because fully consistent democracy is impossible to any democratic institution including moderate salaries that are made in self-determination when they agree that is impossible under capitalism and will be superfluous under socialism. This makes Engels a sophist like the old joke about a man becoming bald by losing one more hair:

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

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

Democracy is a form of the state, it represents, on the one hand, the original, authentic use of force against classes; on the other hand, it signifies the formal recognition of equality of citizens, the equal right of all to determine the structure of, and to administer, the state. This, in turn, results in the formal recognition of equality of all other kinds. If, therefore, the formal recognition of equality of all other kinds is to be achieved, the form of the state must change.

Here "quantity turns into quality": such a degree of democracy implies overstepping the boundaries of bourgeois society and beginning its socialist reorganization. If really all take part in the development of the proletariat, it means that a large majority of the population will be the working class; and all the others will be in reality only sections or sometimes whole sections, which once realized how insignificant their evolutionary role is in the ordinary bourgeois society, will be the supreme aim of all of us, and cannot know, but it is important to
Taken separately, no kind of democracy will bring socialism. But in actual life democracy will never be "taken separately"; it will be "taken together" with other things, it will exert its influence on economic life as well, will stimulate its transformation; and in its turn it will be influenced by economic development, and so on. This is the dialectics of living history.

Engels continued:

"... This shattering [Sprengung] of the former state power and its replacement by a new and truly democratic one is described in detail in the third section of *The Civil War*. But it was necessary to touch briefly here once more on some of its features, because in Germany particularly the superstitious belief in the state has passed from philosophy into the general consciousness of the bourgeoisie and even of many workers. According to the philosophical conception, the state is the 'realization of the idea', or the Kingdom of God on earth, translated into philosophical terms, the sphere in which eternal truth and justice are, or should be, realized. And from this follows a superstitious reverence for the state and everything connected with it, which takes root the more readily since people are accustomed from childhood to imagine that the affairs and interests common to the whole of society could not be looked after other than as they have been looked after in the past, that is, through the state and its lucratively positioned officials. And people think they have taken quite an extraordinary bold step forward when they have rid themselves of belief in hereditary monarchy and swear by the democratic republic. In reality, however, the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another, and indeed in the democratic republic no less than of capitalism. Hence the interesting phenomenon that communism in its first phase retains "the narrow horizon of bourgeois law". Of course, bourgeois law in regard to the distribution of consumer goods inevitably presupposes the existence of the bourgeois state, for law is nothing without an apparatus capable of enforcing the observance of the rules of law.

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

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

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

Democracy means equality. The great significance of the proletariat's struggle for equality and of equality as a slogan will be clear if we correctly interpret it as meaning the abolition of classes. But democracy means only formal equality. And as soon as equality is achieved for all members of society in relation to ownership of the means of production, that is, equality of labor and wages, humanity will inevitably be confronted with the question of advancing further from formal equality to actual equality, i.e., to the operation of the rule "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
in the monarchy. And at best it is an evil inherited by the proletariat after its victorious struggle for class supremacy, whose worst sides the victorious proletariat will have to lop off as speedily as possible, just as the Commune had to, until a generation reared in new, free social conditions is able to discard the entire lumber of the state.”

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

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

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

Supplementary Explanations by Engels

6. Engels on the Overcoming of Democracy

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

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

"... For Marx and myself," continued Engels, "it was therefore absolutely impossible to use such a loose term to characterize our special point of view. Today things are different, and the word ["Social-Democrat"] may perhaps pass muster [mag passieren], inexact [unpassend, unsuitable] though it still is for a party whose economic

* Lassalleans – supporters of the German petty-bourgeois socialist Ferdinand Lassalle, members of the General Association of German Workers founded at the Congress of Workers' Organisations, held in Leipzig in 1863, to counterbalance the bourgeois progressives who were trying to gain influence over the working class. The first President of the Association was Lassalle, who formulated its programme and the fundamentals of its tactics. The Association's political programme was declared to be the struggle for universal suffrage, and its economic programme, the struggle for workers' production associations, to be subsidised by the state. In their practical activities, Lassalle and his followers adapted themselves to the hegemony of Prussia and supported the Great Power policy of Bismarck. "Objectively," wrote Engels to Marx on January 27, 1865, "this was a base action and a betrayal of the whole working-class movement to the Prussians." Marx and Engels frequently and sharply criticised the theory, tactics, and organisational principles of the Lassalleans as an opportunist trend in the German working-class movement.

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

In fact, when a learned professor, followed by the philistine, followed in turn by the Tseretelis and Chernovs, talks of wild utopias, of the demagogic promises of the Bolsheviks, of the impossibility of "introducing" socialism, it is the higher stage, or phase, of communism he has in mind, which no one has ever
programme is not merely socialist in general, but downright communist, and whose ultimate political aim is to overcome the whole state and, consequently, democracy as well. The names of real political parties, however, are never wholly appropriate; the party develops while the name stays."

The dialectician Engels remained true to dialectics to the end of his days. Marx and I, he said, had a splendid, scientifically exact name for the party, but there was no real party, i.e., no mass proletarian party. Now (at the end of the 19th century) there was a real party, but its name was scientifically wrong. Never mind, it will "pass muster", so long as the party develops, so long as the scientific inaccuracy of the name is not hidden from it and the party itself set to work to correct it. Engels was unhappy that the party, by the Brussels-London Congress of 1903, had become a "Bolshevik". Perhaps now that we have a real party, it is developing splendidly; even such a meaningless and ugly term as "Bolshevik" will "pass muster", although it expresses nothing whatever but the purely accidental fact that we were in the majority at the Brussels-London Congress of 1903. Perhaps some wit would console us Bolsheviks in the manner of Engels: we have a real party, it is developing splendidly; even such a meaningless and ugly term as "Bolshevik" will "pass muster", although it expresses nothing whatever but the purely accidental fact that we were in the majority at the Brussels-London Congress of 1903."

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


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†)
Perhaps I would propose a "compromise" to my comrades, namely, to call ourselves the Communist Party, but to retain the word "Bolsheviks" in brackets.

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

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

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

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

We set ourselves the ultimate aim of abolishing the state, i.e., all organized and systematic violence, all use of violence against people in general. We do not expect the advent of a system of society in which the principle of subordination of the minority to the majority will not be observed. In striving for socialism, however, we are convinced that it will develop into communism

individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly – only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois law be left behind in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!"

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

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

This expropiation will make it possible for the productive forces to develop to a tremendous extent. And when we see how incredibly capitalism is already retarding this development, when we see how much progress could be achieved on the basis of the level of technique already attained, we are entitled to say with the fullest confidence that the expropiation of the capitalists will inevitably result in an enormous development of the productive forces of human society. But how rapidly this development will proceed, how soon it will reach the point of breaking away from the division of labor, of doing away with the antithesis between mental and physical labor, of transforming labor into "life's prime want" – we do not and cannot know.
and, therefore, that the need for violence against people in general, for the subordination of one man to another, and of one section of the population to another, will vanish altogether since people will become accustomed to observing the elementary conditions of social life without violence and without subordination.

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

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

**State and Revolution**

4. The Higher Phase of Communist Society

Marx continues:

Complete communism is necessary.

Social inequality, for the sake to which any complete, lasting agreement of "bourgeois law", which sanctions the subordination of the individual to the division of labor, must not be thought that having overthrown capitalism people will at once learn to work for society without any rules of law. Besides, the abolition of capitalism does not immediately create the economic prerequisites for such a change. The state willers away, since there are no longer any capitalists, any classes, and consequently no class can be suppressed. But the state has not yet completely withered away, since the still remaining "bourgeois law", which sanctifies actual inequality, remains the safeguard of "bourgeois law". To this extent, therefore, there still remains the need for a state, which, while safeguarding the common ownership of the means of production, would safeguard equality in labor and in the distribution of products.

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

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State and Revolution
Chapter V

The Economic Basis of the
Withering Away of the State

Marx explains this question most thoroughly in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (letter to Bracke, May 5, 1875, which was not published until 1891 when it was printed in *Neue Zeit*, vol. IX, 1, and which has appeared in Russian in a special edition). The polemical part of this remarkable work, which contains a criticism of Lassalleanism, has, so to speak, overshadowed its positive part, namely, the analysis of the connection between the development of communism and the withering away of the state.

1. Presentation of the Question by Marx

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

Engels suggested to Bebel that all chatter about the state be dropped altogether, that the word “state” be eliminated from the programme altogether and the word “community” substituted for it. Engels even declared that the Commune was long a state in the proper sense of the word. Yet Marx even spoke of the "future state in communist society", i.e., he would seem to recognize the need for the state even under communism.

property of the whole society (commonly called “socialism”) does not remove the defects of distribution and the inequality of "bourgeois laws" which continues to prevail so long as products are divided "according to the amount of labor performed". Continuing, Marx says:

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

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

However, it persists as far as its other part is concerned; it persists in the capacity of regulator (determining factor) in the distribution of products and the allotment of labor among the members of society. The socialist principle, "He who does not work shall not eat", is already realized; the other socialist principle, "An equal amount of products for an equal amount of labor", is also already realized. But this is not yet communism, and it does not yet abolish "bourgeois law", which gives unequal individuals, in return for unequal (really unequal) amounts of labor, equal amounts of products.

This is a “defect”, says Marx, but it is unavoidable in the first phase of communism; for if we are not to indulge in utopianism,
The Economic Basis of the Withering Away of the State

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

On the basis of the fact that it has its origin in capitalism, that it develops historically from capitalism, that it is the result of the action of a social force to which capitalism gave birth, there is no question of specifying the moment of the future “withering away,” the more so since it will obviously be a lengthy process. The apparent difference between Marx and Engels is due to the fact that they dealt with different subjects and pursued different aims. Engels set out to show Bebel graphically, sharply, and in broad outline the utter absurdity of the current prejudices concerning the state (shared to no small degree by Lassalle). Marx only touched upon this question in passing, being interested in another subject, namely, the development of communist society.

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

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

On the basis of the fact that it has its origin in capitalism, that it develops historically from capitalism, that it is the result of the action of a social force to which capitalism gave birth, there is no question of specifying the moment of the future “withering away,” the more so since it will obviously be a lengthy process. The apparent difference between Marx and Engels is due to the fact that they dealt with different subjects and pursued different aims. Engels set out to show Bebel graphically, sharply, and in broad outline the utter absurdity of the current prejudices concerning the state (shared to no small degree by Lassalle). Marx only touched upon this question in passing, being interested in another subject, namely, the development of communist society.

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When people are not alike: one is strong, another is weak. And so on. And the conclusion Marx draws is:
the question of the development of, say, a new biological variety, once he knew that it had originated in such and such a way and was changing in such and such a definite direction.

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

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

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

"The question then arises: what transformation will the state undergo in communist society? In other words, what social functions will remain in existence there that are analogous to present state functions? This question can only be answered scientifically, and one does not get a

stamped with the birthmarks of the old society, that Marx terms the “first”, or lower, phase of communist society.

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

“Equality” apparently reigns supreme.

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

"Hence, the equal right," says Marx, in this case still certainly conforms to "bourgeois law", which,like all law, implies inequality. All law is an application of an equal measure to different people who in fact are not alike, are not equal to one another. That is why the "equal right" is violation of equality and an injustice. In fact, everyone, having performed as much social labor as another, receives an equal share of the social product (after the above-mentioned deductions).
The Economic Basis of the Withering Away of the State

Marx continued:

Between capitalist and communist society lies the period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.


2. The Transition from Capitalism to Communism

Marx proceeds to make a concrete analysis of the conditions of production of this labor to the worker.” Marx makes a sober estimate of exactly how socialist society will have to manage its affairs.

In the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx goes into detail to

The First Phase of Communist Society

In the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx goes into detail to

The Transition from Capitalism to Communism

Marx continued:

Communism

Marx continued:

Withering Away of the State

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

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

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

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

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

In capitalist society, providing it develops under the most favourable conditions, we have a more or less complete democracy in the democratic republic. But this democracy is always hemmed in by the narrow limits set by capitalist exploitation, and consequently always remains, in effect, a democracy for the minority, only for the propertied classes, only for the rich. Freedom in capitalist society always remains about the same as it was in the ancient Greek republics: freedom for the slave-owners. Owing to the conditions of capitalist exploitation, the modern serfs or wage-laborers, and it will cost mankind far less. And it is compatible with the extension of democracy to such an overwhelming majority of the population that the need for a special machine of suppression will begin to disappear. Naturally, the exploiters are unable to suppress the people without a highly complex machine for performing this task, but the people can suppress the exploiters even with a very simple “machine”, almost without a “machine”, without a special apparatus, by the simple organization of the armed people (such as the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, we would remark, running ahead).

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

Without building utopias, Marx defined more fully what can be defined now regarding this future, namely, the differences between the lower and higher phases (levels, stages) of communist society.
wage slaves are so crushed by want and poverty that “they cannot be bothered with democracy”, “cannot be bothered with politics”; in the ordinary, peaceful course of events, the majority of the population is debarred from participation in public and political life.

The correctness of this statement is perhaps most clearly confirmed by Germany, because constitutional legality steadily endured there for a remarkably long time – nearly half a century (1871-1914) – and during this period the Social-Democrats were able to achieve far more than in other countries in the way of “utilizing legality”, and organized a larger proportion of the population into a political party than anywhere else in the world. What is this largest proportion of politically conscious and active wage slaves? One million members of the Social-Democratic Party – out of 15,000,000 wage-workers! Three million organized in trade unions – out of 15,000,000!

Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich – that is the democracy of capitalist society. If we look more closely into the machinery of capitalist democracy, we see everywhere, in the “petty” – supposedly petty – details of the suffrage (residential qualifications, exclusion of women, etc.), in the technique of the representative institutions, in the actual obstacles to the right of assembly (public buildings are not for “paupers”!), in the purely capitalist organization of the daily press, etc., etc., – we see restriction after restriction upon democracy. These restrictions, these capitals organization of the daily press, etc., etc., – we see everywhere, in the machinery of capitalist democracy – we see everywhere, in that democracy of capitalist society. If we look more closely into the machinery of capitalist society, we see democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich.

What is this largest proportion of politically conscious and active wage slaves? One million organized in trade unions – out of 15,000,000 workers! Three million members of the Social-Democratic Party – out of 15,000,000 wage-workers! How large have we so far been inclined to consider the proportion of capitalist society?

In other words, under capitalism we have the state in the proper sense of the word, that is, a special machine for the suppression of one class by another, and, what is more, of the majority by the minority. Necessarily, if there is no exploitation, if there is no oppression, if there is no violence, if there is no need for suppression, if there is no need for the police, if there is no need for the state, if there is no state, if there is no state.

And so in capitalist society we have a democracy, but that is an illusion.

The dictatorship of the proletariat, the period of transition to communism, will for the first time create democracy for the people, for the majority, along with the necessary suppression of the exploiters, of the minority. Communism alone is capable of providing really complete democracy, and the more complete it is, the more complete suppression of the exploiters, of the majority, alone with the necessary suppression of people, for the majority, alone with the necessary suppression of the exploiters, of the majority, alone with the necessary suppression of those classes, that is, of the majority, alone with the necessary suppression of those classes.

The dictatorship of the proletariat, the period of transition to communism, will for the first time create democracy, but this is no longer a state in the proper sense of the word, it is no longer a state in the proper sense of the word.
their mass life (and nine out of 10, if not 99 out of 100, bourgeois publicists and politicians come under this category); but in their sum total these restrictions exclude and squeeze out the poor from politics, from active participation in democracy.

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

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

And the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., the organization of the vanguard of the oppressed as the ruling class for the purpose of suppressing the oppressors, cannot result merely in an expansion of democracy. Simultaneously with an immense expansion of democracy, which for the first time becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the money-bags, the dictatorship of the proletariat imposes a series of restrictions on the freedom of the oppressors, the exploiters, the capitalists. We must suppress them in order to free humanity from wage slavery, their resistance must be crushed by force; it is clear that there is no freedom and no democracy where there is suppression and where there is violence.

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

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

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

The expression "the state withers away" is very well-chosen, for it indicates both the gradual and the spontaneous nature of the process. Only habit can, and undoubtedly will, have such an effect;