

CHAPTER I

Class Society and the State

1 The State as the Product of the Irreconcilability of Class Contradictions

What is now happening to Marx's doctrine has occurred time after time in history to the doctrine of revolutionary thinkers and leaders of oppressed classes struggling for liberation. The oppressing classes have constantly persecuted the great revolutionaries in their lifetime, reacted to their teachings with the most savage malice, the wildest hatred and the most shameless campaigns of lies and slander. Attempts are made after their death to convert them into harmless icons, to canonize them, so to speak, and to confer a certain prestige on their *names* so as to 'console' the oppressed classes by emasculating the *essence* of the revolutionary teaching, blunting its revolutionary edge and vulgarizing it. The bourgeoisie and the opportunists within the working-class movement at the moment co-operate in this 'elaboration' of Marxism. They forget, erase and destroy the revolutionary side of this doctrine, its revolutionary soul. They push to the foreground and extol what is or seems acceptable to the bourgeoisie. All the social-chauvinists are now 'Marxists': oh, please don't laugh! And it is ever more frequent for German bourgeois scholars, who only yesterday specialized in the destruction of Marxism, to speak about the 'national-German' Marx who allegedly educated the workers' unions which are so splendidly organized for the waging of a predatory war!

In such circumstances, when there has been an unprecedented distortion of Marxism, our task is above all to *re-establish* Marx's authentic doctrine on the state. For this purpose it will be necessary to adduce a whole series of lengthy quotations from the works of Marx and Engels themselves. Of course, long quotations will render the text wordy and will not help at all to make it popularly accessible. But we cannot possibly manage without them. All, or at any rate all the crucial passages in the works of Marx and Engels on

the state, definitely must be quoted as fully as possible, so that the reader may have an independent idea of the totality of the views of the founders of scientific socialism and of the development of those views, and so that their distortion by the currently dominant 'Kautskyism' may be documentarily proved and clearly demonstrated.

Let us start with the most popular of Engels's works, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, whose sixth edition appeared in Stuttgart as long ago as 1894. We shall have to translate the quotations from the German originals since the Russian translations, despite being very numerous, are for the most part either incomplete or accomplished very unsatisfactorily.

Summing up his historical analysis, Engels says:

The state is by no means a power forced on society from without. The state is equally not 'the reality of the ethical idea', 'the image and reality of reason' as Hegel maintains. The state is a product of society at a certain stage of development; the state is the recognition that this society has become entangled in an irresolvable contradiction with itself, that it is divided into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to escape. But in order that these antagonisms, classes with conflicting economic interests, might not devour each other and society in sterile struggle, a power seemingly standing above society became necessary for the purpose of moderating the conflict, keeping it within the bounds of 'order'. And this power, which has arisen out of society but placed itself above it and increasingly alienated itself from it, is the state.

(pp. 177-8, sixth German edition)

This expresses with complete clarity the basic idea of Marxism on the question of the historical role and significance of the state. The state is the product and the manifestation of the *irreconcilability* of class contradictions. The state arises where, when and to the extent that class contradictions objectively *cannot* be reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state demonstrates that the class contradictions are irreconcilable.

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

On the one hand, the bourgeois and the petty-bourgeois ideologists, compelled under the pressure of indisputable historical facts to recognize that the state only exists where there are class contradictions and class struggle, 'correct' Marx in such a way as to make it

appear that the state is an organ for the *reconciliation* of classes. According to Marx, the state could neither arise nor endure if it were possible to reconcile classes. According to Marx, the state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the *oppression* of one class by another; it is the creation of 'order', legalizing and perpetuating this oppression by moderating the clashes among the classes. In the opinion of petty-bourgeois politicians, order means precisely the reconciliation of classes and not the oppression of one class by another; to moderate the conflict means to reconcile classes and not to deprive the oppressed classes of definite means and methods of struggle for the overthrow of their oppressors.

For instance: when, in the Revolution of 1917, the question arose in all its magnitude about the significance and role of the state as a practical question demanding immediate action on a mass scale, all the SRs (Socialist Revolutionaries) and Mensheviks immediately and completely bowed down before the petty-bourgeois theory of the 'reconciliation' of classes by 'the state'. Innumerable resolutions and articles by politicians of both these parties are thoroughly pervaded by this petty-bourgeois and philistine 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 can never understand. Their attitude towards the state is one of the most vivid manifestations of the fact that our SRs and Mensheviks are not socialists at all (a point that we Bolsheviks have always been able to demonstrate) but petty-bourgeois democrats with a quasi-socialist phraseology.

On the other hand, the 'Kautskyite' distortion of Marxism is much subtler. 'Theoretically' it is not denied that the state is an organ of class rule, or that class contradictions are irreconcilable. But what is lost from sight or fudged is the following: if the state is the product of the irreconcilability of class contradictions, if it is a power standing *above* society and '*increasingly alienating* itself from society', then 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 incarnation of this 'alienation'. As we shall see later, Marx most definitely drew this theoretically self-evident conclusion on the basis of a concrete historical analysis

of the tasks of revolution. And, as we shall show in detail in our further presentation, it is precisely this conclusion which Kautsky has 'forgotten' and distorted.

2 Special Bodies of Armed Men, Prisons, Etc.

Engels continues:

In contrast with the old gentile (tribal or clan) organization, the state is distinguished firstly by the division of the state's subjects according to territorial divisions.

Such a division seems 'natural' to us, but it cost a prolonged struggle against the old organization of tribal or gentile society.

The second distinguishing feature is the establishment of a public power which no longer coincides directly with the population organizing itself as an armed force. This special public power is necessary, because a self-motivating armed organization of the population has become impossible since the cleavage of society into classes . . . This public power exists in every state. It consists not only of armed people but also of material adjuncts, prisons and coercive institutions of all kinds which were unknown to gentile (clan) society.

Engels is developing the concept of the 'power' which is called the state, a power which has arisen 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 with prisons, etc., at their command.

We have the right to speak about special bodies of armed men because the public power characteristic of every state does not 'coincide directly' with the armed population, with its 'self-acting armed organization'.

Like all great revolutionary thinkers, Engels tries to turn the attention of the class-conscious workers to the very fact which is treated by prevailing philistinism as being the least worthy of attention, as being the most habitual and sanctified by not only deep-rooted but arguably even petrified prejudices. A standing army and police are the chief instruments of state power. But can it be otherwise?

From the viewpoint of the vast majority of Europeans at the end of the nineteenth century whom Engels was addressing, and who had not lived through or closely observed a single great revolution, it could not be otherwise.

For them, a 'self-motivating armed organization of the population' was something completely incomprehensible. To the question why the need arose for special bodies of armed men, placed above society and alienating themselves from society (police, the standing army), the west European and Russian philistines are inclined to reply with a few phrases borrowed from Spencer or Mikhailovski referring to the growing complexity of social life, the differentiation of functions, etc.

Such references seem scientific, and wondrously befuddle the man in the street by obscuring the main and basic fact: the splitting of society into irreconcilably hostile classes.

Were it not for this splitting, the 'self-motivating armed organization of the population' would differ by virtue of its complexity, its high technical level, etc. from a primitive organization of a stick-wielding herd of monkeys or of primitive men or an organization of men united in clans; but such an organization would still be possible.

Yet it is impossible because civilized society is split into antagonistic and, moreover, irreconcilably antagonistic classes: any arming of them for 'self-motivating' purposes would lead to an armed struggle between them. A state is formed, a special power is created and special bodies of armed men; and every revolution, by destroying the state apparatus, brings it vividly home to us how the ruling class strives to restore the special bodies of armed men which serve it, and how the oppressed class strives to create a new organization of this kind, capable of serving not the exploiters but the exploited.

It is with the above-mentioned argument that Engels raised theoretically the very same question which every great revolution poses before us in practice visibly and, moreover, on the plane of mass action: namely the question of the relation between 'special' bodies of armed men and the 'self-motivating armed organization of the population'. We shall see how this question is concretely illustrated by the experience of the European and Russian revolutions.

But let us return to Engels's presentation.

He points out that sometimes, for example, in areas of North America, this public power is weak – and here he is touching on a rare exception in capitalist society by referring to those parts of

North America in its pre-imperialist days where the free colonist predominated – but that, generally speaking, it grows stronger:

The public power grows stronger to the extent that class contradictions within the state become more acute and to the extent that adjacent states become larger and more populated. Just take a look at present-day Europe, where class struggle and the scramble for conquests have winched up the public power to such a pitch that it threatens to devour the whole society and even the state.

This was written not later than the beginning of the 1890s. Engels's last preface was dated 16 June 1891. The turn towards imperialism – meaning the complete domination of the trusts, meaning the omnipotence of the big banks, meaning a massive colonial policy and so forth – was only just beginning in France and was even weaker in North America and in Germany. Since then 'the scramble for conquests' has made gigantic strides forward, especially as, by the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century, the whole world had been finally divided up among these 'rivals in conquest', i.e. among the great predatory powers. Since then, armaments for land and naval warfare have undergone unimaginable growth; and the predatory war of 1914–17 for the domination of the world by England or Germany, for the division of the spoils, has brought all the forces of society to the brink of complete catastrophe as they are 'devoured' by rapacious state power.

As early as 1891 Engels was able to point to 'scramble for conquests' as one of the most important distinguishing features of the foreign policy of the great powers; but in 1914–17, when this rivalry has become many times more intense and given rise to an imperialist war, the social-chauvinist scoundrels cover up the defence of the predatory interests of 'their own' bourgeoisie with phrases about 'the defence of the fatherland', 'defence of the republic and the revolution', etc.!

3 The State as an Instrument for the Exploitation of the Oppressed Class

Taxes and state loans are needed for the maintenance of the special public power standing above society.

Engels writes:

In possession of the public power and of the right to levy taxes, the bureaucrats as organs of society now stand *above* society. The free, voluntary respect that was accorded to the organs of the gentile (clan) society does not satisfy them, even if they could win it . . .

Special laws are enacted proclaiming the sanctity and inviolability of bureaucrats. 'The most pitiful police official' has more 'authority' than the representatives of the clan, but even the head of the military power of a civilized state could well envy an elder of a clan enjoying the 'uncoerced respect' of society.

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

As the state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check and as it arose at the same time in the midst of conflicts among these classes, it is as a rule the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which, with the assistance of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class, and thus acquires new means of suppressing and exploiting the oppressed class . . .

Not only were the ancient and feudal states organs for the exploitation of slaves and serfs but

the modern representative state is an instrument of exploitation of wage labour by capital. By way of exception, however, periods occur in which the warring classes attain such an equilibrium of forces that state power for a time acquires a certain independence in relation to both classes as an ostensible mediator.

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

Such, we may add, is the Kerenski government in republican Russia now that it has proceeded to persecute the revolutionary proletariat at a moment when the soviets, thanks to the leadership of the petty-bourgeois democrats, have *already* become impotent while the bourgeoisie is not *yet* strong enough simply to disperse them.

In a democratic republic, Engels continues, 'wealth exercises its power indirectly, but all the more surely', firstly by means of the 'direct bribery of bureaucrats' (America) and secondly by means of 'an alliance between the government and stock exchange' (France and America).

At the present time, imperialism and the domination of the banks have 'developed' both these methods of supporting and realizing the omnipotence of wealth in democratic republics of all descriptions into an exquisite art. Let us take for example the very first months of the Russian democratic republic, one might call it the honeymoon after the 'socialist' SRs and Mensheviks were joined in wedlock to the bourgeoisie in a coalition government. If Mr Palchinski obstructed every measure intended to curb the capitalists and their marauding practices, their pillaging of the treasury by means of war contracts; and if later on Mr Palchinski resigned from the ministry only to be replaced, of course, by another Palchinski of exactly the same type, and if the capitalists 'rewarded' him with a nice little job at a salary of 120,000 roubles per annum: what would you call this? Direct or indirect bribery? An alliance between the government and the syndicates, or 'merely' friendly relations? What role do the Chernovs, Tseretelis, Avksentevs and Skobelevs play? Are they the 'direct' or only the indirect allies of the millionaire-robbers of the treasury?

The reason why the omnipotence of 'wealth' is better *secured* in a democratic republic is that it is not subject to any particular faults of the political mechanism or to any defective political shell of capitalism. A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism, and therefore, once capital has got control of this excellent shell (through the Palchinskis, Chernovs, Tseretelis and Co.), it establishes its power so securely, so firmly, that *no* change of individuals, of institutions or of parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic can shake this power.

It is also necessary to note that Engels is most definite in naming even universal suffrage as an instrument of bourgeois rule. Universal suffrage, he says, obviously considering the long experience of German social-democracy, is

the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It neither can nor will give any more in the present-day state.

Petty-bourgeois democrats such as our SRs and Mensheviks as well as their twins, namely all the social-chauvinists and opportunists of western Europe, expect just this bit 'more' from universal suffrage. They themselves partake of and instil into the minds of the people the false notion that universal suffrage 'in the *present-day* state' is capable of expressing the will of the majority of labouring people and of securing its implementation.

Here we can only mention this false notion, only indicate that Engels's perfectly clear, precise and concrete statement is distorted at every point in the propaganda and agitation of the 'official' (i.e. opportunist) socialist parties. A detailed exposure of the utter falsity of this notion which Engels brushes aside here is given in our further account of the views of Marx and Engels on the '*present-day*' state.

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

Thus the state has not existed for all eternity. There have been societies that did without it, that had no conception of the state and state power. At a certain stage of economic development, which was necessarily bound up with the cleavage of society into classes, the state became a necessity because of this cleavage. 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 direct hindrance to production. Classes will disappear as inevitably as they inevitably arose at an earlier stage. With the disappearance of classes the state too will inevitably disappear. Society, organizing production on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers, will dispatch the whole state machine whither it will then belong: to the Museum of Antiquities, side by side with the spinning wheel and the bronze axe.

We do not often come across this passage in the literature of propaganda and agitation of contemporary social-democracy. But even when we do come across the passage, it is mostly quoted in the spirit of obeisance before an icon, i.e. as an expression of official respect for Engels without any attempt at assessing the broad and deep scale of the revolution presupposed by this dispatch of 'the whole state machine to the Museum of Antiquities'. Usually we cannot discern even an understanding of what Engels calls the state machine.

4 *The 'Withering Away' of the State and Violent Revolution*

Engels's words on the 'withering away' of the state are so widely famous, are so often quoted and so vividly reveal the gist of the conventional adulteration of Marxism to look like 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 transforms the means of production in the first place into state property. But by the same act it puts an end to itself as proletariat and to class distinctions and antagonisms; it puts an end also to the state as a state. The society which has existed and exists to this day, which moves within class antagonisms, had need of the state, i.e. an organization of the exploiting class for the maintenance of its external conditions of production and therefore especially for the forcible retention of the exploited class in the conditions of oppression (slavery, serfdom, wage labour) determined by the given mode of production. The state was the official representative of society as a whole, its concentration in a visible corporation; but it was this only in so far as it was the state of that class which alone in its epoch represented society as a whole: in antiquity it was the state of citizen slave-owners; in the middle ages, of the feudal nobility; in our times, of the bourgeoisie. When the state finally becomes truly the representative of society as a whole, it makes itself superfluous. As soon as there is no longer any class of society to be held in subjection; as soon as, along with class domination and the struggle for individual existence brought about by the present-day anarchy of production, the conflicts and excesses arising from these have also disappeared, there will be nothing left to suppress, nothing requiring the special force for suppression: a state. The first act by which the state steps forward truly as the representative of society as a whole – the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society – is at the same time its last independent act as a state. The interference of state power in social relations becomes superfluous in one sphere after another and then ceases of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the processes of production. The state is not 'abolished': *it withers away*. It is on this basis that it is proper to evaluate the phrase about 'a free people's state', a phrase which had a temporary justification for agitational ends but in the ultimate analysis is scientifically inadequate.

It is on this basis that it is proper also to evaluate the demand of the so-called anarchists that the state should be abolished overnight.

(*Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*, pp. 301–3, third German edition)

It may be said without fear of error that, out of Engels's entire argument with its remarkable richness of ideas, the only real legacy of socialist thought found in modern socialist parties is the idea that according to Marx the state 'withers away' – in contrast to the anarchist doctrine of the 'abolition' of the state. This hacking back of Marxism essentially reduces it to opportunism; for such an 'interpretation' only leaves a vague notion of a slow, uninterrupted, gradual change, of an absence of leaps and storms, of an absence of revolution. The currently widespread and popular concept (if such a word may be used) of the 'withering away' of the state undoubtedly amounts to a playing down, if not a repudiation, of revolution.

Such an 'interpretation', however, is the crudest distortion of Marxism, advantageous only to the bourgeoisie; it is based in terms of theory on a disregard for the most important circumstances and considerations indicated, for instance, in the 'summary' argument by Engels which we have just quoted in full.

In the first place, Engels at the very outset of his argument says that, in seizing state power, the proletariat 'by the same act puts an end to the state as a state'. It is not considered 'quite proper' to ponder over the meaning of this. Usually it is either completely ignored or is considered to be something in the nature of an 'Hegelian weakness' on Engels's part. In fact these words succinctly 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 appropriate place. In fact Engels speaks here of the proletarian revolution 'eradicating' the *bourgeois* state, and 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 '*eradicated*' by the proletariat in the course of the revolution. It is the proletarian state or semi-state which withers away after this revolution.

Secondly, the state is a 'special force' for suppression. Engels gives this splendid and extremely profound definition here with the

utmost clarity. And it follows from the definition that the 'special repressive force' for the suppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, of millions of labouring people by a handful or two of the wealthy, must be replaced by a 'special repressive force' for the suppression of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat (the dictatorship of the proletariat). This is the very nub of 'the eradication of the state as a state'. This is precisely the 'act' of taking possession of the means of production in the name of society. And it is self-evident that *such* a replacement of one (bourgeois) 'special force' by another (proletarian) 'special force' cannot possibly take place in the form of a 'withering away'.

Thirdly, in speaking of the state 'withering away' and – in even more vivid and colourful language – 'ceasing of itself', Engels refers quite clearly and definitely to the period *after* 'the state's expropriation of the means of production in the name of the whole of society', i.e. *after* the socialist revolution. We all know that the political form of the 'state' at that time is the fullest democracy. But it never enters the head of any of the opportunists who shamelessly distort Marxism that Engels is consequently speaking here of *democracy* 'ceasing of itself', or 'withering away'. This seems very strange at first sight. But it is 'incomprehensible' only to those who have not taken account that democracy is *also* a state and that, consequently, democracy will also disappear when the state disappears. Revolution alone can 'eradicate' the bourgeois state. The state in general, i.e. the fullest democracy, can only 'wither away'.

Fourthly, after formulating his famous proposition that 'the state withers away', Engels at once explains concretely that this proposition is directed against both the opportunists and the anarchists. At the same time Engels gives priority to the conclusion drawn from the proposition that 'the state withers away' which is directed against the opportunists.

It is worth a bet 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 it was *not only* against the anarchists that Engels directed his conclusions from this proposition. And of the remaining ten persons, probably nine do not know the meaning of 'a free people's state' or why an attack on this slogan constitutes an attack on the opportunists. This is how history is written up! This is how a great revolutionary doctrine is impercep-

tibly counterfeited and adapted to the prevailing philistinism! The conclusion directed against the anarchists has been repeated thousands of times, vulgarized, drummed into people's heads in the most simplistic fashion and has acquired the strength of a prejudice. And the conclusion directed against the opportunists has been fudged and 'forgotten'!

The 'free people's state' was a programme demand and a widely current slogan of the German social-democrats in the 1870s. This slogan is devoid of all political content except for a philistine and impassioned description of the concept of democracy. In so far as it hinted in a legally permissible manner at a democratic republic, Engels was willing to 'justify' its use 'for a time' from an agitational viewpoint. But it was an opportunist slogan; for it expressed not only a glorification of bourgeois democracy but also a misunderstanding of the socialist criticism of the state in general. We are in favour of a democratic republic as the best form of the state for the proletariat under capitalism; but we have no right to forget that wage slavery is the lot of the people even in the most democratic bourgeois republic. Furthermore, every state is a 'special force for the suppression' of the oppressed class. Consequently, *every* state is *unfree* and *non-popular*. Marx and Engels frequently explained this to their party comrades in the 1870s.

Fifthly, this very same work by Engels, with its universally remembered argument on the withering away of the state, also contains an argument on the significance of violent revolution. Engels's historical evaluation of its role becomes a veritable panegyric on violent revolution. 'No one remembers' about this; it is not considered proper in contemporary socialist parties to talk or even think about the significance of this idea; and it plays no part whatever in their daily propaganda and agitation among the masses. And yet it is inseparably connected in a seamless web with the 'withering away' of the state.

Here is Engels's argument:

That force plays another role in history [other than as a perpetrator of evil], namely a revolutionary role; that it is, in Marx's words, the midwife of every old society when it is pregnant with the new; that it is the instrument whereby the social movement forces its way through and shatters the petrified, dead political forms: there is not a word of this in Herr

Dühring. It is only with sighs and groans that he admits the possibility that force will perhaps be necessary for the overthrow of the economic system of exploitation – unfortunately, if you will, because all use of force verily demoralizes the person who uses it. And this is said despite the immense moral and spiritual upsurge which has resulted from every victorious revolution! And this is said in Germany, where a violent collision, which indeed may be forced on the people, would at least have the advantage of expunging the spirit of servility which has permeated the national consciousness as a consequence of the humiliation of the 'Thirty Years' War. And this lifeless, insipid and impotent way of thinking dares to propose itself to the most revolutionary party which history has known!

(p. 193, end of chapter 4, section 2, third German edition)

How can this panegyric on violent revolution, pressed insistently by Engels upon the German social-democrats between 1878 and 1894, i.e. right through to his death, be combined with the theory of the 'withering away' of the state to form a single doctrine?

Usually the two are combined with the help of eclecticism and by an unprincipled or sophistic selection made arbitrarily (or to please the powers that be) of now one, now another argument; and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, if not more often, it is the idea of the 'withering away' that is placed in the foreground. Dialectics are replaced by eclecticism – this is the most conventional and widespread phenomenon in present-day official social-democratic literature in relation to Marxism. Such a substitution is, of course, no novelty; it was observed even in the history of classical Greek philosophy. With the fraudulent substitution of opportunism for Marxism it becomes the very easiest way to deceive the masses by substituting eclecticism for dialectics. This gives an illusory satisfaction; it seems to take into account all sides of the process, all tendencies of development, all the conflicting influences and so forth; and yet in reality it presents no integral and revolutionary understanding of the process of social development at all.

We have already said above, and shall later show in greater detail, that the doctrine of Marx and Engels about the inevitability of a violent revolution refers to the bourgeois state. The latter *cannot* be superseded by the proletarian state (the dictatorship of the proletariat) through the process of 'withering away', but as a general rule only through a violent revolution. The panegyric sung

in its honour by Engels fully corresponds to Marx's repeated declarations: let us recall the end of *The Poverty of Philosophy* and *The Communist Manifesto*, with their proud and open proclamation of the inevitability of violent revolution; and let us also recall what Marx wrote nearly thirty years later, in criticizing the Gotha Programme of 1875, when he mercilessly castigated the opportunist character of that programme. This panegyric is by no means a mere 'impulse', a mere declamation or a polemic *démarche*. The necessity of systematically imbuing the masses with *this* view and no other view of violent revolution lies at the root of *all* the doctrines of Marx and Engels. The betrayal of their teaching by the predominant social-chauvinist and Kautskyite trends of today is expressed in striking relief by the neglect of *such* propaganda and agitation by both these trends.

The replacement of the bourgeois state by the proletarian state is impossible without a violent revolution. The eradication of the proletarian state, i.e. the eradication of the state as such, is impossible except through the process of 'withering away'.

A detailed and concrete development of these views was given by Marx and Engels when they studied each separate revolutionary situation and analysed the lessons of the experience of each particular revolution. We shall now move on to this, undoubtedly the most important, part of their doctrine.

CHAPTER II

The State and Revolution – The Experience of 1848–51

1 *The Eve of the Revolution*

The first works of mature Marxism, *The Poverty of Philosophy* and *The Communist Manifesto*, appeared just on the eve of the 1848 Revolution. Consequently, alongside an explosion of the general foundations of Marxism, they offer us to a certain degree a reflection of the concrete revolutionary situation of the time. Thus it will doubtless be more expedient to examine what the authors of these works said about the state immediately before they drew their conclusions from the experience of the years 1848–51.

In *The Poverty of Philosophy* Marx writes:

The working class in the course of its development will replace the old bourgeois society with an association which will exclude classes and their antagonism; there will no longer be political power properly so-called since political power is the official expression of the antagonism of classes in bourgeois society.

(p. 182, German edition, 1885)

It is instructive to compare this general exposition of the idea of the state's disappearance after the elimination of classes with the exposition given in *The Communist Manifesto*, written by Marx and Engels a few months later – namely in November 1847:

In describing the most general phases of the development of the proletariat we traced the more or less veiled civil war within existing society up to the point where it turns into open revolution, and where the proletariat establishes its rule through the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie . . .

We have seen above that the first step in the workers' revolution is the transformation (literally 'elevation') of the proletariat into the ruling class, the conquest of democracy.

The proletariat uses its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all the instruments of production

in the hands of the state, i.e. of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of 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 question 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 supremely interesting definition of the state which also belongs to the list of 'forgotten words' of Marxism: *'The state, i.e. the proletariat organized as the ruling class.'*

This definition of the state has never been explained in the literature of propaganda and agitation prevailing in official social-democratic parties. Worse still, it has been deliberately forgotten as it is completely irreconcilable with reformism and is a slap in the face of the usual opportunist prejudices and philistine illusions about the 'peaceful development of democracy'.

The notion that the proletariat needs a state is repeated by all opportunists, social-chauvinists and Kautskyites, who affirm this to be Marx's doctrine while 'forgetting' to add, firstly, that the proletariat (according to Marx) needs a state on the wane, i.e. a state so organized that it immediately begins to wither. And, secondly, the 'state' needed by the labouring people is to be 'the proletariat organized as the ruling class'.

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

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

The petty-bourgeois democrats, those self-styled socialists who have replaced class struggle with dreams of harmony among the classes and even portrayed 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 come to a recognition of its tasks. This petty-bourgeois utopia, which is inseparably connected with the conception of the state as being above classes, has led in practice to the betrayal of the interests of the labouring 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 England, France, Italy and other countries at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.

Marx fought all his life against this petty-bourgeois socialism, which is now resurrected in Russia by the Socialist Revolutionary and Menshevik parties. He applied his doctrine on the class struggle consistently, right through to his doctrine about political power, about the state.

The overthrow of bourgeois rule can be accomplished only by the proletariat as the specific class whose economic conditions of existence prepare it for such an overthrow and provide it with the possibility and the power to perform it. While the bourgeoisie breaks up and disintegrates the peasantry and all the petty-bourgeois strata, it welds together, unites and organizes the proletariat. Only the proletariat – by virtue of its economic role in large-scale production – is capable of being the leader of *all* the labouring and exploited masses, whom the bourgeoisie exploits, oppresses and crushes often not less but more strongly than it does for proletarians, but who are incapable of waging an *independent* struggle for their liberation.

The doctrine about the class struggle, when applied by Marx to the question of the state and of socialist revolution, leads necessarily to the recognition of the *political rule* of the proletariat, of its dictatorship, i.e. of power shared with nobody and relying directly upon the armed force of the masses. The overthrow of the bourgeoisie can be achieved only by the proletariat becoming transformed into the *ruling class*, capable of crushing the inevitable and desperate resistance of the bourgeoisie and of organizing *all* the labouring and exploited masses for the new economic order.

The proletariat needs state power, the centralized organization

of force, the organization of violence both to crush the resistance of the exploiters and to *lead* the enormous mass of the population – the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie, the semi-proletarians – in the work of ‘establishing’ a socialist economy.

By educating the workers’ party, Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat which is capable of assuming power and *of leading the whole people* to socialism, of directing and organizing the new order, of being the teacher, the guide, the leader of all the labouring and exploited people in the task of constructing their social life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie. By contrast, the now prevalent opportunism selects from the workers’ party and trains the representatives of the better-paid workers, who are cut off from the working masses and who ‘get along’ fairly well under capitalism and sell their birthright for a mess of pottage, i.e. renounce their role as revolutionary leaders of the people against the bourgeoisie.

‘The state, i.e. the proletariat organized as the ruling class’: this theory of Marx is inseparably bound up with all he taught about the revolutionary role of the proletariat in history. The culmination of this role is the proletarian dictatorship, the political rule of the proletariat.

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

2 *The Revolution in Summary*

Marx sums up his conclusions from the Revolution of 1848–51 on the question of the state which interests us in the following argument, contained in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*:

But the revolution is thoroughgoing. It is still on its journey through purgatory. It does its work methodically. By 2 December 1851 [the day of Louis Bonaparte’s *coup d’état*], it had completed one half of its preparatory work; it is now completing the other half. First it perfected the

parliamentary power in order to be able to overthrow it. Now that it has attained this, it perfects the *executive power*, reduces it to its purest expression, isolates it, sets it up against itself as the sole object *in order to concentrate all its forces of destruction against it* [author's italics]. And when the revolution has done this second half of its preliminary work, Europe will leap from its seat and triumphantly exclaim: Well grubbed, old mole!

This executive power, with its enormous bureaucratic and military organization, with its highly complex and ingenious state machinery and with this host of half a million bureaucrats as well as an army of another half million, this appalling parasitic organism, which entangles the entire body of French society like a net and chokes all its pores, sprang up in the epoch of the absolute monarchy with the decline of feudalism, which this same organism helped to hasten. [The first French Revolution developed centralization] but at the same time broadened the scope, the attributes and the number of agents of governmental power. Napoleon completed this state machine. [The legitimatist monarchy and the July monarchy], added nothing new but a greater division of labour . . .

Finally, the parliamentary republic in its struggle against the revolution found itself compelled to strengthen, alongside with repressive measures, the resources and centralization of governmental power. *All revolutions perfected this machine instead of smashing it* [our italics]. The parties which fought in turn for domination regarded the seizure of this huge edifice as the principal spoils for the victor.

(*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, pp. 98-9, fourth edition, Hamburg, 1907)

In this remarkable argument Marxism takes a tremendous step forward in comparison with *The Communist Manifesto*. There the question of the state is still treated in an extremely abstract fashion, with the most general concepts and expressions. Here the question is treated concretely, and the conclusion is extremely precise, definite, practical and tangible: all previous revolutions perfected the state machine, whereas it must be broken, smashed.

This conclusion is the chief and fundamental point in Marxism's doctrine on the state. And it is precisely this fundamental point which has been not only completely *forgotten* by the dominant official social-democratic parties, but simply *distorted* (as we shall see below) by the foremost theoretician of the Second International, K. Kautsky.

The Communist Manifesto gives a general summary of history,

which compels us to regard the state as the organ of class rule and leads to the inevitable conclusion that the proletariat cannot overthrow the bourgeoisie without first conquering political power, without attaining political dominance, 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 impossible in a society without class contradictions. The question how, from the viewpoint of historical development, the replacement of the bourgeois state by the proletarian state should take place is not posed here.

It is just such a question that Marx poses and decides in 1852. True to his philosophy of dialectical materialism, Marx takes as his basis the historical experience of the great years of revolution, 1848-51. Here, as always, his doctrine is a *summarizing* of experience, illuminated by a profound philosophical world-view and a rich knowledge of history.

The question of the state is put concretely: how did the bourgeois state, the state machine necessary for the rule of the bourgeoisie, historically arise? What changes, what evolution did it undergo in the course of the bourgeois revolutions and in the face of the independent open actions of the oppressed classes? What are the tasks of the proletariat in relation to this state machine?

The centralized state power characteristic of bourgeois society arose in the epoch of the fall of absolutism. Two institutions are most typical of this state machine: the bureaucracy and the standing army. There are frequent references in the works of Marx and Engels as to how it is that these institutions are connected by thousands of threads with the bourgeoisie. The experience of every worker illustrates this connection in an extremely vivid and convincing manner. The working class learns in its bones to recognize this connection; this is why it so easily grasps and so firmly appropriates the scientific knowledge about the inevitability of this connection – a knowledge which the petty-bourgeois democrats either ignorantly and flippantly deny, or, still more flippantly, admit it in general terms while forgetting to draw the corresponding practical conclusions.

The bureaucracy and the standing army are a 'parasite' on the body of bourgeois society, a parasite spawned by the internal contradictions tearing that society apart, but a parasite which 'chokes' all its vital pores. The Kautskyite opportunism now dominating

official social-democracy considers the view of the state as a *parasitic organism* to be the peculiar and exclusive attribute of anarchism. Of course, this distortion of Marxism is extraordinarily profitable for those philistines who have reduced socialism to the unparalleled disgrace of justifying and glorifying the imperialist war by applying the concept of 'the defence of the fatherland' to it; but it is an absolute distortion nevertheless.

The development, perfection and strengthening of this bureaucratic and military apparatus occurred through all the bourgeois revolutions witnessed in an abundance of cases in Europe since the fall of feudalism. In particular, it is precisely the petty bourgeoisie that is attracted to the side of the large-scale bourgeoisie and is subordinated to it to a significant degree by means of this apparatus, which provides the upper strata of the peasantry, small artisans, traders and the like, with relatively comfortable, quiet and respectable jobs which elevate their holders *above* the people. Take what has happened in Russia during the six months following 27 February 1917: official posts which were formerly given by preference to members of the Black Hundreds have now become the spoils of the Kadets, Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries. Nobody has basically thought of any serious reforms; efforts have been made to delay them 'until the Constituent Assembly meets', and little by little to put off the convocation of the Constituent Assembly until the end of the war! But there has been no postponement, no waiting around for the Constituent Assembly in the dividing of the spoils, in the getting of cosy jobs as ministers, deputy ministers, governors-general, etc., etc.! The game of combinations 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 high and low, throughout the country, in every department of central and local administration. The general record, the general objective record for the half-year between 27 February and 27 August 1917 is beyond dispute: reforms shelved, distribution of official jobs accomplished and 'mistakes' in the distribution corrected by several redistributions.

But the more the bureaucratic apparatus is 'redistributed' among the various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties (among the Kadets, SRs and Mensheviks, if we take the Russian example), the more clearly the oppressed classes, with the proletariat at their head, become

conscious of their irreconcilable hostility to the *whole* of bourgeois society. Hence the necessity 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 repressions, i.e. this same state machine. Such a course of events compels the revolution '*to concentrate all its forces of destruction*' against the state power, and to set itself the aim not to perfect the state machine but to *smash and destroy* it.

It was not logical arguments but the actual development of events in 1848-51, the living experience of those years, that led to the problem being posed in this way. The extent to which Marx held strictly to the factual ground of historical experience can be seen from the fact that, in 1852, he did not yet concretely pose the question as to *what* was to take the place of the state machine that was to be destroyed. Experience had not yet provided material for the solution of this problem which history placed on the agenda of the day only later, in 1871. In 1852 all that it was possible to affirm with the scientific precision of an observation made in natural history was that the proletarian revolution *had approached* the task of 'concentrating all its forces of destruction' against the state power, of 'smashing' the state machine.

Here the question may arise whether it is correct to generalize the experience, observations and conclusions of Marx, to apply them to a field that is wider than the history of France over the three years from 1848 to 1851. In order to analyse this question let us first recall a remark by Engels, and then examine the factual data. Engels wrote in his preface to the third edition of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*:

France is the country where, more than anywhere else, the historical class struggles were each time fought out to a decisive result. It is in France that the changing political forms within which they move and in which their results are expressed have been stamped in the sharpest outlines. As the centre of feudalism in the Middle Ages, the model country of a uniform monarchy based on estates since the time of the Renaissance, France demolished feudalism at the time of the Great Revolution and established the pure rule of the bourgeoisie with a classical clarity unparalleled by any other European country. And the struggle of the upward-striving proletariat against the ruling bourgeoisie appears here in an acute form unknown elsewhere.

(p. 4, 1907 edition)

The last sentence is out of date, inasmuch as an interruption has come about in the revolutionary struggle of the French proletariat since 1871; but, long as this interruption may be, it in no way precludes the possibility that, in the coming proletarian revolution, France may show herself to be the classical land of the class struggle fought out to a decisive result.

But let us cast a general glance over the history of the advanced countries at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. We shall see that the same process has been happening at a slower pace, in more varied forms and on 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 (England, Germany to a certain extent, Italy, the Scandinavian countries, etc.); on the other hand, a struggle for power among the various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties which have distributed and redistributed the 'spoils' of bureaucratic offices while the foundations of bourgeois society remained unchanged; and, finally, the perfection and strengthening of the 'executive authority', its bureaucratic and military apparatus.

There is no doubt that these features are common to the whole modern evolution of all capitalist states in general. In the three years between 1848 and 1851 France displayed in a swift, sharp, concentrated form, the same processes of development characteristic of the entire capitalist world.

Imperialism – the era of bank capital, the era of gigantic capitalist monopolies, the era of the transformation of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism – has displayed an extraordinary strengthening of the 'state machine' and an unprecedented growth of its bureaucratic and military apparatus together with the intensification of repressive measures against the proletariat both in the monarchical and in the freest republican countries.

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

What the proletariat will put in its place is to be found in the highly instructive material provided by the Paris Commune.

3 *The Presentation of the Question by Marx in 1852*

In 1907 Mehring, in the journal *Die Neue Zeit* (vol. XXV, no. 2, p. 164), published extracts from a letter from Marx to Weydemeyer dated 5 March 1852. This letter contains, amongst other things, the following remarkable comment.

As regards myself, I am due no credit for discovering the existence of classes in modern society or for discovering the struggle amongst them. Bourgeois historians long before me described the historical development of this struggle of the classes, and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes. What I did that was new was to prove the following: (1) that the existence of classes is bound up only with definite historical phases in the development of production (*historische Entwicklungsphasen der Produktion*); (2) that class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat; (3) that this dictatorship itself constitutes only the transition to the eradication of all classes and to a society without classes . . .

With these words Marx succeeded in giving stunningly vivid expression firstly to the main and radical difference between his doctrine and the doctrine of the advanced and most profound thinkers of the bourgeoisie; and secondly to the essence of his doctrine on the state.

The main point in Marx's teachings is the class struggle. This is very often said and written. But it is not true. And it is from this untruth that there very often results an opportunist distortion of Marxism, its falsification in such a way as to make it acceptable to the bourgeoisie. For the doctrine of the class struggle was created *not* by Marx *but* by the bourgeoisie *before* Marx; and generally speaking it *is acceptable* to the bourgeoisie. Those who recognize *only* the class struggle are not yet Marxists; they may be situated still within the framework of bourgeois thinking and bourgeois politics. To limit Marxism to the doctrine of the class struggle means to chop up Marxism, distort and reduce it to something acceptable to the bourgeoisie. Only those persons are Marxists who *extend* the recognition of class struggle as far as the recognition of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. This is what constitutes the most profound difference between the Marxist and the ordinary petty (as well as grand) bourgeois. This is the touchstone on which a *real*

understanding and recognition of Marxism is to be tested. And it is not surprising that, when the history of Europe has brought the working class to confront this question as a *practical* matter, not only all the opportunists and reformists but all the 'Kautskyites' (being people who vacillate between reformism and Marxism) have proved to be miserable philistines and petty-bourgeois democrats who *repudiate* the dictatorship of the proletariat. Kautsky's pamphlet, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, published in August 1918, i.e. long after the first edition of the present book, is a paradigm of the petty-bourgeois distortion of Marxism and its disgusting renunciation *in practice* alongside its hypocritical recognition *in words* (cf. my pamphlet, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, Petrograd and Moscow, 1918).

Present-day opportunism in the person of its main representative, the ex-Marxist K. Kautsky, fits in completely with Marx's above-quoted characterization of the *bourgeois* position, for this opportunism limits the recognition of the class struggle to the area of bourgeois relationships. (But within this area, within its framework, not a single educated liberal will refuse to recognize the class struggle 'in principle'!) Opportunism *does not extend* the recognition of class struggle to the period of *transition* from capitalism to communism, to the period of the bourgeoisie's *overthrow* and its complete *elimination*. In reality, this period is inevitably a period of an unprecedentedly savage class struggle in unprecedentedly acute forms; and, consequently, the state in this period unavoidably has to be a state that is democratic *in a new way* (for the proletarians and the propertyless in general, and dictatorial *in a new way* (against the bourgeoisie).

And further to the point: the essence of Marx's doctrine of the state has been assimilated only by those who have grasped that the dictatorship of a *single* class is necessary not only for every class society in general and not only for a *proletariat* which has overthrown its bourgeoisie, but also for the entire *historical period* dividing capitalism from 'society without classes', from communism. The forms of bourgeois states are extraordinarily varied, but their essence is the same: all these states somehow or other in the final analysis simply have to be a *dictatorship of the bourgeoisie*. The transition from capitalism to communism, of course, cannot help but produce a vast abundance and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same: *the dictatorship of the proletariat*.

CHAPTER III

The State and Revolution – The Experience of the Paris Commune of 1871 – Marx's Analysis

1 *What was Heroic about the Communards' Attempt?*

It is well known that several months before the Commune, in autumn 1870, Marx warned the workers of Paris that any attempt to overthrow the government would be the folly of desperation. But when, in March 1871, a decisive battle was imposed upon the workers and they accepted the challenge when the uprising had become a fact, Marx greeted the proletarian revolution with the greatest joy despite the unfavourable auguries. Marx did not fall back upon a pedantic condemnation of a 'premature' movement as did the notorious Russian renegade from Marxism, Plekhanov, who began in November 1905 by writing encouragingly about the workers' and peasants' struggle, but after December 1905 cried out just like a liberal: 'They should not have taken to arms.'

Marx, however, was not only enthusiastic about the heroism of the Communards who, as he put it, 'stormed the heavens'. He regarded the mass revolutionary movement, even though it did not achieve its aim, as an historical experience of enormous importance, as a certain advance on the part of the worldwide proletarian revolution, as a practical step which was more important than hundreds of programmes and arguments. To analyse this experience, to draw tactical lessons from it, to re-examine his theory in the light of it: this was the task set for himself by Marx.

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

The last preface to the new German edition of *The Communist Manifesto*, as signed by both its authors, is dated 24 June 1872. In this preface the authors Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels say that the programme of *The Communist Manifesto* 'has in some places become outdated', and they continue:

[The Commune] demonstrated in particular that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machine, and deploy it for its own purposes'.

The authors took the words that are inside the inverted commas in this quotation from Marx's work, *The Civil War in France*.

Thus Marx and Engels considered one basic and principal lesson of the Paris Commune to have such enormous importance that they introduced it as an essential correction to *The Communist Manifesto*.

It is extremely characteristic that it is this essential correction that has been distorted by the opportunists, and that its meaning is probably not known to nine-tenths, if not ninety-nine hundredths, of the readers of *The Communist Manifesto*. We shall deal with this distortion more fully below in the chapter specially devoted to distortions. Here it will be adequate to note that the current vulgar 'understanding' of Marx's above-quoted famous utterance that he was emphasizing the idea of slow development as opposed to a seizure of power and so on.

In fact, *the exact opposite is the case*. Marx's notion is that the working class must *break up, smash* the 'ready-made state machine', and not confine itself merely to seizing hold of it.

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

If you look at the last chapter of my *Eighteenth Brumaire*, you will see that I state that the next attempt of the French Revolution will not be, as happened before, to transfer the bureaucratic-military machine from one set of hands to another, but to *smash* it (Marx's italics; in the original German: *zerbrechen*), and this is the prerequisite for every real people's revolution on the continent. And it is precisely this which is being attempted by our heroic comrades in Paris.

(*Die Neue Zeit*, vol. XX, no. 1, p. 709, 1901-2)

[The letters of Marx to Kugelmann have appeared in Russian in no fewer than two editions, one of which I edited and provided with an introduction.]

These words, 'to smash the bureaucratic-military state machine', concisely express Marxism's principal lesson on the tasks of the proletariat in the revolution in relation to the state. And it is this

lesson that has been not only completely forgotten but directly distorted by the prevailing Kautskyite 'interpretation' of Marxism!

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

It is especially interesting to note two points in Marx's above-quoted argument. Firstly, he limits his conclusion to the continent. This was understandable in 1871, when England was still the model of a purely capitalist country and was without militarism and, to a considerable degree, without bureaucratism. Marx consequently made an exception of England, where a revolution, even a people's revolution, then seemed to be and indeed was possible *without* the preliminary condition of destroying the 'ready-made state machine'.

Now in 1917, in the epoch of the first great imperialist war, this reservation by Marx is no longer valid. Both England and America, the largest and ultimate representatives – in the whole world – of Anglo-Saxon 'liberty' in the sense of an absence of militarism and bureaucratism, have completely sunk into the all-European filthy and bloody morass of bureaucratic-military institutions which subordinate everything to themselves and trample everything underfoot. Today both in England and America 'the preliminary condition for every true people's revolution' is the *smashing*, the *destruction* of the 'ready-made state machine' (developed in those countries between 1914 and 1917 to 'European' and general imperialist standards of perfection).

Secondly, particular attention is due to Marx's extremely profound remark that the destruction of the bureaucratic-military state machine is 'the prerequisite for every true *people's* revolution'. This idea of a 'people's' revolution seems strange coming from Marx; and 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 a condition of such wretchedly liberal distortion that nothing exists for them beyond the antithesis between bourgeois revolution and proletarian revolution – and even this antithesis they interpret in an extremely lifeless way.

If we take the revolutions of the twentieth century as examples, we shall naturally have to recognize the Portuguese and Turkish revolutions as being bourgeois ones. Neither of them, however, is a

'people's' revolution since the mass of the people, its enormous majority, has in neither of them come out actively and independently to any notable extent with its own economic and political demands. By contrast, although the Russian bourgeois revolution of 1905-7 registered no such 'brilliant' successes as at times fell to the lot of the Portuguese and Turkish revolutions, it was undoubtedly a 'real people's' revolution since the mass of the people, its majority, the very lowest social strata, who were crushed by oppression and exploitation, rose independently and placed on the entire course of the revolution the imprint of *their own* demands, of *their own* attempts to construct a new society in their own way in place of the old society which was being destroyed.

In the Europe of 1871 there was not a single country on the continent where the proletariat constituted the majority of the people. A 'people's' revolution tugging the majority along into the movement, could be such only if it embraced both the proletariat and the peasantry. These two classes then constituted the 'people'. These two classes are united by the fact that the 'bureaucratic-military state machine' oppresses, crushes, exploits them. To *smash* this machine and *break it up* is truly in the interest of the 'people', of the majority, of the workers and the majority of the peasants: this is 'the preliminary condition' for a free union between the poorest peasants and the proletarians; and democracy in the absence of such a union is unstable and socialist transformation impossible.

As is well known, the Paris Commune was pioneering a way towards such a union even though it did not reach its goal as a result of a number of circumstances both internal and external in character.

Consequently, in speaking of a 'real people's revolution', Marx, without in the least forgetting the peculiarities of the petty bourgeoisie (he spoke a lot and often about them), gave the most stringent consideration to the actual correlation of class forces in the majority of continental countries of Europe in 1871. And on the other hand he stated that the 'smashing' of the state machine was required by the interests of both the workers and the peasants, that it unites them, that it confronts them with the common task of removing the 'parasite' and of replacing it with something new.

With what exactly?

2 *With What is the Smashed State Machine to be Replaced?*

In 1847, in *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx's answer to this question was as yet a completely abstract one; or rather, more accurately, it was an answer that indicated the tasks without explaining the means of accomplishing them. The answer given in *The Communist Manifesto* was that this machine was to be replaced by 'the organization of the proletariat into the ruling class', by 'the conquest of democracy'.

Marx did not indulge in utopias; he expected the *experience* of the mass movement to provide the answer to the question as to what specific forms this organization of the proletariat as the ruling class would assume and as to the exact manner whereby this organization would be combined with the most complete and consistent 'conquest of democracy'.

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

Originating in the Middle Ages, there developed in the nineteenth century 'a centralized state power with its ubiquitous organs: the standing army, the police, the bureaucracy, the clergy and the judiciary estate'. With the development of class antagonism between capital and labour,

state power assumed more and more the character of public power for the oppression of labour, the character of a machine of class rule. After every revolution marking a certain step forward in the class struggle, the purely oppressive character of state power stands out in bolder and bolder relief.

After the revolution of 1848–9, state power becomes 'the national war engine of capital against labour'. The Second Empire consolidates this.

The direct antithesis to the Empire was the Commune . . . It was a particular form [of] a republic that was to eliminate not only the monarchical form of class rule but also class rule itself.

What did this 'particular' form of proletarian, socialist republic consist of? What was the state it was beginning to create?

The first decree of the Commune was the eradication of the standing army and its replacement by the armed people.

This demand now appears in the programmes of all parties going by the name of socialist. But the true value of their programmes is best shown by the behaviour of our Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, who in practice refused to carry out this demand immediately after the revolution of 27 February!

The Commune was formed from municipal councillors chosen through universal suffrage in the various wards of Paris. They were responsible and instantly recallable. The majority of them naturally consisted of workers or acknowledged representatives of the working class . . .

The police, until then the agent of the state government, was quickly stripped of its political functions and turned into the responsible and instantly recallable organ of the Commune . . . So, too, were the bureaucrats of all other branches of the administration . . . Beginning with the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at *a workman's wages*. All privileges and financial allowances for representative work given to the highest holders of state office disappeared along with those offices . . . Having eradicated the standing army and the police, those instruments of material power for the old government, the Commune was anxious to break the instrument of spiritual oppression, the power of the priests . . . The posts in the judiciary lost their former appearance of independence . . . Henceforward they were to be elective, responsible and recallable.

Thus the Commune appears to have replaced the smashed state machine 'only' by fuller democracy: the abolition of the standing army; the provision that all officials should be elected and subject to recall. But as a matter of fact this 'only' signifies a gigantic replacement of certain institutions by other institutions of an essentially different kind. This is precisely one of those instances of 'quantity becoming transformed into quality': democracy, introduced as fully and consistently as is at all conceivable, is transformed from bourgeois democracy into proletarian democracy; from a state (= a special force for the suppression of a particular class) into something which is no longer a state in the proper sense.

It is still necessary to suppress the bourgeoisie and its resistance. This was particularly necessary for the Commune; and one of the reasons for its defeat was that it did not do this with enough decisiveness. But the organ of suppression is now the majority of the population, and not a minority as always occurred under slavery, serfdom and wage slavery. And as soon as it is the majority of the people *itself* which 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 high command of the standing army), the majority itself can directly undertake this, and the more the functions of state power are undertaken by the people as a whole, the less need is left for such a power.

In this respect a certain measure of the Commune highlighted by Marx is especially noteworthy: the abolition of all financial allowances for persons chosen as political representatives and of all financial privileges accorded to officials: the reduction of the pay for *all* servants of the state to the level of '*a workman's wages*'. This expresses, in the sharpest possible way, the break between bourgeois democracy and proletarian democracy, between the democracy of the oppressors and the democracy of the oppressed classes, between the state as a '*special force*' for the suppression of a particular class and the suppression of the oppressors by the *general force* of the majority of the people – the workers and the peasants. And it is precisely on this especially obvious point, arguably the most important as regards the problem of the state is concerned, that the teachings of Marx have been the most forgotten! In popular commentaries, whose number is legion, this is not mentioned. It is 'good form' to keep silent about it as if it were old-fashioned '*naïveté*', just as the Christians, after receiving the position of a state religion, 'forgot' the '*naïveté*' of primitive Christianity with its democratic-revolutionary spirit.

The reduction of the pay of the highest state officials seems to be 'simply' a demand of a naïve, primitive democratism. One of the 'founders' of modern opportunism, the former social-democrat Eduard Bernstein, has often exerted himself to repeat the vulgar bourgeois jeers at 'primitive' democratism. Like all opportunists and like today's Kautskyites, he has utterly failed to understand that, firstly, the transition from capitalism to socialism is *impossible*

without a certain 'return' to 'primitive' democratism (for how else can the majority of the population and then the whole population, including every one of its members, proceed to discharge state functions?); secondly, that 'primitive democratism' on the basis of capitalism and capitalist culture is not the same as primitive democratism in prehistoric or precapitalist times. Capitalist culture has *created* large-scale production, factories, railways, the postal service, telephones and so forth, and *on this basis* the great majority of the functions of the old 'state power' have become so simplified and can be reduced to such very simple operations of registering, filing and checking that these functions will become entirely accessible to all literate people, that these functions will be entirely performable for an ordinary 'workman's wages' and that these functions can (and must) be stripped of every shadow of association with privilege or peremptory command.

Complete electivity of all officials without exception; their subjection to recall *at any time*; the reduction of their salaries to the level of an ordinary 'workman'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 from capitalism over to socialism. These measures impinge on the state-based and purely political reconstruction of society; but, of course, they acquire their full meaning and significance only in connection with the 'expropriation of the expropriators' being either accomplished or prepared, i.e. with the transition of capitalist private ownership of the means of production into social ownership.

Marx wrote:

The Commune made that catchword of bourgeois revolutions, cheap government, into a reality by eradicating the two greatest items of expenditure, the standing army and the bureaucracy.

From the peasantry, as from other strata of the petty bourgeoisie, only an insignificant minority 'rise to the top', 'get on in the world' in the bourgeois sense, i.e. become either well-to-do people and bourgeois or else officials in secure and privileged positions. In every capitalist country where there is a peasantry (as in most capitalist countries), the vast majority of the peasants are oppressed by the government and yearn both for its overthrow and for 'cheap' government. This can be realized *only* by the proletariat; and in

realizing it, the proletariat is simultaneously taking a step towards the socialist reconstruction of the state.

3 *The Eradication of Parliamentarianism*

The Commune [Marx wrote] had to be not a parliamentary but a working institution passing and executing laws at the same time . . .

Instead of deciding once every three or six years which member of the ruling class should represent and suppress [*ver- und zertreten*] the people in parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people organized in communes in the search for the workers, foremen and bookkeepers for their enterprise just as individual suffrage serves every other employer for this purpose.

Thanks to the dominance of social-chauvinism and opportunism, this remarkable criticism of parliamentarianism made in 1871 also now belongs to the 'forgotten words' of Marxism. Cabinet ministers and professional parliamentarians, the traitors to the proletariat and the 'businesslike' socialists of our day have left all criticism of parliamentarianism completely to the anarchists, and this wonderfully rational foundation is used by them to denounce *all* criticism of parliamentarianism as 'anarchism'!! It is not surprising that the proletariat of the 'advanced' parliamentary countries, feeling a great disgust with 'socialists' such as the Scheidemanns, Davids, Legiens, Sembats, Renaudels, Hendersons, Vanderveldes, Staunings, Brantings, Bissolatis and Co., has ever more frequently been transferring its sympathies to anarcho-syndicalism, despite the fact that the latter is the twin brother of opportunism.

For Marx, however, revolutionary dialectics were never the empty fashionable phrase, the toy rattle, which Plekhanov, Kautsky and others have made of it. Marx knew how to break mercilessly with anarchism for its inability to use even the 'pig-sty' of bourgeois parliamentarianism especially when there is quite obviously no revolutionary situation in sight; but at the same time he knew how to subject parliamentarianism to truly revolutionary-proletarian criticism.

To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people in parliament: this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarianism not only in

parliamentary-constitutional monarchies but also in the most democratic republics.

But if we pose the question of the state and if we examine parliamentarianism as one of the state's institutions, from the viewpoint of the tasks of the proletariat in *this* field, what is the way out of parliamentarianism? How can we do without it?

Again and again it needs repeating: the lessons of Marx, based on the study of the Commune, have been so much forgotten that present-day 'social-democrats' (viz. present-day traitors to socialism) find any criticism of parliamentarianism, other than anarchist or reactionary criticism of it, quite incomprehensible.

The way out of parliamentarianism is not, of course, the elimination of representative institutions and electivity but the conversion of the representative institutions from talking shops into 'working' institutions. 'The Commune had to be not a parliamentary but a working institution, passing and executing laws at the same time . . .'

'Not a parliamentary but a working' institution: this strikes right between the eyes of the present-day parliamentarians and parliamentary 'lap dogs' of social-democracy! Look at any parliamentary country, from America to Switzerland, from France to England, Norway and so forth: in these countries the real business of 'state' is done behind the scenes and is carried on by departments, chancelleries, general staffs. Parliaments are only places where chattering goes on with the special purpose of fooling the 'common people'. This is so true that even in the Russian republic, a bourgeois-democratic republic, all these sins of parliamentarianism have immediately revealed themselves even before the republic managed to set up a real parliament. Heroes of rotten philistinism such as the Skobelevs and Tseretelis, the Chernovs and Avksentevs, have even succeeded in polluting the Soviets after the fashion of the most disgusting bourgeois parliamentarianism and in converting them into mere talking shops. In the Soviets, the 'socialist' gentlemen-cum-ministers are duping credulous rustics with phrase-mongering and resolutions. In the government, a sort of permanent quadrille is performed so that, on the one hand, as many Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks as possible may have their turn at putting their snouts in 'the trough', the lucrative and prestigious official posts, and so that, on the other hand, the 'attention of the people'

may be engaged. Meanwhile it is inside the chancelleries and general staffs that they 'work' on the business of 'state'.

Delo Naroda, the organ of the ruling 'Socialist Revolutionary' Party, recently admitted in an editorial article – with the matchless candour of people of the kind of 'good society' where everyone is engaged in political prostitution – that even in those ministries belonging to the 'socialists' (please excuse the expression!) the whole bureaucratic apparatus has stayed essentially as of old, is functioning in the old way and quite 'freely' sabotaging the revolutionary reforms! Even without this admission, does not the actual history of the participation of the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks in the government prove this? Here it is itself a characteristic fact that, in the ministerial company of the Kadets, Messrs Chernov, Rusanov, Zenzinov and the other editors of *Delo Naroda* have so much lost any sense of shame that they make no effort to keep it quiet – as if they were talking of a trifle – that in 'their' ministries everything has stayed as of old!! Revolutionary-democratic phrases to make fools of village simpletons; bureaucracy and red tape to 'warm the hearts' of the capitalists: this is the *essence* of the 'honest' coalition for you.

The Commune replaces the venal and rotten parliamentarianism of bourgeois society with institutions in which freedom of opinion and discussion do not degenerate into deception, for the parliamentarians themselves have to work, have to execute their own laws, have to test their results in real life and to answer directly to their electors. Representative institutions remain, but parliamentarianism *does not exist* here as a special system, as the division of labour between the legislative and the executive, as a privileged position for the deputies. We cannot imagine democracy, even proletarian democracy, without representative institutions, but we can and *must* imagine democracy without parliamentarianism if our criticisms of bourgeois society are not mere empty words for us, if the aspiration to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie is our serious and sincere desire, and not a 'ballot-box' phrase for catching workers' votes, as it is with the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries and as it is with the Scheidemanns and Legiens, the Sembats and Vanderveldes.

It is extremely instructive that, in speaking of the functions of *those* bureaucrats who are necessary for the Commune and for

proletarian democracy, Marx compares them to the workers of 'any other employer', i.e. of the ordinary capitalist enterprise, with its 'workers, foremen and bookkeepers'.

There is no touch of utopianism in Marx in the sense that he made up or invented a 'new' society. No, he studies the *birth* of the new society *out of* the old, the forms of transition from the latter to the former as a natural-historical process. He takes the actual experience of a mass proletarian movement and tries to draw practical lessons from it. He 'learns' from the Commune, just as all the great revolutionary thinkers were not afraid to learn from the experience of the great movements of the oppressed class, and never addresses pedantic 'sermons' to them (such as 'they should not have taken to arms' à la Plekhanov or 'a class must put limits on itself' à la Tsereteli).

There can be no talk of eradicating the bureaucracy at once, everywhere and completely. That is utopia. But to *smash* the old bureaucratic machine at once and to begin immediately to construct a new one that facilitates the gradual eradication of all bureaucracy: this is *not* utopia, this is the experience of the Commune, this is the direct, immediate task of the revolutionary proletariat.

Capitalism simplifies the functions of 'state' administration; it makes it possible to have done with 'bossing' and to reduce the whole business to an organization of proletarians (as the ruling class) which will hire 'workers, foremen and bookkeepers' in the name of the whole of society.

We are not utopians. We do not have 'dreams' about dispensing *at once* with all administration, with all subordination; these anarchist dreams, based upon a misunderstanding of the tasks of the dictatorship of the proletariat, are essentially alien to Marxism, and in practice serve only to postpone the socialist revolution until people have themselves become different. No, we want the socialist revolution with people as they are now, with people who cannot dispense with subordination, with control, with 'foremen and bookkeepers'.

But the subordination must be to the armed vanguard of all the exploited and labouring people, to the proletariat. A start can and must be made at once, overnight, to replace the specific 'bossing' by state bureaucrats with the simple functions of 'foremen and bookkeepers', functions which are already fully accessible to ordi-

nary urban inhabitants at their present level of development and are fully performable for a 'workman's wages'.

We ourselves, the workers, will organize large-scale production on the basis of what has already been created by capitalism, relying on our own experience as workers, establishing strict, iron discipline supported by the state power of the armed workers; we will reduce state officials to the role of simple executors of our instructions, to the role of responsible, recallable and modestly paid 'foremen and bookkeepers' (together, of course, with 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 start, 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 quotation marks, an order bearing no similarity to wage slavery, an order in which the ever simpler functions of control and accounting will be performed by each person in turn, will then become a habit and will finally die out as the *special* functions of a special stratum of people.

A sharp-witted German social-democrat of the 1870s called the *postal service* a model for the socialist economic system. This is very true. At present the postal service is a business organized on the lines of a state-*capitalist* monopoly. Imperialism is gradually transforming all trusts into organizations of a similar type. Over the 'common' labouring people, who are overworked and starved, the same bourgeois bureaucracy still stands in place. But the mechanism of society's economic management is already to hand. We have only to overthrow the capitalists, to crush the resistance of these exploiters with the iron hand of the armed workers, to smash the bureaucratic machine of the modern state – and we shall have a well-equipped mechanism of a high technical quality, freed from the 'parasite', a mechanism which can very easily be set in motion by the united workers themselves, who will hire technicians, foremen and bookkeepers and pay them *all*, and indeed *all* 'state' officials in general, a workman's wage. Here is a concrete, practical task, immediately fulfillable in relation to all trusts, a task that will relieve labouring people of exploitation and take account of the experiment already begun by the Commune (especially in the area of state construction).

To organize the *whole* national economy on the lines of the postal service, so that the technicians, foremen, bookkeepers, as well as *all* officials, shall receive salaries no higher than 'a workman's wage', under the control and leadership of the armed proletariat – this is our immediate aim. It is such a state, resting on such an economic foundation, that we need. This is what will bring about the eradication of parliamentarianism and the preservation of representative institutions. This is what will rid the labouring classes of the prostitution of these institutions by the bourgeoisie.

4 Organization of the Unity of the Nation

In the rough sketch of national organization which the Commune had no time to develop further, it is clearly stated that the Commune was to . . . become the political form of even the smallest country hamlet . . . The Communes were to elect the 'National Delegation' in Paris . . .

The few but important functions which still would remain for a central government were not to be abolished, as has been deliberately incorrectly asserted, but were to be handed over to communal, i.e. strictly responsible agents . . .

The unity of the nation was not to be destroyed, but, on the contrary, to be organized by the communal constitution. The unity of the nation was to become a reality by means of the destruction of the state power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity but wanted to be independent of, and superior to, the nation. In fact this state power was only a parasitic excrescence on the body of the nation . . . The task was to amputate the purely repressive organs of the old governmental power, to wrest its legitimate functions from an authority with pretensions to standing above society itself and to hand them over to the responsible servants of society.

The extent to which the opportunists of contemporary social-democracy have failed to understand – or, perhaps it would be truer to say, have not wanted to understand – these observations of Marx is best shown by that book of Herostratean fame written by the renegade Bernstein, *The Premises of Socialism and the Tasks of Social-Democracy*. It is precisely in connection with the above-quoted words of Marx that Bernstein wrote that this programme

in its political content displays in all essential features the greatest similar-

ity to the federalism of Proudhon . . . Despite all the other divergences between Marx and the 'petty-bourgeois' Proudhon [Bernstein places the word 'petty-bourgeois' in quotation marks in order to give what he regards as the desirable ironical effect] on these points their lines of thought are 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 task of democracy would be such an abolition [*Auflösung*, literally: a dissolution, a dismantlement] of the modern states and such a complete transformation [*Umwandlung*: overturn] of their organization as is conceived by Marx and Proudhon: the formation of a national assembly from delegates of provincial or regional assemblies, which in their turn would be constituted by delegates from the communes, so that the whole previous form of national representation would vanish completely.

(Bernstein, *Premises*, pp. 134 and 136, German edition, 1899)

This is downright monstrous: to confuse Marx's views on the 'destruction of state power as parasite' with Proudhon's federalism! But this 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 existing in all bourgeois countries.

All that occurs to the opportunist is what he sees around him, in a milieu of petty-bourgeois philistinism and 'reformist' stagnation: namely only the 'municipalities'! The opportunist has even learned not to think about the revolution of the proletariat.

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

To such an extent has the opportunist learned not to think in a revolutionary way and to ponder on revolution that he attributes 'federalism' to Marx and confuses him with the founder of anarchism, Proudhon. And Kautsky and Plekhanov, claiming to be orthodox Marxists and defenders of the doctrine of revolutionary Marxism, are silent about this! Here lies one of the roots of the extreme vulgarization of views on the difference between Marxism

and anarchism which is characteristic of both the Kautskyites and the opportunists, and which we shall have to discuss further.

Marx's above-quoted arguments on the experience of the Commune contain not a trace of federalism. Marx agrees with Proudhon on the very point that the opportunist Bernstein failed to see. Marx disagrees with Proudhon on the very point on which Bernstein found a similarity between them.

Marx agrees with Proudhon inasmuch as they both stood for the 'smashing' of the modern state machine. Neither the opportunists nor the Kautskyites wish to see this similarity of views between Marxism and anarchism (including both Proudhon and Bakunin) since they have departed from Marxism on this point.

Marx disagrees both with Proudhon and with Bakunin precisely on the question of federalism (not to mention the dictatorship of the proletariat). Federalism derives as a tenet of principle from the petty-bourgeois views of anarchism. Marx is a centralist. There is no retreat whatever from centralism in his quoted observations. Only people suffused with the philistine 'superstitious belief' in the state can mistake the destruction of the bourgeois state machine for the elimination of centralism!

Well, what if the proletariat and the poorest peasantry take state power into their hands, organize themselves quite freely in communes and *unite* the actions 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 forth to the *entire* nation, to society as a whole? Will that not be centralism? Will that not be the most consistent democratic centralism? And proletarian centralism at that?

Bernstein simply cannot conceive of the possibility of voluntary centralism, of the voluntary unification of the communes into a nation, of the voluntary fusion of the proletarian communes in the cause of destroying bourgeois rule and the bourgeois state machine. Like every philistine, Bernstein conceives of centralism only as something coming from on high, capable of being imposed and maintained solely by bureaucratic and militaristic power.

Marx, as though foreseeing the possibility of his views being distorted, deliberately emphasizes that the accusation that the Commune wanted to destroy the unity of the nation, and to abolish the central authority, were trumped up. Marx deliberately uses the

expression 'to organize the unity of the nation' so as to counterpose conscious, democratic proletarian centralism to bourgeois, military, bureaucratic centralism.

But . . . there are none so deaf as those who will not hear. And the opportunists of contemporary social-democracy do not want to hear about the destruction of state power, the cutting away of the parasite.

5 The Destruction of the Parasite State

We have already quoted Marx's relevant words on this and must now supplement them.

The usual fate of the object of new historical creativity [Marx wrote] is to be mistaken for the replica of older and even obsolete forms of social life to which the new institutions may bear a certain similarity. Thus this new Commune, which breaks up the modern state power [*bricht* – smashes], has been taken as a resurrection of the medieval communes . . . as a union of small states (Montesquieu, the Girondins) . . . as an exaggerated form of the ancient struggle against excessive centralization . . .

The communal constitution would have restored to the body of society all the forces hitherto devoured by the parasite state feeding upon, and clogging the free movement of, society. By this single act it would have advanced the regeneration of France . . .

The communal constitution would bring rural producers under the spiritual leadership of the main towns of each region, and secure the urban workers on their side there as the natural representatives of their interests. The very existence of the Commune involved, as a matter of course, local self-government, but no longer as a counter-balance against the state power which is now becoming outmoded.

'The eradication of state power' which was a 'parasitic excrescence'; its 'amputation'; its 'destruction'; 'state power is now becoming outmoded': these are the expressions used by Marx about the state when appraising and analysing the experience of the Commune.

All this was written a little less than half a century ago; and now it is like having to carry out excavations in order to bring a knowledge of undistorted Marxism to the broad masses. The conclusions

drawn from his observations of the last great revolution lived through by Marx were forgotten just at the moment when the time for the next great revolutions of the proletariat had arrived.

The variety of interpretations which the Commune has evoked, and the variety of interests which claimed to have been expressed in it, show that it was a thoroughly flexible political form, while all previous forms of government had been repressive to their very core. Its true secret was this: it was essentially *a government of the working class*, the result of the struggle of the producing class against the appropriating class; it was the at last discovered political form by which the economic emancipation of labour could be accomplished . . .

In the absence of this last condition the communal constitution would have been an impossibility and a delusion . . .

The utopians kept themselves busy with the 'discovery' of the political forms by which the socialist reconstruction of society was to take place. The anarchists shrugged off the question of political forms altogether. The opportunists of contemporary social-democracy accepted the bourgeois political forms of the parliamentary democratic state as a limit never to be overstepped; they battered their foreheads praying before this 'model' and declared all desire to *smash* these forms as anarchism.

Marx deduced from the whole history of socialism and of political struggle that the state was bound to disappear, that the transitional form of its disappearance (the transition from state to non-state) would be the 'proletariat organized as the ruling class'. But Marx did not set out to *discover* the political *forms* of this future. He limited himself to a precise observation of French history, to analysing it and to drawing a conclusion about the results of 1851: that matters were moving towards the *smashing* of the bourgeois state machine.

And when the mass revolutionary movement of the proletariat burst forth, Marx, despite the failure of that movement, despite its short duration and undisguisable weakness, began to study what forms it had *discovered*.

The Commune is the form 'at last discovered' by the proletarian revolution which allows the economic emancipation of labour to take place.

The Commune is the first attempt of a proletarian revolution to

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smash the bourgeois state machine; and it is the 'at last discovered' political form by which the smashed machine can and must be *replaced*.

Our further presentation will show that the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, in different circumstances and under different conditions, continue the work of the Commune and confirm the genius of Marx's historical analysis.

CHAPTER IV

Continuation: Supplementary Clarifications by Engels

Marx laid the groundwork relating to the question of the significance of the experience of the Commune. Engels returned repeatedly to the same theme clarifying Marx's analysis and conclusions and sometimes elucidating *other* sides of the question with such force and vividness that it is necessary to deal with his clarifications separately.

I *The Housing Question*

In his work on *The Housing Question* (1872), Engels is already considering the experience of the Commune and dwelling several times upon the tasks of the revolution in relation to the state. It is interesting that his handling of this concrete subject sharply clarified, on the one hand, those features of similarity between the proletarian state and the present-day state – features giving grounds for talking about a state in both cases – and, on the other hand, features of difference between them, involving the transition to the elimination of the state.

How is the housing question to be solved? In present-day society it is decided after the fashion of any other social question: by the gradual economic equalizing of supply and demand; and this is a solution which constantly reproduces the question itself anew, i.e. it is no solution. How the social revolution will solve this question not only depends upon circumstances of time and place but also is bound up with more far-reaching questions, one of the most fundamental of which is the elimination of the antithesis between town and country. Since we are not engaged in the composition of utopian systems for the organization of the future society, it would be more than idle to dwell on the question here. One thing is beyond dispute: there are already enough buildings for dwellings in the big

towns to relieve immediately the real housing *shortage* through a rational utilization of these buildings. This naturally can be realized only by the expropriation of the present owners and by the transferring of their houses to homeless workers or to workers presently living in excessively overcrowded apartments. As soon as the proletariat conquers political power, such a measure dictated in the interest of the public good will be just as easy to carry out as are other expropriations and bilettings by the existing state.

(p. 22, German edition, 1887)

The change in the form of state power is not examined here: only the content of its activity is taken up. Expropriations and occupations of apartments take place even on the orders of the existing state. From the formal point of view the proletarian state will also 'order' the occupation of apartments and expropriation of buildings. But it is clear that the old executive apparatus, the bureaucracy, which is linked to the bourgeoisie, would simply be unfit to carry out the orders of the proletarian state.

It must be affirmed that the actual seizure of all the instruments of labour, the seizure of industry as a whole on the part of the labouring people, is the exact opposite of the Proudhonist idea of 'redemption'. Under the latter, the individual worker becomes the owner of the dwelling, the peasant landholding, the instruments of labour; under the former, the 'labouring people' remain the collective owner of the houses, factories and instruments of labour. The use of these houses, factories and the rest will hardly be presented, at least during a transitional period, to individuals or associations without compensation for the costs. Just as the elimination of property in land does not presuppose the elimination of ground rent but rather its transfer, albeit in a modified form, to society. The actual seizure of all the instruments of labour on the part of the labouring people consequently does not at all exclude the retention of renting and renting out.

(p. 68)

We shall discuss the question touched upon in this commentary, namely the economic foundations of the withering away of the state, in the next chapter. Engels expresses himself extremely cautiously, saying that the proletarian state would 'scarcely' permit the use of houses without payment, 'at least during the transitional period'. The letting of apartments that belong to the whole people

to individual families presupposes the collection of payment, a certain amount of control and some sort of fixed scheme for the allotment of the apartments. All this demands a certain form of state, but in no way a special military and bureaucratic apparatus with a specially privileged position for officials. And the transition to a situation when it will be possible to supply apartments rent-free is connected with the complete 'withering away' of the state.

Speaking of the change of policy of the Blanquists, after the Commune and under the influence of its experience, to the principled position of Marxism, Engels formulates this position in passing as follows:

The necessity of political action by the proletariat and of its dictatorship as the transition to the abolition of classes and the state along with them . . .

(p. 55)

Admirers of pedantic criticism or the 'destroyers of Marxism' will perhaps see a contradiction between the *recognition* of the 'abolition of the state' and the rejection of this formulation as being anarchistic in the above-quoted passage from *Anti-Dühring*. It would not be surprising if the opportunists counted Engels, too, as an 'anarchist': the laying of charges of anarchism against internationalists is nowadays becoming more and more widespread among the social-chauvinists.

It has always been a teaching of Marxism 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 standing for the abolition of the state but of preaching that the state can be abolished 'overnight'.

The currently prevalent 'social-democratic' doctrine about the relation of Marxism to anarchism on the question of elimination of the state is such a complete distortion that it is especially useful to recall a particular polemic of Marx and Engels against the anarchists.

2 *The Polemic with the Anarchists*

This polemic relates to 1873. Marx and Engels contributed

articles against the Proudhonists, the 'autonomists' or 'anti-authoritarianists', to an Italian socialist collection and it was not until 1913 that these articles appeared in German in *Die Neue Zeit*.

If the political struggle of the working class assumes revolutionary forms [wrote Marx, ridiculing the anarchists for their repudiation of politics], if the workers set up their revolutionary dictatorship in place of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, they are committing the terrible crime of offending principles; for, in order to satisfy their wretched and crude everyday needs and to crush the bourgeoisie's resistance, they give the state a revolutionary and transcendent form instead of laying down their arms and abolishing the state . . .

(*Die Neue Zeit*, vol. I, year 32, p. 40, 1913-14)

It was exclusively against this kind of 'abolition' of the state that Marx rose up to refute the anarchists! He was in no way hostile to the view that the state would disappear when classes disappeared, or that it would be abolished when classes were abolished; but he was against the idea that the workers should renounce the use of arms, of organized violence, *i.e. of a state* whose duty was to serve the cause of 'crushing the resistance of the bourgeoisie'.

To prevent the true meaning of his struggle against anarchism from being distorted, Marx deliberately underlines the 'revolutionary and *transient* form' of the state needed by the proletariat. The proletariat needs the state only temporarily. We do not at all disagree with the *anarchists* on the question of the abolition of the state as an *aim*. We maintain that, to achieve this aim, we must make temporary use of the instruments, resources and methods of state power *against* the exploiters just as a temporary dictatorship of the oppressed class is necessary for the abolition of classes. Marx chooses the sharpest and clearest way to pose the question against the anarchists: after overthrowing the yoke of the capitalists, must 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 class if not a 'transient form' of the state?

Let every social-democrat ask himself: is *this* how he himself has been posing the question of the state in the polemic with the anarchists? Is *this* how the question has been posed by the vast majority of the official socialist parties of the Second International?

Engels presents the same ideas in much greater detail and much more popularly. Above all, he ridicules the mental confusion of the Proudhonists who called themselves 'anti-authoritarianists', i.e. repudiated any authority, any subordination, any kind of power. Take a factory, a railway, a ship on the open seas, said Engels: is it not clear that the functioning of each of these complex technical undertakings, being based on the application of machines and the planned cooperation of many people, would be impossible without a certain amount of subordination and, consequently, without a certain amount of authority or power?

If I put forward these arguments against the most desperate anti-authoritarianists [writes Engels] they can only offer the following answer: 'Yes, that is true, but here it is not a question of authority which we confer on our delegates, *but of a certain commission entrusted to them*. These people think that we can change a certain thing by changing its name . . .'

Having thus shown that authority and autonomy are relative concepts, that the area of their application changes with the various phases of social development, that it is absurd to take them as absolutes, and having added that the area of application of machinery and large-scale production is ever expanding, Engels moves from general considerations on authority to the question of the state:

If the autonomists [he writes] wanted only to say that the social organization of the future would confine authority entirely to the limits which are inevitably prescribed by the conditions of production, we could come to terms with each other. But they are blind to all facts that make authority a necessity, and they passionately fight against the word.

Why is it that the anti-authoritarianists do not confine themselves to shouting against political authority, against the state? All socialists are agreed that the political state, and with it political authority, will disappear as a result of the future social revolution, i.e. that public functions will lose their political character and be turned into the simple administrative functions of supervising social interests. But the anti-authoritarianists demand that the political state be abolished at one stroke, even before the social conditions that gave birth to it have been abolished. They demand that the first act of the social revolution should be the abolition of authority.

Have these gentlemen ever seen a revolution? A revolution is certainly

the most authoritarian thing that is possible. Revolution is the act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets, and cannons, i.e. extremely authoritarian means. And the victorious party of necessity is compelled to maintain its rule by means of fear which its arms inspire in the reactionaries. Would the Paris Commune have lasted more than a single day if it had not relied upon the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie? Are we not justified, on the contrary, in reproaching the Commune for having used this authority too little? Therefore, one of two things may be true: either the anti-authoritarianists do not know what they are talking about, in which case they are only sowing confusion. Or else they know, and are betraying the cause of the proletariat. In either instance they are merely helping the cause of reaction.

(p. 39)

It is in this argument that questions are broached which should be examined in connection with the subject of the relationship between politics and economics during the 'withering away' of the state (which constitutes the subject of the next chapter). Such are the questions about the transformation of public functions from political into simple administrative ones as well as about 'the political state'. The latter term, which is particularly capable of causing misunderstanding, points to the process of the withering away of the state: a state which is withering away may be called a non-political state at a certain stage of its withering away.

The most remarkable aspect of this argument of Engels is his posing of the question against the anarchists. Social-democrats claiming to be disciples of Engels have argued against the anarchists millions of times since 1873, but they have *not* argued exactly as Marxists can and must argue. The anarchist image of the abolition of the state is confused and *non-revolutionary*: that is how Engels raised the question. It is precisely the revolution in its emergence and development, with its specific tasks in relation to violence, authority, power and the state, that the anarchists do not wish to see.

The usual criticism of anarchism by present-day social-democrats has been reduced to the purest philistine vulgarity: 'We recognize the state whereas the anarchists don't!' Naturally such vulgarity cannot but repel workers who are at all thoughtful and

revolutionary. What Engels says is different: he emphasizes that all socialists recognize the disappearance of the state as a result of socialist revolution. He then concretely poses the question of the revolution, the very question which the social-democrats, out of their opportunism, usually evade, leaving it, so to speak, exclusively for the anarchists 'to work out'. And in posing this question, Engels takes the bull by the horns: should not the Commune have made *more* use of the *revolutionary* power of the *state*, i.e. of the proletariat armed and organized as the ruling class?

Prevailing official social-democracy usually shrugged off the question of the concrete tasks of the proletariat in the revolution either with a philistine sneer or, at best, with the sophistic evasion: 'Wait and see.' And the anarchists thus obtained the right to attack such social-democracy for betraying its task of giving the workers a revolutionary education. Engels uses the experience of the last proletarian revolution for the precise purpose of making a very concrete study of what should be done by the proletariat, and in what manner, in relation to both the banks and the state.

3 *Letter to Bebel*

One of the most, if not the most, remarkable observations on the state in the works of Marx and Engels is the following passage from Engels's letter to Bebel dated 18–28 March 1875. This letter, we may observe parenthetically, was first published by Bebel (as far as we know) in the second volume of his memoirs (*From My Life*), which appeared in 1911, i.e. thirty-six years after the letter had been written and posted.

Engels wrote to Bebel criticizing that same draft of the Gotha Programme which Marx, too, had criticized in his famous letter to Bracke. Touching on the question of the state in particular, Engels said as follows:

The free people's state is transformed into a free state. According to the grammatical meaning of these words, a free state is one where the state is free in relation to its citizens, i.e. a state with a despotic government. It would be proper to drop all this chatter about the state, especially after the Commune, which was not a state in its real sense. 'The people's state' has

been relentlessly thrown in our faces by the anarchists even though Marx's book against Proudhon and subsequently *The Communist Manifesto* had already directly stated that with the introduction of the socialist social order the state dissolves of itself [*sich auflöst*] and disappears. Since the state is only a transitional institution which is used in the struggle, in the revolution, in order to suppress one's adversaries by force, it is pure nonsense to talk of a free people's state: so long as the proletariat still *has need of* the state, it needs it not in the interests of freedom but in the interests of suppressing its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such will cease to exist. We would therefore propose everywhere to replace the word *state* with the word 'community' [*Gemeinwesen*], a good old German word corresponding to the French word 'commune'.

(pp. 321–2, German original)

It must 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-quoted letter from Engels – Marx's letter is dated 5 May 1875 – and that Engels was living at the time with Marx in London. Consequently, when he says 'we' in the last sentence, Engels is undoubtedly suggesting to the leader of the German workers' party in his own as well as in Marx's name that the word 'state' *be struck out of the programme* and be replaced by the word '*community*'.

What a howl about 'anarchism' would be raised by the luminaries of present-day 'Marxism', which has been falsified for the convenience of the opportunists, if such a correction of the programme were suggested to them!

Let them howl! The bourgeoisie will lavish praise on them for it.

But we shall get on with our work. In reviewing our party's programme we must pay absolute attention to the advice of Engels and Marx in order to come nearer to the truth, to restore Marxism by purging it of distortions, to guide the struggle of the working class for its emancipation more correctly. Certainly no opponents of the advice of Engels and Marx will be found among the Bolsheviks. Difficulty will arise, perhaps, only over the term. In German there are two words meaning 'community', of which Engels used the one which denotes *not* a single community but their totality, the system of communities. In Russian there is no such word, and

perhaps we have to choose the French word 'commune', although this also has its drawbacks.

'The Commune was no longer a state in the proper sense' – here is the statement by Engels with the greatest importance for theory. After what has been indicated above, this statement is entirely comprehensible. The Commune *was ceasing* to be a state in so far as it had to suppress not the majority of the population but a minority (the exploiters); it smashed the bourgeois state machine; the population itself came on the scene in place of a *special* repressive force. All this was a departure from the state in the proper sense. And had the Commune become firmly established, all traces of the state in it would have 'withered away' of themselves; it would not have needed to 'abolish' the institutions of the state: they would have ceased to function to the extent that 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 recognizes these attacks to be correct *to the extent* that the 'people's state' was as much a load of nonsense and as much a departure from socialism as the 'free people's state'. Engels tries to put the struggle of the German social-democrats against the anarchists on the right lines, to make this struggle correct in principle, to purge it of opportunist prejudices about the 'state'. Alas! Engels's letter was put away to gather dust for thirty-six years. We shall see below that, even after this letter was published, Kautsky obstinately repeated what in essence were the very mistakes against which Engels had warned.

Bebel replied to Engels in a letter of 21 September 1875 in which he wrote among other things that he 'fully agreed' with Engels's criticism of the draft programme and that he blamed Liebknecht for his willingness to make concessions (German edition of Bebel's memoirs, vol. II, p. 334). But if we take Bebel's pamphlet, *Our Aims*, we encounter completely incorrect arguments on the state:

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

(*Unzere Ziele*, p. 14, German edition, 1886)

This was printed in the *ninth* (the ninth!) edition of Bebel's

pamphlet! It is not surprising that so persistent a repetition of opportunist arguments on the state was absorbed by German social-democracy, especially when Engels's revolutionary clarifications had been securely filed away and all the conditions of its current existence were over a lengthy period 'weaning' it away from revolution!

4 *Critique of the Draft of the Erfurt Programme*

The critique of the draft of the Erfurt Programme, sent by Engels to Kautsky on 29 June 1891 and published only ten years later in *Die Neue Zeit*, cannot be ignored in an analysis of Marxism's teaching on the state, for this criticism is devoted mainly to just these *opportunist* views of social-democracy on questions of *state* structure.

Let us note in passing that Engels also makes a remarkably valuable observation on questions of economics which shows how attentively and thoughtfully he followed the latest changes in capitalism, and how he consequently managed to foresee to a certain extent the tasks of our present-day imperialist epoch. The observation is as follows. Referring to the word 'planlessness' [*Planlosigkeit*] used in the draft programme to characterize capitalism, Engels writes:

When we move from joint-stock companies to trusts which take charge of and monopolize whole branches of industry, it is not only private production but also planlessness that ceases to exist.

(*Die Neue Zeit*, vol. XX, p. 8, 1901–2)

Here we have the fundamentals for the theoretical appraisal of the latest phase of capitalism, i.e. imperialism; namely that capitalism turns into monopoly *capitalism*. The last word must be emphasized because the bourgeois-reformist assertion that monopoly capitalism or state-monopoly capitalism is no longer capitalism but is describable as 'state socialism' or something of the sort is a most widespread error. The trusts, of course, did not provide, 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 regulate it on a planned

basis, we still remain under *capitalism* – capitalism in its latest stage, but still undoubtedly capitalism. The ‘proximity’ of *such* capitalism to socialism should serve the authentic representatives of the proletariat as providing an argument in favour of the proximity, easiness, practicability and urgency of socialist revolution, and not at all as an argument for tolerating both the repudiation of this revolution and the campaign to glorify capitalism which engages the energy of all the reformists.

But let us return to the question of the state. Here Engels offers a trinity of particularly valuable suggestions: first, on the question of the republic; second, on the connection between the national question and the structure of state; third, on local self-government.

As regards the republic, Engels made this the centre of gravity of his criticism of the draft of the Erfurt Programme. And when we recall what importance the Erfurt Programme acquired for the whole of international social-democracy, becoming the model for the entire Second International, we can say without exaggeration that Engels is here criticizing the opportunism of the entire Second International. ‘The political demands of the draft,’ Engels writes, ‘suffer from a great inadequacy. What really ought to be said *is not there*’ (Engels’s italics).

And, later on, it is made clear that the German constitution is but a copy of the reactionary constitution of 1850; that the Reichstag is only, as Wilhelm Liebknecht put it, ‘the fig leaf of absolutism’ and that it is ‘an obvious nonsense’ to wish to bring about ‘the transformation of all the instruments of labour into common property’ on the basis of a constitution which legalizes the existence of little states and the union of little German states.

‘To touch on this subject is dangerous,’ adds Engels, knowing full well that it was impossible legally to include in the programme the demand for a republic in Germany. But Engels does not content himself with just this obvious consideration which satisfies ‘everybody’. Engels continues:

And yet somehow or other the thing must be moved forward. How necessary this is is shown precisely by the opportunism now widespread [*einreissende*] amidst a large section of the social-democratic press. Fearing a renewal of the law against the socialists and remembering several premature statements made under the rule of that law, they now want the

party to recognize the existing legal order in Germany as adequate for the peaceful realization of all its demands . . .

Engels highlights the fundamental fact that the German social-democrats were acting out of fear of a renewal of the Exceptional Law, and without hesitation calls this opportunism, declaring that the dreams of a 'peaceful' path were completely senseless precisely because of the absence of a republic and freedom in Germany. Engels is sufficiently careful not to tie his own hands. He admits that, in republican or very free countries, a peaceful development towards socialism 'is conceivable' (only 'conceivable!'); but in Germany, he repeats:

in Germany, where the government is almost omnipotent and the Reichstag and all other representative bodies have no real power, to proclaim such a thing in Germany – and, moreover, when there is no need whatsoever – is to remove the fig leaf from absolutism and to become a screen for its nakedness . . .

The official leaders of the German Social-Democratic Party, who pushed this advice under wraps, turned out to be screen-carriers for absolutism.

Such a policy can only ultimately lead the party astray. They highlight general, abstract political questions and thereby conceal the immediate concrete questions which will put themselves on the agenda under the impact of the first great events, the first political crisis. What can result from this except that the party is left helpless at the decisive moment, that a lack of clarity and unity prevails on the most decisive questions because these questions have never been discussed? . . .

This forgetting of the great basic considerations for the momentary interests of the day, this pursuit of successes of the moment and this struggle for them without taking account of its further consequences, this sacrifice of the future movement for its present may stem from 'honest' motives. But this is and remains opportunism, and 'honest' opportunism is surely the most dangerous of all . . .

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

Engels repeats here in a particularly striking form the basic idea which runs like a red thread through all the works of Marx, namely that the democratic republic is the shortest path to the dictatorship of the proletariat. For such a republic, without in the least eradicating the rule of capital and, therefore, the oppression of the masses and class struggle, inevitably leads to such an extension, development, unfolding and intensification of this struggle that, as soon as there arises the possibility of satisfying the underlying 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 are also the 'forgotten words' of Marxism for the entire Second International, and the oblivion surrounding them was demonstrated with extraordinary vividness by the history of the Menshevik Party over the first six months of the Russian Revolution of 1917.

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

What should take the place of present-day Germany? [with its reactionary division into petty states, a division which perpetuates all the peculiarities 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. A federal republic in the gigantic territory of the United States is still, on the whole, a necessity, although in the east it is already becoming an encumbrance. It would be a step forward in England, where four nations live on two islands and, despite the existence of a single parliament, three particular systems of legislation exist side by side. It has long been an encumbrance in little Switzerland, and if it is still possible to tolerate a federal republic there, this is only because Switzerland is content with the role of a purely passive member of the European state system. Federal Switzerlandization would be a huge step backwards for Germany. Two points distinguish a union state from a completely unitary state: namely that each individual state entering the union, each canton has its own special civil and criminal legislation, its own special judicial system; and, secondly, that together with a popular chamber there is also a chamber of representatives from the states, a chamber wherein each canton, whether large or small, votes as such.

In Germany the union state constitutes a transition to the completely unitary state, and the 'revolution from above' of 1866 and

1870 must not be reversed but supplemented by a 'movement from below'.

Engels not only refuses to be indifferent to the forms of the state but, on the contrary, tries to analyse the transitional forms with exceptional thoroughness in order to establish, according to the concrete-historical peculiarities of each separate case, *from what and into what* the given transitional form is a transition.

From the viewpoint of the proletariat and the proletarian revolution, Engels is like Marx in defending democratic centralism, the one and indivisible republic. He regards the federal republic either as an exception and an obstacle to development or as a transitional form from a monarchy to a centralist republic, as a 'step forward' under certain specific conditions. And among these special conditions, the national question is given prominence.

Despite their merciless criticism of both the reactionary nature of little states and the disguising of this reactionary nature by the national question in certain concrete cases, Engels is like Marx in exhibiting not the slightest trace of a desire to brush aside the national question – a desire which is often the sin of Dutch and Polish Marxists as a result of their very legitimate struggle against the narrow philistine nationalism of 'their' small states.

Even in England, where geographical conditions, a common language and the history of many centuries would seem to have 'put an end' to the national question of the separate little divisions of England – even there Engels gives consideration to the patent fact that the national question is not yet a thing of the past, and therefore recognizes a federal republic as a 'step forward'. Of course, there is not the slightest hint here of a refusal to criticize the inadequacies of a federal republic or to undertake the most determined propaganda and struggle for a unified, centralized democratic republic.

But democratic centralism is understood by Engels not at all in the bureaucratic sense in which this term is used by bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideologists, including the anarchists. Centralism for Engels does not in the least preclude such broad local self-government as would, when accompanied by the voluntary defence of the unity of the state by the 'communes' and the regions, absolutely eradicate all bureaucratism and all 'ordering' from above. Developing on the programmatic views of Marxism on the state, Engels writes:

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Thus a unitary republic – but not in the sense of the present-day French republic, which is nothing but the Empire established in 1798 without the emperor. From 1792 to 1798 each Department of France, each commune [*Gemeinde*] enjoyed complete self-government on the American model, and this is what we too must have. How self-government is to be organized and how we can manage without a bureaucracy has been shown to us by America and the first French republic, and is being shown even today by Canada, Australia and the other English colonies. And such a provincial (regional) and communal self-government constitutes much freer institutions than for instance Swiss federalism, where the canton admittedly is very independent in relation to the union [i.e. to the federal state as a whole], but is also independent both in relation to the district [*Bezirk*] and in relation to the commune. The cantonal governments appoint the police commissioners [*Bezirksstatthalter*] and prefects – a feature which is unknown in English-speaking countries and which we shall have to eradicate here just as resolutely in the future along with the Prussian Landräte and Regierungsräte [commissars, police commissioners, governors, and in general all bureaucrats appointed from above].

Accordingly, Engels proposes to formulate the point in the programme about self-government as follows:

Complete self-government for the province [gubernia and region], district and community through bureaucrats elected by universal suffrage; the abolition of all local and provincial authorities appointed by the state.

I have already had occasion to indicate – in *Pravda* (no. 68, 28 May 1917), which was suppressed by the government of Kerenski and other ‘socialist’ ministers – how on this point (and of course not on this point alone) our pseudo-socialist representatives of pseudo-revolutionary pseudo-democracy were undertaking outrageous departures *from democratism*. It is understandable that people who have tied themselves into a ‘coalition’ with the imperialist bourgeoisie have remained deaf to these observations.

It is extremely important to note that Engels, with the facts at his fingertips, adduces a most precise example to refute a prejudice which is very widespread, particularly among petty-bourgeois democrats: namely that a federal republic necessarily means greater freedom than a centralist republic. This is not true. The facts adduced by Engels about the centralist French republic of 1792–8 and the

federal Swiss republic refute this. The really democratic centralist republic gave *more* freedom than the federal republic. Or, to put it another way; the *greatest* amount of local, regional and other types of freedom known in history was given by a *centralist* and not by a federal republic.

Inadequate attention has been and is being paid in our party propaganda and agitation to this fact, as well as to the whole question of the federal and the centralist 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 18 March 1891 and was originally published in *Die Neue Zeit* – Engels, along with some interesting incidental remarks on questions connected with the attitude towards the state, gives a remarkably vivid account of the lessons of the Commune. This account, which was rendered more profound by the entire experience of the twenty years separating the author from the Commune and which was directed particularly against the ‘superstitious belief in the state’ so widespread in Germany, may justly be called the *last word* of Marxism on the question under consideration. In France, Engels observes, the workers were under arms after 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 nub of the matter – which is true also, by the way, for the question of the state (namely *is the oppressed class armed?*) – is captured here remarkably well. It is this nub which is most often ignored both by professors under the influence of bourgeois ideology and by petty-bourgeois democrats. In the Russian Revolution of 1917, the honour (which is an honour à la Cavaignac) of blurting out this secret of bourgeois revolutions fell to the ‘Menshevik’ and self-professed ‘Marxist’ Tsereteli. In his

'historic' speech of 11 June, Tsereteli blabbed about the bourgeoisie's determination to disarm the Petrograd workers – naturally presenting this decision as his own and as a 'state' necessity in general!

Tsereteli's historic speech of 11 June will, of course, stand for every historian of the Revolution of 1917 as one of the most striking illustrations of how the Socialist Revolutionary and Menshevik bloc, led by Mr Tsereteli, deserted to the bourgeoisie *against* the revolutionary proletariat.

Another incidental remark by Engels, which is also connected with the question of the state, relates to religion. It is well known that German social-democracy, as it decayed and became ever more opportunist, slipped more and more frequently into a philistine misinterpretation of the famous formula: 'the treatment of religion as a private matter'. What happened was that this formula was twisted to mean that religion was a private matter *even for the party* of the revolutionary proletariat! It was this utter betrayal of the revolutionary programme of the proletariat that provoked the revolt of an Engels who in 1891 was witnessing only the *very feeble* germinations of opportunism in his own party, and who consequently expressed himself very cautiously:

As it was almost exclusively workers or the workers' recognized representatives who sat in the Commune, its decisions were distinguished by a decidedly proletarian character. Either these decisions decreed reforms which the republican bourgeoisie had failed to pass solely out of a scoundrelish cowardice but which provided a necessary basis for the free activity of the working class. Such is the realization of the principle that *in relation to the state* religion is a purely private matter. Or else the Commune promulgated decrees which were in direct line with the interest of the working class and in part cut deeply into the old social order.

Engels deliberately underlined the words 'in relation to the state', aiming a blow straight in the face of German opportunism, which had declared religion to be a private matter *in relation to the party* and thereby degraded the party of the revolutionary proletariat to the level of a most vulgar 'free-thinking' philistinism that is willing to allow a position of neutrality towards religious creeds while renouncing the task of *party* struggle against the opium of religion which befuddles the mind of the people.

The future historian of German social-democracy, in tracing the roots of its shameful collapse in 1914, will find much interesting material on this question, beginning with the evasive announcements in the articles by the party's ideological leader Kautsky which open the door wide to opportunism, and ending with the attitude of the party towards the '*Los-von-Kirche-Bewegung*' [the 'leave-the-church' movement] in 1913.

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

Here are the lessons lent prominence by Engels:

It was precisely the oppressive power of the previous centralized government, army, political police and bureaucracy, which Napoleon had created in 1798 and which since then had been taken over by every new government as a welcome instrument and used against its adversaries – it was precisely this power which had to fall everywhere in France as it already had fallen in Paris.

The Commune from the very outset had to recognize that the working class, on coming to power, could not go on managing with the old state machine; that the working class, in order not to lose again the supremacy it has just won for itself, must on the one hand eradicate the entire old machine of oppression previously used against itself and on the other hand must safeguard itself against its own deputies and bureaucrats by declaring them all, without exception, subject to recall at any moment.

Engels emphasizes again and again that the state remains a state not only under a monarchy but *also in a democratic republic*, i.e. it retains its fundamental distinctive feature of transforming its officials, who are 'the servants of society' and its organs, into the *masters* of society.

Against this transformation of the state and the organs of the state from servants of society into masters of society – a transformation which has been inevitable in states that have previously existed – the Commune brought two infallible means to bear. Firstly, it made appointments to all official posts in administration, justice and education with persons elected through universal suffrage; and in addition it introduced the right of the electors to recall these elected representatives at any time. And, secondly, it paid all officials, high or low, only such a wage as was received by other workers. The highest salary paid by the Commune to anyone was 6,000

francs.* In this way a reliable barrier to place-hunting and careerism was created, even apart from the binding mandates to delegates to representative institutions which were additionally introduced.

It is here that Engels approaches the interesting boundary where consistent democracy on the one hand is *transformed* into socialism, and on the other hand where it *makes its own demand* for socialism. For the eradication of the state necessitates the transformation of the functions of the civil service into the simple operations of control and accounting that are within the capacity and ability of the vast majority of the population and, eventually, every single individual in the population. And the complete elimination of careerism demands that an 'honourable', albeit lowly paid, little post in the public service should *not* be able to serve as a spring-board to highly lucrative posts in banks or joint-stock companies, as happens *constantly* in all the freest capitalist countries.

But Engels did not make the mistake made, for example by some Marxists, on the question of the right of nations to self-determination, when they argue that this is impossible under capitalism but superfluous under socialism. Such a superficially incisive but in fact incorrect argument could be repeated in regard to *any* democratic institution, right through to modest salaries for officials; for a fully consistent democracy is impossible under capitalism and all democracy *withers away* under socialism.

This is a sophism like the old joke as to whether a man will become bald if he loses one more hair.

The development of democracy *to its ultimate point*, the search for *the forms* of this development, their testing *by practice* and so forth: all this is one of the constituent tasks of the struggle for the social revolution. Taken separately, no democratism will ever provide socialism; but democratism in real life will never be 'taken separately': it will be 'taken together' with other things, it will exert its influence on the economy, will stimulate *its* transformation and

*This gives nominally around 2,400 roubles, but 6,000 roubles at the present rate of exchange. Bolsheviks who propose, for example, a salary of 9,000 roubles for those persons working in municipal councils are behaving quite unforgivably; they should propose the introduction of a maximum of 6,000 roubles *through the entire state*: a fully adequate amount.

in its turn will be subjected to the influence of economic development and so on. Such are the dialectics of living history.

Engels continues:

This shattering [*Sprengung*] of the old 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 dwell again briefly here on some features of this replacement because it is precisely in Germany that the superstitious belief in the state has been carried over from philosophy into the general consciousness of the bourgeoisie and even many workers. According to the teaching of the philosophers, the state is the 'realization of the idea', or the Kingdom of God on earth, translated into philosophical language; the state is terms, the field in which eternal truth and justice are realized or must be realized. And from this there follows a superstitious reverence for the state and everything related to the state, a superstitious reverence which takes root all the more easily since people are accustomed from childhood to take it for granted that the affairs and interests common to society as a whole could not be carried through and safeguarded otherwise than as in the past, i.e. by means of the state and its bureaucrats who are rewarded with their lucrative posts. People imagine that they are taking an extraordinarily bold step forward when they divest themselves of their belief in hereditary monarchy and become supporters of a democratic republic. In reality the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another, and indeed in the democratic republic no less than in the monarchy. And at best the state is an evil inherited by the proletariat after its victory in the struggle for class supremacy; the victorious proletariat, just like the Commune, will be compelled to cut off the worst sides of this evil until such time as a generation which has grown up in the new, free social conditions is capable of throwing away all this rubbish associated with the state.

Engels warned the Germans not to forget the fundamentals of socialism on the question of the state in general in the contingency of the replacement of the monarchy by a republic. His writings now read like a straightforward lesson to Messrs Tsereteli, Chernov and their like, who in their activity as 'coalition' ministers displayed a superstitious belief in the state and a superstitious reverence for it!

Two further remarks: (1) If Engels says that under a democratic republic, 'not a whit less' than under a monarchy, the state remains

a 'machine for the oppression of one class by another', this by no means signifies that the *form* of oppression is a matter of indifference to the proletariat, as some anarchists 'teach'. A wider, freer and more open *form* of class struggle and of class oppression gives gigantic relief to the proletariat in its struggle for the elimination of classes in general; (2) Why will only a new generation be in a condition to do away forever with all this rubbish associated with the state? This question is bound up with the question of overcoming democracy to which we shall now proceed.

6 Engels on the Overcoming of Democracy

Engels had occasion to speak out on this in connection with the question of the *scientific* incorrectness of the name 'social-democrat'.

In the preface to an edition of his articles from the 1870s on various subjects, mainly 'international' in character [*Internationales aus dem 'Volksstaat'*], dated 3 January 1894, i.e. written a year and a half before his death, Engels wrote that in all his articles he had been using 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 me [continues Engels] it was therefore an absolute impossibility to use such an elastic term to characterize our own special point of view. Today things are different, and this word ['social-democrat'] may perhaps do the job [*mag passieren*], even though it remains inexact [*unpassend*, inappropriate] for a party whose economic programme is not merely socialist in general, but directly communist – for a party whose ultimate political aim is the conquest of the whole state and, consequently, of democracy as well. The names of *real* [Engels's italics] political parties, however, are never wholly apposite; the party develops while the name remains.

Engels the dialectician remains true to dialectics in the twilight of his days. Marx and I, he says, had a beautiful, scientifically exact name for the party, but there was no real party, i.e. no mass proletarian party. Now (at the end of the nineteenth century) there is a real party, but its name is scientifically incorrect. Never mind:

it will 'do the job' so long as the party *develops*, so long as the scientific inexactitude of its name is not hidden from it and does not hinder its development in the right direction!

Perhaps some joker amongst us Bolsheviki might try to reassure us in the manner of Engels: we have a real party, it is developing excellently; even such a meaningless and ugly term as 'Bolshevik' will 'do the job' although it expresses absolutely nothing other than the purely accidental fact that at the Brussels-London Congress of 1903 we were in the majority . . . Perhaps, now that persecution of our party by republicans and 'revolutionary' petty-bourgeois democracy in July and August has attracted such universal respect to the name 'Bolshevik'; now that, in addition, this persecution has come to serve as an emblem of the tremendous historical step forward made by our party in its *real* development: perhaps now even I might vacillate over the proposal I made this April to change our party's name. Perhaps I would propose a 'compromise' to my comrades: to call ourselves the communist party, but to retain the word 'Bolshevik' in brackets . . .

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

In conventional arguments about the state, the mistake is constantly made which is exposed in this warning by Engels and which has been noted in passing in our presentation above: namely that it is constantly forgotten that the elimination of the state also involves the abolition of democracy, that the withering away of the state means the withering away of democracy.

At first sight such an assertion seems extremely strange and incomprehensible; someone may indeed even begin to worry that we are expecting the advent of a social order wherein the principle of the subordination of the minority to the majority will not be observed; for does not democracy mean the recognition of just such a 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. it is an organization for the systematic use of *violence* 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

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organized and systematic violence, all use of violence against people in general. We do not expect the advent of a social order wherein the principle of the subordination of the minority to the majority will not be observed. But, in striving for socialism, we are convinced that it will develop into communism and that, in connection with this, the need for violence against people in general, for the *subordination* of one person to another, 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*, 'which has grown up in the new, free social conditions capable of throwing away all this rubbish associated with the state' – with the state in all its forms, including the democratic republican state.

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

CHAPTER V

The Economic Basis for the Withering Away of the State

The most substantial explication of this question is given by Marx in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (letter to Bracke of 5 May 1875, which was published only in 1891 in *Die Neue Zeit*, vol. IX no. 1, and then appeared in a special Russian-language edition). The polemical part of this remarkable work, which consists in a critique of Lassalleanism, has, so to speak, overshadowed its positive part: namely the analysis of the link between the development of communism and the withering away of the state.

1 *The Presentation of the Question by Marx*

A superficial comparison of Marx's letter to Bracke of 5 May 1875 with the above-examined letter from Engels to Bebel of 28 March 1875 might give the impression that Marx was much more of 'an enthusiast for the state' than Engels and that the difference of views between the two writers on the question of the state was very significant.

Engels calls on Bebel to abandon altogether his babbling about the state and to expunge the word 'state' completely from the programme, replacing it with the word 'community'. Engels even declares that the Commune had not been a state in the proper sense. Marx by contrast even speaks of the 'future statehood of communist society', i.e. as though he recognized the need for the state even under communism.

But such a view would be radically incorrect. Closer examination shows that the views of Marx and Engels on the state and its withering away coincide completely, and that Marx's above-quoted phrase refers precisely to this statehood while it is in the process of *withering away*.

It is clear that there can be no question of defining the exact 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 explained by the difference in the tasks taken up and pursued by them. Engels set himself the task of showing Bebel graphically, sharply and in broad brush-strokes the utter absurdity of the current prejudices about the state (shared to no small degree by Lassalle). Marx only touched upon *this* question in passing, being interested in another theme: namely the *development* of a communist society.

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

On the basis of what *data* is it possible to pose the question of the future development of future communism?

On the basis of the fact that it *originates* in capitalism, that it develops historically from capitalism, that it is the result of the action of a social force to which capitalism *has given birth*. There is no trace of an attempt by Marx to conjure up a utopia, to make idle guesses about what cannot be known. Marx poses the question of communism as a natural scientist would pose the question of the development of a new biological variety, for instance when it is already known that the variety arose in such and such a fashion and is changing in such and such a definite direction.

Marx, first of all, brushes aside the confusion which is introduced by the Gotha Programme to the question of the relation between state and society.

Contemporary society [he writes] is capitalist society, which exists in all civilized countries, more or less free from a medieval admixture, more or less modified by the peculiarities of each country's historical development, more or less developed. By contrast, 'the contemporary state' changes with each state frontier. It is different in the Prusso-German empire from what it is in Switzerland, it is different in England from what it is in the United States. The 'contemporary state' is therefore a fiction.

None the less the different states of the different civilized countries, despite their manifold diversity of form, have it in common that they are based on a modern bourgeois society which is more or less capitalistically developed. They therefore have certain essential common features. In this sense it is possible to speak of 'contemporary statehood' in contrast with the future when its present-day roots, namely 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 at that time which will be analogous to the state's present functions? This question can only be answered scientifically; and not an inch is moved nearer to resolving the problem by combining the word 'people' with the word state.

Having thus ridiculed all conversations about a 'people's state', Marx frames the question and gives a warning, as it were, that a scientific answer to it can be had only by the employment of solidly and scientifically established data.

The first circumstance to have been established with complete exactitude by the whole theory of development and generally by science as a whole – a circumstance that was forgotten by the utopians and is forgotten by present-day opportunists who are afraid of socialist revolution – is that, historically, there must undoubtedly be a special stage or a special phase of *transition* from capitalism to communism.

2 The Transition from Capitalism to Communism

Marx continues:

Between capitalist and communist society there lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the first into the second. In correspondence to this period there is also a political transition period, and the state in this period can be nothing other than *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat . . .*

Marx bases this conclusion on an analysis of the role played by the proletariat in modern capitalist society, on the data about the development of this society, and on the irreconcilability

of the antagonistic interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

Previously the problem was put in this way: in order to achieve its liberation, the proletariat must overthrow the bourgeoisie, win political power, establish its revolutionary dictatorship.

Now the problem is put somewhat differently: the transition from a capitalist society which is developing towards communism, to a 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 two concepts side by side: 'the transformation of the proletariat into the ruling class' and 'the conquest of democracy'. On the basis of everything presented above, it is possible to define more precisely how democracy changes in the transition from capitalism to communism.

In capitalist society, provided it develops under the most favourable conditions, we have more or less complete democratism in the democratic republic. But this democratism is always constricted by the narrow framework of capitalist exploitation, and consequently always remains essentially democratism for the minority, only for the propertied classes, only for the rich. Freedom in capitalist society always remains approximately the same as in the ancient Greek republics: freedom for the slave-owners. Modern wage slaves, as a result of capitalist exploitation, are so crushed by want and poverty that 'they have nothing to do with democracy', 'nothing to do with politics', that the majority of the population in the ordinary peaceful course of events is excluded from participation in the life of public politics.

The correctness of this assertion is perhaps most vividly confirmed by Germany, precisely because constitutional legality in that state steadily endured for a remarkably long time – for nearly half a century (1871–1914) – and social-democracy during this period managed to do much more than in other countries in the 'utilizing of legality' and in the organizing of a larger proportion of the workers into a political party than anywhere else in the world.

What is this largest proportion of politically conscious and active

wage slaves which has yet been observed in capitalist society? One million members of the social-democratic party – out of fifteen million wage-workers! Three million organized in trade unions – out of fifteen million!

Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich: this is the democratism of capitalist society. If we look more closely into the mechanism of capitalist democracy, we shall see everywhere, both in the 'petty' – supposedly petty – details of the suffrage (residential qualification, exclusion of women, etc.) and in the techniques of the representative institutions, in the real obstacles to the right of assembly (public buildings are not for 'beggars'!) as well as in the purely capitalist organization of the daily press and so on and so forth, we shall see restriction after restriction upon democracy. These restrictions, exclusions, exceptions, obstacles for the poor, seem petty, especially in the eyes of anyone who has never known want himself and never been in close contact with the oppressed classes in their mass life (and nine-tenths, if not ninety-nine hundredths, of bourgeois publicists and politicians are of such a kind); but the sum total of these restrictions excludes and shoves out the poor from politics, from active participation in democracy.

Marx grasped the *essence* of capitalist democracy magnificently when, in analysing the experience of the Commune, he spoke as follows: the oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class shall represent and repress them in parliament!

But from this capitalist democracy – which is inevitably narrow and stealthily shoves aside the poor, and is therefore pervasively hypocritical and false – a progressive development does not occur simply, directly and smoothly towards 'ever greater democracy' as the liberal professors and petty-bourgeois opportunists claim. No, a progressive development, i.e. towards communism, occurs through the dictatorship of the proletariat and cannot occur otherwise, for the *resistance* of the exploiter-capitalists cannot be *broken* by anyone else or by any other path.

And the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e. the organization of the vanguard of the oppressed as the ruling class for the suppression of the oppressors, cannot lead simply to an expansion of democracy. *Alongside* an immense expansion of democratism which *for the first time* becomes democratism for the poor, democratism for the

people and not democratism for the rich, the dictatorship of the proletariat imposes a series of exclusions from freedom in relation to 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 where there is suppression, where there is coercion, there is no freedom and no democracy.

Engels expressed this beautifully in his letter to Bebel when he said, as the reader will remember, that 'the proletariat has need of the state not in the interests of freedom but in the interests of suppressing its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such will cease to exist'.

Democracy for the gigantic majority of the people, and suppression by force, i.e. the exclusion from democracy of the exploiters and oppressors of the people: this is the transformation witnessed in democracy in the *transition* from capitalism to communism.

Only in communist society, when the resistance of the capitalists has been definitively crushed, when the capitalists have disappeared, when there are no classes (i.e. when there is no difference between the members of society in their relation to the social means of production), *only* then does 'the state . . . disappear' and does it '*become possible to speak of freedom*'. Only then will a truly complete democracy, democracy without any exceptions whatever, become possible and be realized. And only then will democracy begin to *wither away* because of the simple fact that, relieved of capitalist slavery, of countless horrors, savageries, absurdities and infamies of capitalist exploitation, people will gradually *become accustomed* to observing the elementary rules of social intercourse that have been known for ages and repeated for thousands of years in all copybooks – and to observing them without force, without compulsion, without subordination, *without the special apparatus* for compulsion which is called the state.

The expression 'the state *withers away*' is very appositely chosen, for it indicates both the gradualness of the process and its spontaneous nature. Only habit can, and undoubtedly will, have such an effect; for there are millions of times that we see around us how easily people become accustomed to observing the necessary rules of social intercourse when there is no exploitation, when there is nothing that rouses indignation, nothing that calls forth protest and revolt and creates the need for *suppression*.

Thus in capitalist society we have a democracy that is curtailed, wretched, false, a democracy only for the rich, for the minority. The dictatorship of the proletariat, the period of transition to communism, will for the first time create democracy for the people, for the majority, along with the necessary suppression of the minority who are the exploiters. Communism alone is capable of providing a truly complete democracy, and the more complete it is the more quickly will it become unnecessary and wither away of itself.

In other words: under capitalism we have the state in the proper sense of the word, i.e. a special machine for the suppression of one class by another, and, furthermore, of the majority by the minority. Understandably, if ever success is to be obtained in such an undertaking as the systematic suppression of the exploited majority by the exploiting minority, there exists a need for the utmost ferocity and savagery in this process of suppression, for the seas of blood through which mankind has to wade in a condition of slavery, serfdom and wage labour.

Furthermore, in the *transition* from capitalism to communism, suppression is *still* necessary; but it is now the suppression of the minority of exploiters by the exploited majority. A special apparatus, a special machine for suppression, the 'state' is *still* necessary; but this is now a transitional state, it is no longer a state in the proper sense; for the suppression of the minority of exploiters by the majority of *yesterday's* wage slaves is comparatively so easy, simple and natural a task that it will cost much less bloodshed than the suppression of the risings of slaves, serfs or wage labourers, and the price to be paid by mankind will be much 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. The exploiters are naturally in no position to suppress the people without a most complex machine for performing such a task, whereas *the people* can suppress the exploiters even with a very simple 'machine', almost without a 'machine', without a special apparatus: by means of the simple *organization of the armed masses* (such as the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, let us note if we may run ahead in our account).

Lastly, only communism makes the state absolutely unnecessary, for there is *nobody* to be suppressed – 'nobody' in the sense of a

class, in the sense 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 equally the need to suppress *such* excesses. But in the first place, no special machine, no special apparatus of suppression is needed for this; this will be done by the armed people itself with the ease and simplicity shown by any crowd of civilized people, even in modern society, stepping in to put a stop to a brawl 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 masses, their want and their poverty. With the removal of this chief cause, excesses will inevitably begin to '*wither away*'. We do not know with what speed and calibration; but we do know that they will wither away. With their withering away the state will also *wither away*.

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

3 *The First Phase of Communist Society*

In his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* Marx gives a detailed refutation of Lassalle's idea that under socialism the workers will receive their 'undiminished' or 'full product of labour'. Marx shows that from the social labour of society there must be deducted a reserve fund, a fund for the expansion of production, for the replacement of 'worn-out' machines and so on; then, from the means of consumption, there must be deducted a fund for the expenses of administration, for schools, hospitals, homes for the aged and so on.

Instead of Lassalle's misty, opaque, phrase ('the full product of his labour to the worker'), Marx makes a sober estimate of exactly how a socialist society will have to budget its affairs. Marx proceeds to make a *concrete* analysis of the conditions of life of a society in which there will be no capitalism, and says in this respect:

What we are dealing with here [in analysing the programme of the workers' party] is not with a communist society which has *developed* on its own

foundations but one which is only just *emerging* from capitalist society and which thus in all relations – economic, moral and intellectual – bears the imprint of the old society from whose womb it emerged.

And so it is this communist society, which has just emerged into the light of day out of the womb of capitalism and which in every respect bears the imprint of the old society, that Marx calls 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 such and such an amount of work. With this certificate he receives from the public store of articles of consumption a corresponding quantity of products. Consequently, after a deduction is made of the amount of labour which goes to the public fund, every worker receives from society as much as he has given to it.

‘Equality’ apparently reigns.

But when Lassalle, having in view such a social order (usually called socialism, but referred to as the first phase of communism in Marx), says that this is ‘equitable distribution’, that this is ‘the equal right of all to an equal product of labour’, Lassalle is mistaken and Marx exposes his error.

‘Equal right’ says Marx, we indeed have here; but it is *still* a ‘bourgeois right’ which, like every right, *presupposes inequality*. Every right is an application of a *uniform* standard to *different* people who in fact are not identical, are not equal to one another; and therefore ‘equal right’ is really a violation of equality and an injustice. Indeed every person, having performed as much social labour as another, receives an equal share of the social product (after the above-mentioned deductions).

People, however, are not equal; one is strong, another is weak; one is married, another is not; one has more children, another has fewer, and so on.

With an equal performance of labour, and hence an equal share in the social consumption fund [Marx concludes] one will in fact receive more than another, one will be richer than another, and so forth. To avoid all this, right instead of being equal would have to be unequal.

Consequently, the first phase of communism cannot yet produce justice and equality: differences in wealth, and unjust differences at that, will still exist, but the *exploitation* of man by man will have become impossible because it will be impossible to seize the *means of production*, the factories, machines, land and so on as private property. While ripping apart Lassalle's petty-bourgeois and opaque phrasing about 'equality' and 'justice' *in general*, Marx shows the *course of development* of communist society, which is at first *compelled* to abolish *only* the 'injustice' of the means of production having been seized by individuals, and which is *unable* immediately to eliminate the other injustice consisting in the distribution of articles of consumption 'according to the amount of labour performed' (and not according to needs).

The vulgar economists, including the bourgeois professors and 'our' Tugan among them, constantly reproach socialists with forgetting about the inequality of people and with 'dreaming' of eliminating this inequality. Such a reproach, as we see, only proves the extreme ignorance of those gentlemen, the bourgeois ideologists.

Marx not only takes most scrupulous account of the inevitable inequality of people, but also takes account of the fact that the mere transfer of the means of production into the common property of the whole of society (commonly called 'socialism') *does not remove* the defects of distribution and the inequality of 'bourgeois right' which *continues to prevail* inasmuch as products are shared out 'according to the amount of labour performed'. Marx continues:

But these defects are inevitable in the first phase of communist society in the form in which it emerges, after prolonged birth pangs, from capitalist society. Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development as conditioned by the structure.

Thus, in the first phase of communist society (which is usually called socialism), 'bourgeois right' is *not* abolished entirely 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 right' recognizes them as the private property of individuals. Socialism converts them into *common* property. *To that extent* – and to that extent alone – 'bourgeois right' disappears.

Nevertheless it remains in existence in its other capacity: it re-

mains as the regulator (determinator) of the distribution of products and the allotment of labour among the members of society. The socialist principle that 'he who does not work, neither shall he eat' is *already* realized; the other socialist principle, namely 'an equal amount of products for an equal amount of labour', is also *already* realized. This, however, is not yet communism, and it does not yet abolish 'bourgeois right', which gives an equal amount of products to unequal individuals in return for unequal (really unequal) amounts of labour.

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

But there are no other norms than 'bourgeois right'. To this extent there still remains the need for a state, which, while safeguarding the common ownership of the means of production, is to safeguard equality in labour and equality in the distribution of products.

The state withers away in so far as there are no longer any capitalists, there are no longer any classes, and, consequently, no *class* whatsoever can *be suppressed*.

But the state has not yet completely withered away since there remains the safeguarding of 'bourgeois right' which sanctifies real inequality. Complete communism is necessary for the state to wither away completely.

4 *The Higher Phase of Communist Society*

Marx continues:

In the higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the person to the division of labour vanishes; after the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour has ceased to be merely a means of sustaining life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased together with the all-round development of individuals, and all the sources of social wealth flow in full spate: only

then will it be possible to cross over the narrow horizon of bourgeois right, and will society be able to inscribe on its banners: 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!'

Only now can we appreciate the full correctness of the remarks by Engels when he mercilessly attacked the absurdity of combining the words 'freedom' and 'state'. So long as 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 development of communism that the antithesis between mental and physical labour disappears and, consequently, there disappears one of the most important sources of modern *social* inequality – a source, moreover, which in no way can instantly be removed by the mere conversion of the means of production into public property, by the mere expropriation of the capitalists.

This expropriation will create the *possibility* of a gigantic development of the productive forces. And, when we see how incredibly this development is already being *retarded* by capitalism, when we see how much progress could be achieved on the basis of the level of modern techniques already attained, we are justified in saying with the fullest confidence that the expropriation of the capitalists will inevitably result in a gigantic development of the productive forces of human society. But how rapidly this development will proceed, how soon it will reach the point of rupture with the division of labour, of the eradication of the antithesis between mental and physical labour, of the transformation of labour into 'the prime necessity of life' – this we do not and *cannot* know.

That is why we are justified in speaking only of the inevitable withering away of the state, emphasizing the lengthiness of this process and its dependence upon the rapidity of development of the *higher phase* of communism, and leaving quite open the question of the schedule or concrete forms of the withering away; for there is *no* material for the answering of such questions.

The state will be able to wither away completely when society fulfils the rule: 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs', i.e. when people have become so accustomed to observing the fundamental rules of social intercourse and when their labour becomes so productive that they will voluntarily work

according to their ability. 'The narrow horizon of bourgeois right' which compels one to calculate with the coldheartedness of a Shylock whether one has not worked half an hour more than somebody else, whether one is not getting less pay than somebody else, this narrow horizon will then be crossed. The distribution of products will not then call for a system of norms, on behalf of society, to regulate how many products are to be received by each; each will take freely 'according to his needs'.

From the bourgeois point of view, it is easy to declare such a social order to be 'sheer utopia' and to sneer at the socialists for promising everyone the right to receive from society, without any control over the labour of the individual citizen, any quantity of truffles, cars, pianos, etc. The majority of bourgeois 'scholars' to this day distinguish themselves by such sneering, and thereby display both their own ignorance and their own mercenary defence of capitalism.

Ignorance – for it has never entered the head of a single socialist to 'promise' that the higher phase of the development of communism will arrive; but the *anticipation* by the great socialists that it will arrive presupposes the existence of neither the present-day productivity of labour *nor the present-day* philistines who, like the seminary students in Pomyalovski's stories, are capable of damaging the stocks of public wealth 'just for fun' and of demanding the impossible.

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

The mercenary defence of capitalism by bourgeois ideologists (and their hangers-on, such as the likes of Messrs Tsereteli, Chernov and Co.) consists precisely in their *substitution* of disputes and conversations about the distant future for the vital and burning question of *present-day* politics: the expropriation of the capitalists, the conversion of *all* citizens into workers and employees of a *single* huge 'syndicate' – the entire state – and the complete subordination of the entire work of this syndicate to a genuinely democratic state, to *a state of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*.

Essentially, when a learned professor is followed by some philistine and then by the likes of Messrs Tsereteli and Chernov in talking of the senseless utopias, of the demagogic promises of the Bolsheviks, of the impossibility of 'introducing' socialism, it is the higher stage or phase of communism they have in mind, which no one has ever promised or even thought to 'introduce'; for in general it cannot be 'introduced'.

And here we arrive at the question of the scientific distinction between socialism and communism, which was touched upon by Engels in his above-quoted argument about the incorrectness of the name 'social-democrat'. Politically the difference between the first, or lower, and the higher phase of communism will in time, probably, be tremendous; but it would be ridiculous to try to assess this difference now, under capitalism, and perhaps only individual anarchists could invest it with primary importance (if there still remain people among the anarchists who have learned nothing from the 'Plekhanovite' conversion of the Kropotkins, the Graves, the Cornelissens and other 'luminaries' of anarchism into social-chauvinists or 'anarcho-trenchists', as Ge – one of the few anarchists to have preserved a sense of honour and a conscience – has put it).

But the scientific difference between socialism and communism is clear. What is usually called socialism was termed by Marx the 'first' or lower phase of communist society. In so far as the means of production become *common* property, the word 'communism' is also applicable here so long as we do not forget that this is *not* complete communism. The great significance of Marx's explanations is that yet again he consistently applies materialist dialectics, the doctrine of development, by treating communism as something which develops *out of* capitalism. Instead of scholastically invented, 'confected' definitions and fruitless disputes about words (what is socialism? what is communism?), Marx gives an analysis of what might be called the stages of the economic maturity of communism.

In its first phase, or first stage, communism *cannot* as yet be fully mature economically and fully free from traditions or vestiges of capitalism. Hence the interesting phenomenon that 'the narrow horizon of *bourgeois* right' is retained by communism in its first phase. Of course, bourgeois right in relation to the distribution of articles of *consumption* inevitably presupposes the existence of the

bourgeois state, for right is nothing without an apparatus capable of *enforcing* the observance of the norms of right.

It follows that under communism there remains for a certain length of time not only bourgeois right but even a bourgeois state – but without the bourgeoisie!

This may appear a paradox or simply a dialectical riddle, which is often a charge laid against Marxism by people who have not gone to the slightest bother to study its extraordinarily profound content.

In point of fact, life shows us remnants of the old surviving in the new at every step, both in nature and in society. And Marx did not arbitrarily insert a tiny piece of ‘bourgeois’ right into communism, but took that which is economically and politically inevitable in a society emerging *out of the womb* of capitalism.

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

Democracy means equality. The great significance of both the proletariat’s struggle for equality and of equality as a slogan will be understandable if we correctly approach it as meaning the abolition of *classes*. But democracy means only *formal* equality. And as soon as equality is realized for all members of society *in relation to* the ownership of the means of production, i.e. equality of labour and equality of wages, humanity will inevitably be confronted with the question of advancing further, from formal equality to actual equality, i.e. to the realization of the rule, ‘from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs’. We do not and cannot know by what stages, by what practical measures, humanity will proceed to this supreme aim. But it is important to have a clear idea how infinitely mendacious is the ordinary bourgeois conception of socialism as something dead, petrified, fixed once and for all; in reality it will be *only* under socialism that a rapid, genuine and truly mass advance, embracing first the *majority* and then the whole of the population, will begin in all areas of public and personal life.

Democracy is a form of the state, one of its varieties. And, consequently, it is like every state in representing the organized

systematic use of violence against persons. This is one side of the matter. But the other side is that it signifies the formal recognition of equality of citizens, the equal right of all to determine the state order and to administer it. This in turn is bound up with the fact that, at a certain stage in the development of democracy, it first welds together the revolutionary anti-capitalist class, the proletariat, and then gives it the opportunity to crush, smash to smithereens, wipe the bourgeois state machine, even a republican one, with its standing army, police and bureaucracy, off the face of the earth and replace them with a *more* democratic state machine – but a state machine nevertheless, in the shape of the armed masses of workers who develop into a militia with the participation of the entire population.

Here ‘quantity turns into quality’: *such* a degree of democracy is linked to a movement beyond the framework of bourgeois society, to the beginning of its socialist reconstruction. If really *every-one* takes part in the administration of the state, capitalism simply cannot survive. And the development of capitalism in turn creates the *prerequisites* for everyone really *to be able* to take part in the administration of the state. Among these prerequisites are: universal literacy, which has already been achieved in a number of the most advanced capitalist countries; then the ‘training and disciplining’ of millions of workers by the huge, complex, socialized apparatus of the postal services, railways, large-scale factories, large-scale commerce, banking, etc., etc.

Given these *economic* prerequisites it is fully possible, after the overthrow of the capitalists and the bureaucrats, to proceed immediately, overnight, to replace them in the functions of *control* of production and distribution, in the functions of *keeping account* of labour and products by the armed workers, by the armed population as a whole. (The question of control and accounting must not be confused with the question of a scientifically trained staff of engineers, agronomists and so on: these gentlemen are working today in subordination to the capitalists; they will work even better tomorrow in subordination to the armed workers.)

Accounting and control is the *main* thing required to bring about the smooth working, the correct functioning of the *first phase* of communist society. All citizens are transformed here into hired employees of the state, which consists of the armed workers. *All*

citizens become employees and workers of a *single* all-people state 'syndicate'. The entire matter lies in their working on an equal basis, doing their proper share of work and being equally paid. The accounting and control in this respect have been *simplified* by capitalism to the extreme and reduced to the extraordinarily simple operations – which any literate person can perform – of supervising and recording, of knowing the basic rules of arithmetic and of issuing the appropriate receipts.*

When the *majority* of people begin independently and ubiquitously to keep such accounts and maintain such control over the capitalists (now turned into employees) and over the gentlemen intellectuals who have preserved their capitalists' habits, this control will really become universal, general, popular; and there will be no way of getting away from it, there will be 'nowhere to hide'.

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

But this 'factory' discipline, which the proletariat, after defeating the capitalists, after overthrowing the exploiters, will extend to the whole of society, is by no means our ideal or our ultimate goal. Rather it is a *step* for the radical purging of society of all the infamies and abominations of capitalist exploitation *and for further progress*.

From the moment when all members of society, or even only the vast majority, have learned to administer the state *themselves*, have taken this work into their own hands, have 'ironed out' any problems of control over the insignificant minority of capitalists, over the grandees wishing to preserve their capitalist habits and over such workers as have been deeply corrupted by capitalism – from this moment the need for administration of any kind begins to disappear altogether. The more complete the democracy, the nearer the moment approaches when it becomes unnecessary, the more democratic the 'state' which consists of the armed workers and which is 'no longer a state in the proper sense of the word', the more rapidly does *every aspect* of state begin to wither away.

*When the state is reduced in the greatest part of its functions to such accounting and control by the workers themselves, it will cease to be a 'political state' and the 'public functions will lose their political character and be transformed into simple administrative functions' (cf. above, chapter IV, part 2, on Engels's polemic with the anarchists).

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For when *all* have learned to administer and really independently administer social production, independently keep accounts and exercise control over the idlers, the gentlefolk, the swindlers and other such 'guardians of the traditions of capitalism', then any escape from this popular accounting and control will inevitably become so incredibly difficult, such a rare exception, and will probably be accompanied by so swift and serious a punishment (for the armed workers are practical people and not sentimental little intellectuals, and they will scarcely allow anyone to mess around with them) that the *necessity* to observe the uncomplicated basic rules of all human intercourse will very soon become a *habit*.

And then the door will be opened wide for the transition from the first phase of communist society towards its higher phase, and simultaneously towards the complete withering away of the state.

CHAPTER VI

The Vulgarization of Marxism by the Opportunists

The question of the relation of both the state to the social revolution and the social revolution to the state, like the question of revolution generally, engaged the minds of the leading theoreticians and publicists of the Second International (1889–1914) very little. But what is most characteristic about the process of the gradual growth of opportunism which led to the collapse of the Second International in 1914 is that even when these people actually directly confronted this question they *tried to evade* it or else failed to notice it.

In general and on the whole it may be said that *evasiveness* as regards the question of the relation of the proletarian revolution to the state – an evasiveness which worked to the advantage of opportunism and fostered it – resulted in a *distortion* of Marxism and in its complete vulgarization.

To characterize this lamentable process, however briefly, let us take the most prominent theoreticians of Marxism: Plekhanov and Kautsky.

I *Plekhanov's Polemic with the Anarchists*

Plekhanov dedicated a special pamphlet to the relation of anarchism to socialism, entitled *Anarchism and Socialism* and published in German in 1894.

Plekhanov's treatment of this theme contrived completely to ignore the most urgent, burning and politically most essential issue in the struggle against anarchism: namely the relation of the revolution to the state, and the question of the state in general! Two sections of his pamphlet stand out: one of them is historical and literary, with valuable material on the history of the ideas of Stirner, Proudhon and others; the other is philistine, and contains a clumsy commentary on the theme that an anarchist is indistinguishable from a bandit.

It is a most amusing combination of themes and is highly characteristic of Plekhanov's entire activity on the eve of the revolution and during the revolutionary period in Russia. Indeed, in the years from 1905 to 1917, Plekhanov revealed himself as a semi-doctrinaire and semi-philistine who, in politics, followed in the wake of the bourgeoisie.

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

The anarchists had tried to claim the Paris Commune, so to speak, as their 'own', as a corroboration of their doctrine; and yet they utterly failed to understand its lessons and Marx's analysis of these lessons. Anarchism has offered nothing even approximating to a true solution of 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 failing to take note* of the development of Marxism before and after the Commune, meant inevitably slipping into opportunism. For opportunism requires above all that these two questions should *not* be raised at all. This *in itself* is a victory for opportunism.

2 Kautsky's Polemic 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 joke that Kautsky is read more in Russia than in Germany. Let us mention, parenthetically, that there is a much deeper historical basis to this quip than those who first made it suspect: that Russian workers, by expressing in 1905 an extraordinarily great and unprecedented demand for the best works of the world's best social-democratic literature and by receiving translations and editions of these works in quantities unparalleled in other countries, transplanted, so to

speak, the vast experience of a more advanced, neighbouring country at an accelerated pace to the young soil of our proletarian movement.

Besides his popular exposition of Marxism, Kautsky is especially famous amongst us for his polemic with the opportunists under the leadership of Bernstein. But there exists one almost unknown fact which must not be overlooked if we set ourselves the task of investigating how Kautsky slid into the unbelievably disgraceful confusion and defence of social-chauvinism at the time of very great crisis in 1914–15. This fact is as follows: before he came out against the most prominent representatives of opportunism in France (Millerand and Jaures) and in Germany (Bernstein), Kautsky displayed very sharp vacillations. The Marxist journal, *Zarya*, which was published in Stuttgart in 1901–2 and advocated revolutionary proletarian views, was compelled to *polemicize* with Kautsky and to characterize as ‘rubbery’ the half-hearted and evasive resolution which was conciliatory towards the opportunists and which he proposed at the International Socialist Congress in Paris in 1900. Kautsky’s letters published in Germany revealed no less vacillation on his part before he campaigned against Bernstein.

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

Let us take Kautsky’s first important work against opportunism, his book *Bernstein and the Social-Democratic Programme*. Kautsky refutes Bernstein in detail. But there is the following characteristic aspect to this.

Bernstein in his *Premises of Socialism*, which has gained Herostratean notoriety, lays the accusation of ‘*Blanquism*’ against Marxism (an accusation subsequently repeated thousands of times by the opportunists and the bourgeois liberals in Russia against the representatives of revolutionary Marxism, the Bolsheviks). Here Bernstein dwells particularly on Marx’s *The Civil War in France*, and tries – quite unsuccessfully, as we have seen – to identify Marx’s viewpoint on the lessons of the Commune with the viewpoint of Proudhon. Bernstein is induced to give special attention to

the conclusion emphasized by Marx in his 1872 preface to *The Communist Manifesto* to the effect that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machine, and deploy it for its own purposes'.

This utterance 'appealed to' Bernstein so much that he repeated it no fewer than three times in his book, interpreting it in the most distorted, opportunist sense.

Marx, as we have seen, meant that the working class must *smash, break or shatter* (*Sprengung*, explosion, being the expression used by Engels) the entire state machine. But Bernstein gives the impression that these words of Marx were written to warn the working class *against* excessive revolutionary zeal when seizing power.

A cruder and more hideous distortion of Marx's idea is inconceivable.

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

He shrank away from analysing the depths plumbed by opportunism in distorting Marxism on this point. He cited the above-quoted excerpt from Engels's introduction to Marx's *Civil War* and said that, according to Marx, the working class cannot *simply* lay hold of the *ready-made* state machine but that generally it *can* lay hold of it – and he left the matter at that. Kautsky did not mention a word about the fact that Bernstein attributed to Marx the *very opposite* of Marx's real thinking, about the fact that Marx from 1852 had advocated the task of the proletarian revolution as being to 'smash' the state machine.

The consequence was that the most essential difference between Marxism and opportunism on the question of the tasks of the proletarian revolution was fudged by Kautsky!

'The solution of the question of the proletarian dictatorship,' wrote Kautsky 'in opposition' to Bernstein, 'may quite safely be left by us to the future' (p. 172, German edition).

This is not a polemic *against* Bernstein, but essentially a *concession* to him, a surrender to positions of opportunism; for the opportunists at the moment need nothing more than to 'leave safely to the future' all the fundamental questions of the tasks of the proletarian revolution.

For fully forty years, from 1852 to 1891, Marx and Engels taught the proletariat that it must smash the state machine. Yet Kautsky

in 1899, in the face of the complete betrayal of Marxism by the opportunists on this point, fraudulently *substitutes* the question of the concrete forms of smashing this machine for the question as to whether it should be smashed at all; and he sought refuge behind the 'indisputable' (and sterile) philistine truth that concrete forms cannot be known in advance!!

A chasm separates Marx and Kautsky in their relation to the proletarian party's task of getting the working class ready for revolution.

Let us take the next and more mature work by Kautsky, which was also, to a considerable extent, devoted to a refutation of the mistakes of opportunism. This is his pamphlet on *The Social Revolution*. Here the author chose as his special theme the question of 'the proletarian revolution' and 'the proletarian regime'. The author offered much that was extraordinarily valuable, but the question of the state was *avoided* by him. Throughout the pamphlet there is talk of the conquest of state power – and no more: i.e. a formulation is chosen which makes a concession to the opportunists inasmuch as it *admits* the possibility of power being seized *without* the destruction of the state machine. The very thing which Marx in 1872 had declared to be 'obsolete' in the programme of *The Communist Manifesto* is *resurrected* by Kautsky in 1902!

A special paragraph in the pamphlet is devoted to 'the forms and the weapons of the social revolution'. Here there is talk of the mass political strike and of civil war as well as of the 'instruments of force of the modern large state, such as the bureaucracy and the army'; but not a word about what the Commune had already taught the workers. Evidently, it was not without reason that Engels warned especially the German socialists against 'superstitious reverence' for the state.

Kautsky presents the matter as follows: the victorious proletariat 'will carry out the democratic programme', and he recapitulates its clauses. But not a word about the innovation provided by the year 1871 on the question of the replacement of bourgeois democracy by proletarian democracy. Kautsky shrugs off the question by giving tongue to such 'solid' banalities as follows:

It is quite obvious that we shall not achieve supremacy under the present conditions. Revolution itself presupposes a prolonged and deep-going

struggle, which will succeed in changing our present political and social structure.

Undoubtedly this 'goes without saying' just as does the truth that horses eat oats or that the Volga flows into the Caspian Sea. Only it is a pity that an empty and bombastic phrase about 'deep-going' struggle is used as a means of *avoiding* a question which is essential for the revolutionary proletariat: namely *where* is the 'depth' of *its* revolution expressed in relation to the state, in relation to democracy, as distinct from previous, non-proletarian revolutions.

By avoiding this question, Kautsky *in practice* makes a concession to opportunism on this very essential point while *in words* declaring a terrible war upon it, underlining the importance of the 'idea of revolution' (but how much is this 'idea' worth when one is afraid to propagate the concrete lessons of revolution to the workers?); or else saying 'revolutionary idealism before all else' or announcing that the English workers are now 'hardly much more than petty bourgeois'.

In a socialist society [Kautsky writes] there can exist side by side . . . the most variegated forms of enterprises – bureaucratic [??], trade-unionist, cooperative, individual . . .

For example, there exist enterprises which cannot do without a bureaucratic [??] organization such as the railways. Here a democratic organization can take the following aspect: the workers elect delegates who form a sort of parliament, and this parliament establishes the working regulations and supervises the management of the bureaucratic apparatus. Other enterprises can be handed into the charge of workers' unions; still others can be organized on cooperative principles.

(Russian translation: pp. 115 and 148, Geneva edition, 1903)

This argument is erroneous, representing a step backwards in comparison with the explanation given by Marx and Engels in the 1870s through the paradigmatic lessons of the Commune.

From the viewpoint of the necessary 'bureaucratic' organization, there is definitely no difference whatever between railways and any enterprise in large-scale machine industry, any factory, large department-store or large-scale capitalist agricultural enterprise. The techniques used in all such enterprises offer an absolute pre-

scription for the strictest discipline, the utmost precision in the observance of the proportion of work allotted to each person; for the threat is that the whole enterprise may come to a halt or that machinery or the finished product may be damaged. In all such enterprises the workers will, of course, 'elect delegates who will form a *sort of parliament*'.

But the whole point is that this 'sort of parliament' will *not* merely be a parliament in the sense of bourgeois-parliamentary institutions. 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 ideas do not go beyond the framework of bourgeois parliamentarianism, imagines. In socialist society the 'sort of parliament' consisting of workers' deputies will of course 'establish the working regulations and supervise the management' of the 'apparatus'; *but* this apparatus will *not* be 'bureaucratic'. The workers, having conquered political power, will smash the old bureaucratic apparatus; they will shatter it to its foundations, they will leave not a stone standing upon stone; they will replace it by a new one, consisting of the very same workers and employees *against* whose transformation into bureaucrats there will at once be taken such measures as were analysed in detail by Marx and Engels: (1) not only electivity but also recallability at any time; (2) pay not exceeding that of a worker; (3) immediate transition to the enabling of *everyone* to fulfil the functions of control and supervision so that everyone may become a 'bureaucrat' for a time and therefore that *nobody* may be able to become a 'bureaucrat'.

Kautsky has not pondered at all on Marx's words: 'The Commune was not a parliamentary but a working corporation, passing and executing laws at the same time.'

Kautsky has completely failed to understand the difference between bourgeois parliamentarianism, which combines democracy (*not for the people*) with bureaucratism (*against the people*) and proletarian democratism, which will take immediate steps to cut out bureaucratism at the roots and be able to carry these measures to a conclusion, to the complete eradication of bureaucratism, to the introduction of complete democracy for the people.

Here Kautsky displayed the same old 'superstitious reverence' for the state and 'superstitious belief' in bureaucratism.

Let us now move on to the last and best of Kautsky's works against the opportunist, to his pamphlet *The Road to Power* (which, I believe, has not been published in Russian, since it appeared at the time when the reaction was at its most intense here, in 1909). This pamphlet is a considerable step forward inasmuch as it does not talk about the revolutionary programme in general, as in the 1899 pamphlet against Bernstein, or about the tasks of the social revolution regardless of the time of its occurrence, as in the 1902 pamphlet *The Social Revolution*: instead it deals with the concrete conditions compelling us to recognize that the 'era of revolution' is *approaching*.

The author definitely points to the intensification of class contradictions in general and to imperialism, which plays a role of especially great importance in this connection. After the 'revolutionary period of 1789-1871' in Western Europe, an analogous period begins from 1905 in the East. A world war is approaching with menacing rapidity. 'The proletariat can no longer talk of premature revolution.' 'We have entered a revolutionary period.' 'The revolutionary era is beginning.'

These declarations are perfectly clear. This pamphlet by Kautsky must serve as a measure of comparison between what German social-democracy *promised to be* before the imperialist war and how low it sank – along with Kautsky – at the outbreak of war. 'The present-day situation', Kautsky wrote in the pamphlet under consideration, 'is fraught with the danger that we (i.e. German social-democracy) may easily be taken to be more moderate than we really are.' It has turned out that in reality the German Social-Democratic Party was much more moderate and opportunist than it had appeared to be!

It is all the more characteristic, then, that Kautsky, despite declaring so definitely that the era of revolutions had already begun, yet again completely avoided the question of the state in a pamphlet which he himself said was devoted precisely to an analysis of '*political* revolution'.

The sum total of these evasions of the question, these omissions and equivocations, has inevitably resulted in that complete switch to opportunism about which it will now be necessary to talk.

It is as if German social-democracy, in the person of Kautsky, has declared: I stand by revolutionary views (1899). I recognize, in

particular, the inevitability of the social revolution of the proletariat (1902). I recognize the advent of the new era of revolutions (1909). But I am nevertheless going back on what Marx said as early as 1852 now that the question being raised is about the tasks of the proletarian revolution in relation to the state (1912).

It was precisely in this direct form that the question was put in Kautsky's polemic with Pannekoek.

3 *Kautsky's Polemic with Pannekoek*

In the struggle against Kautsky, Pannekoek came out as one of the representatives of the 'left-radical' trend which counted Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Radek and others in its ranks and which, while advocating revolutionary tactics, was united by the conviction that Kautsky was going over to the position of the 'centre' which wavered in an unprincipled manner between Marxism and opportunism. The correctness of this view was fully confirmed by the war, when this trend of the 'centre' (wrongly called Marxist) or 'Kautskyism' revealed itself in all its disgusting wretchedness.

In an article touching on the question of the state, entitled 'Mass Action and Revolution' (*Die Neue Zeit*, 1912, vol. XXX no. 2), Pannekoek characterized Kautsky's position as of 'passive radicalism', as 'a theory of inactive expectancy'. 'Kautsky does not want to see the process of revolution' (p. 616). In posing the question in this way, Pannekoek approached the theme which interests us, namely the tasks of the proletarian revolution in relation to the state.

The struggle of the proletariat [he wrote] is not merely a struggle against the bourgeoisie *for* state power but a struggle *against* state power . . . The content of the proletarian revolution is the destruction of the instruments of the power of the state and their extrusion [literally: dissolution, *Auflösung*] by the instruments of power of the proletariat . . . The struggle ceases only when, as the ultimate result, there occurs the utter destruction of the state organization. The organization of the majority demonstrates its superiority by destroying the organization of the ruling minority.

(p. 548)

The formulation in which Pannekoek presented his ideas suffers

from large defects. But its meaning is clear none the less, and it is interesting *how* Kautsky repudiated it.

Until now [he wrote] the difference between the social-democrats and the anarchists has been that the former wished to conquer state power while the latter wished to destroy it. Pannekoek wants to do both.

(p. 724)

If Pannekoek's exposition suffers from imprecision and an inadequate concreteness – not to speak of other inadequacies of his article which have no bearing on the present theme – Kautsky seized precisely on the point of *principle* raised by Pannekoek; and it was *on this fundamental* question of *principle* that Kautsky completely abandoned the position of Marxism and went over wholly to opportunism. His definition of the difference between the social-democrats and the anarchists is absolutely wrong, and Marxism is utterly vulgarized and distorted.

The difference between Marxists and the anarchists consists in the following: (1) The former, while aiming at the complete destruction of the state, recognize this aim to be achievable only after the destruction of classes by the socialist revolution as the result of the establishment of socialism, which leads to a withering away of the state; the latter want the complete destruction of the state overnight, failing to understand the conditions under which the destruction of the state can be realized. (2) The former recognize the necessity for the proletariat, on conquering political power, to destroy the old state machine and replace it with a new one consisting of an organization of armed workers, after the type of the Commune; the latter, while advocating the destruction of the state machine, have absolutely no clear idea of *what* the proletariat will put in its place and *how* it will use its revolutionary power; the anarchists even repudiate the use of state power by the revolutionary proletariat, they repudiate its revolutionary dictatorship. (3) The former demand the preparation of the proletariat for revolution through the use of the modern state; the anarchists reject this.

In this controversy it is Pannekoek who represents Marxism in opposition to Kautsky, for it was none other than Marx who taught that the proletariat cannot simply conquer state power in the sense of a transfer of the old state apparatus into new hands, but must smash, break up this apparatus and replace it by a new one.

Kautsky abandons Marxism and goes over to the side of the opportunists; for this destruction of the state machine, which is utterly unacceptable to the opportunists, completely disappears from his argument, and he leaves a loophole for them in the sense of interpreting 'conquest' as the simple acquisition of a majority.

To cover up his distortion of Marxism, Kautsky behaves like a master of the catechism: he advances a 'quotation' from Marx himself. In 1850 Marx wrote about the need for 'a determined centralization of power in the hands of the state authority'. And Kautsky asks in triumph: does Pannekoek want to destroy 'centralism'?

This is simply a trick, similar to Bernstein's postulate that Marxism and Proudhonism were at one in favouring federalism at the expense of centralism.

Kautsky's 'quotation' is neither here nor there. Centralism is possible with both the old and the new state machine. If the workers voluntarily unite their armed forces, this will be centralism, but it will be based on the 'complete destruction' of the centralist state apparatus: the standing army, the police and the bureaucracy. Kautsky behaves like an outright scoundrel when he ignores the perfectly well-known arguments of Marx and Engels on the Commune and plucks out a quotation which has nothing to do with the question. Kautsky continues:

Is it perhaps that Pannekoek wants to destroy the state functions of the bureaucrats? But we cannot get along without bureaucrats both in party and trade-union organization, not to speak about state administration. Our programme does not demand the elimination of state officials but rather the election of bureaucrats by the people . . . The issue here is not what form will be taken by apparatus of administration in the 'future state' but whether our political struggle eliminates [literally dissolves, *auf- löst*] state power *before we have conquered it* [Kautsky's italics]. Which ministry together with its bureaucrats could be eliminated? [Then follows an enumeration of the ministries of education, justice, finances and war.] No, not one of the present ministries will be removed by our political struggle against the government . . . I repeat, in order to avoid misunderstandings: the issue is not what form will be given to the 'future state' by victorious social-democracy, but how the present state is changed by our opposition.

(p. 725)

This is an obvious ruse. The question posed by Pannekoek was about *revolution*. This is clear in both the title of his article and the passages quoted. In skipping to the question of the 'opposition' Kautsky replaces the revolutionary by the opportunist point of view. What he says comes down to the following: at present we are an opposition; what we shall be *after* we have captured power, that we shall see. *Revolution vanishes!* And that is exactly what the opportunists wanted.

The point is not about opposition or about political struggle in general but *revolution*. Revolution consists in the proletariat *destroying* the 'apparatus of administration' and the *whole* state machine, replacing it with a new one consisting of the armed workers. Kautsky displays a 'superstitious reverence' for 'ministries'; but why can they not be replaced, say, by commissions of specialists working under sovereign and all-powerful Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies?

The heart of the problem is not at all whether the 'ministries' will remain, or whether 'commissions of specialists' or some other institutions will be set up; this is quite unimportant. The heart of the problem is whether the old state machine (bound by thousands of threads to the bourgeoisie and permeated through and through with routine and ossified habits) shall remain or be *destroyed* and replaced by a *new one*. Revolution consists not in the new class commanding and governing with the aid of the *old* state machine but in its smashing this machine and commanding and governing with the aid of a *new* machine. Kautsky glosses over this *basic* idea of Marxism, or else he has utterly failed to understand it.

His question about bureaucratic officials clearly shows that he has not understood the lessons of the Commune or the teaching of Marx. 'We cannot get along without bureaucrats both in party and trade union organization . . .'

We cannot get along without bureaucrats *under capitalism*, under *the rule of the bourgeoisie*. The proletariat is oppressed, the labouring masses are enslaved by capitalism. Under capitalism democracy is restricted, cramped, curtailed, mutilated by all the conditions of wage slavery and of the poverty and misery of the masses. This and this alone is the reason why the office-holders in our political organizations and trade unions are corrupted (or, more

precisely, have a tendency to be corrupted) by the conditions of capitalism and betray a tendency to being turned into bureaucrats, i.e. privileged persons cut off from the masses and standing *above* the masses.

This is the *essence* of bureaucratism, and until the capitalists have been expropriated and the bourgeoisie overthrown a certain degree of 'bureaucratization' *even* of proletarian office-holders is inevitable.

Kautsky puts things as follows: since elected office-holders will remain under socialism, bureaucrats will also remain, bureaucracy will remain! This is exactly where he is wrong. It was precisely the example of the Commune that Marx used to show that under socialism office-holders will cease to be 'bureaucrats', to be 'functionaries', will cease to be so *to the extent* that there will be an introduction of not just electivity *but also* instant recallability *as well as* a reduction of salaries to the level of the wages of the average worker *and also* the replacement of parliamentary institutions by 'working bodies, issuing laws and carrying them into effect'.

In essence, Kautsky's whole argument against Pannekoek and especially Kautsky's magnificent point that we do not dispense with bureaucrats even in our trade union and party organizations manifest a repetition by Kautsky of Bernstein's old 'arguments' against Marxism in general. In his renegade book *The Premises of Socialism*, Bernstein takes up arms against ideas of 'primitive' democracy, against what he calls 'doctrinaire democratism' as exemplified by imperative mandates, office-holders working without remuneration and impotent central representative organs, etc. As proof of the unsoundness of this 'primitive democracy', Bernstein refers to the experience of the British trade unions as interpreted by the Webbs. It is made out that the trade unions over the seventy years of their development – allegedly a development occurring 'in complete freedom' – became convinced that primitive democratism was useless, and they replaced it with ordinary democratism: parliamentarianism combined with bureaucratism.

In fact the trade unions did not develop 'in complete freedom' *but under complete capitalist slavery* which naturally 'cannot dispense' with a series of concessions to the evil prevailing all around, the violence, the falsehood, the exclusion of the poor from the

affairs of 'higher' administration. Under socialism, much of the 'primitive' type of democracy will inevitably take on a new life since, for the first time in the history of civilized societies, the *mass* of the population will rise to the level of taking an *independent* part not only in voting and elections *but also in everyday administration*. Under socialism, *everyone* will administrate in turn and will soon become accustomed to no one administrating.

Marx's critico-analytical genius discerned in the Commune's practical measures the *turning point* which the opportunists fear and do not want to recognize out of cowardice, out of a reluctance to break irrevocably with the bourgeoisie, and which the anarchists do not want to discern either out of hastiness or out of a failure to understand conditions of great social changes in general. 'We must not even think of destroying the old state machine: how can we get along without ministries and bureaucrats?' This is the argument of the opportunist who is completely imbued with philistinism, and who essentially not only does not believe in revolution, in the creativity of revolution, but lives in mortal dread of it (like our Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries).

'We must think *only* of destroying the old state machine; there is no point in probing into the *concrete* lessons of earlier proletarian revolutions and analysing *what* to put in the place of what is being destroyed and *how*.' This is the argument of the anarchists (the best of the anarchists, of course, and not those who follow the likes of Messrs Kropotkin and Co. and hang on to the coat-tail of the bourgeoisie); and consequently the tactics of the anarchist turn out to be the tactics of *despair* in place of a mercilessly bold revolutionary work on concrete problems while taking into account the practical conditions of the mass movement.

Marx teaches us to avoid both errors; he teaches unconditional boldness in destroying the entire old state machine, and at the same time he teaches us to put the question concretely: the Commune succeeded within a few weeks in *starting* to build a *new*, proletarian state machine by carrying through the measures indicated to secure greater democratism and to uproot bureaucratism. Let us learn revolutionary boldness from the Communards; let us see in their practical measures the *sketch* of urgently practical and immediately possible measures; and then, *taking this road*, we shall move on towards the complete destruction of bureaucratism.

The possibility of this destruction is secured by the fact that socialism will shorten the working day, will raise the *masses* to a new life, will situate the *majority* of the population in conditions such as will enable *everybody* without exception to fulfil 'state functions', and this leads to the *complete withering away* of every form of state in general.

The task of the mass strike [Kautsky continues] can never consist in *destroying* the state power but only in drawing the government to making concessions on some particular question or to replacing a government hostile to the proletariat by a government making an accommodation [*entgegenkommende*] to it . . . But at no time and under no conditions can this [i.e. the victory of the proletariat over a hostile government] lead to the *destruction* of the state power; it can lead only to a certain *shift* [*Verschiebung*] in the relation of forces *within* the state power . . . And the aim of our political struggle remains, as it has always been, the conquest of state power by means of the acquisition of a majority in parliament and by the conversion of parliament into the master of the government.

(pp. 726, 727, 732)

This is nothing but the purest and the most vulgar opportunism, a repudiation of revolution in deeds while accepting it in words. Kautsky's thought goes no further than a 'government making an accommodation to the proletariat': a step backward to philistinism in comparison with 1847, when *The Communist Manifesto* proclaimed 'the organization of the proletariat as the ruling class'.

Kautsky will have to achieve his beloved 'unity' with the Scheidemanns, Plekhanovs and Vanderveldes, all of whom agree to fight for a government 'making an accommodation to the proletariat'.

But we shall move on to a break with these traitors to socialism and shall fight for the complete destruction of the old state machine in order that the armed proletariat itself *should become the government*. These are 'two large differences'.

Kautsky will have to enjoy the pleasant company of the Legiens and Davids, Plekhanovs, Potresovs, Tseretelis and Chernovs, who are quite willing to fight for the 'shifting of the relation of forces within the framework of state power', for the 'winning of a majority in parliament and for the establishment of parliament's complete sovereignty over the government'. A most worthy aim, wherein everything is wholly acceptable to the opportunists and everything

remains within the bounds of the bourgeois parliamentary republic.

But we shall move on to a break with the opportunists; and the entire conscious proletariat will be with us in the fight not for a 'shifting of the relation of forces' but for the *overthrow of the bourgeoisie*, for the *destruction* of bourgeois parliamentarianism, 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 such trends as *The Socialist Monthly* in Germany (Legien, David, Kolb and many others, including the Scandinavians Stauning and Branting); the Jauresists and Vandervelde in France and Belgium; Turati, Treves and other representatives of the right wing of the Italian party; the Fabians and the 'Independents' (the Independent Labour Party, which in fact has always been dependent on the Liberals) in England; and others like them. All these gentlemen, while playing an immense, very often predominant role in the parliamentary work and the press of the party, repudiate outright the dictatorship of the proletariat and pursue a policy of undisguised opportunism. For these gentlemen the 'dictatorship' of the proletariat 'contradicts' democracy! There is essentially no serious difference between them and the petty-bourgeois democrats.

Taking this circumstance into consideration, we are justified in drawing the conclusion that the Second International, in the case of the overwhelming majority of its official representatives, has sunk completely into opportunism. The experience of the Commune has been not only forgotten but distorted. Far from inculcating the idea in the minds of the working masses that the time is nigh when they must take action and smash the old state machine, replacing it with a new one and in this way turning their political rule into the foundations for the socialist reconstruction of society, they have inculcated the very opposite idea in the minds of the masses and have depicted the 'conquest of power' in such a way as to leave thousands of loopholes for opportunism.

The distortion and shelving of the question of the relation of the proletarian revolution to the state could not help but play an immense role at a time when states, each with its military apparatus

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reinforced as a result of imperialist competition, have been turned into military monsters which are exterminating millions of people in order to decide the dispute as to whether England or Germany – this or that centre of finance capital – is to rule the world.