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Every such struggle which ceases at the level of the national state (in which the working class does not push beyond the national framework and expropriate the national capitalists and attack the capital-labor relation) becomes reactionary.

In Marx's day, nary a single union until the 1870's managed to stabilize. In fact, the increasing conservatism of the British unions in the 1870's played no small part in Marx's contention that the International Workingmen's Association was dead (alongside the slaughter of its French section after the Paris Commune and the attempts by the Bakuninists to transform the International into their pet sect.) This helps explain the difference in attitude we should take from Marx towards the utility of the unions (which Marx always valued first and foremost as training schools for the working class, not as bargaining units over the value of wage labor.)

61. Under socialism much of "primitive" democracy will inevitably be revived, since, for the first time in the history of civilized society the mass of population will rise to taking an independent part, not only in voting and elections, but also in the everyday administration of the state. Under socialism all will govern in turn and will soon become accustomed to no one governing.

This sounds nice, but in fact, people will not take part in the everyday administration of the state, but in the everyday control of their lives at every level, without the use of an illusory community. I come back to this phrase again and again because it indicates a much more sophisticated appreciation of the state than post-Marx Marxism.

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and misery of the people. This and this alone is the reason why the functionaries of our political organizations and trade unions are corrupted - or rather tend to be corrupted - by the conditions of capitalism and betray a tendency to become bureaucrats, i.e., privileged persons divorced from the people and standing above the people.

Under capitalism, democracy is not mutilated by wage slavery, poverty and misery. Democracy is mutilated by the fundamental alienation of human beings from each other. The problem is the form of human relations, their fetishized character. By reasoning from poverty, misery, or even wage slavery, Lenin reasons no differently from a Liberal. Bureaucracy is the inevitable tendency of a society in which the producers are separated from the means of production, but it is a tendency that develops with the rhythm of class struggle, that does not exist from the concrete turns of the class struggle, which is particularized by the actual course of class struggle.

Contra Lenin, The Class Struggle in France and the 18th Brumaire of Louis Napolean show how the class struggle shapes the state. No barren abstractions litter Marx's landscape.

Lenin tentatively draws the conclusion that "even" workers' organizations become bureaucratized under capitalism. In fact, any organization that exists beyond a certain set of struggles, which seeks to stabilize its existence even after the struggles which gave rise to it necessarily ossifies and becomes bureaucratized and corrupt. The working class cannot create organizations of struggle which do not inevitably succumb to the capital-labor relation outside of periods of struggle. This is why the important part of the unions was always the struggle for them, *not their ongoing existence, in which they have become reactionary institutions.* This is the truth of the state in relation to national liberation struggles.

struggle out of the equation. It is structuralism with a voluntarist twist.

The result is point three. But how exactly do we utilize the present state? What does that train workers to do? They learn the mechanisms and functioning of an alien apparatus which represents one of the fast-frozen forms of the capital-labor relation. Again, Marx's notion that the state is the illusory community is lost on Lenin (if he ever heard it, which he may not have.) As such, Lenin believes that there is something usable about the current state, when in fact, since the state is a means of and result of the fetishization of social relations, involvement in the state functions to re-fetishize the state, to help solidify what needs to be liquidated. Lenin, contrary to his conscious desires, fetishizes the state, he bows before it. Lenin does not understand, therefore, Marx's idea of the Commune as a non-state or partial state. Marx refers to it as such only in so far as it carries out certain functions *analogous* to the capitalist state, those functions being the repression of

59. The point is whether the old state machine (bound by thousands of threads to the bourgeoisie and permeated through and through with routine and inertia) shall remain, or be destroyed and replaced by a new one. Revolution consists not in the new class commanding, governing with the aid of the old state machine, but in this class smashing this machine and commanding, governing with the aid of a new machine. Kautsky slurs over this basic idea of Marxism, or he does not understand it at all.

This may seem like criticism *ad nauseum* but I cannot stress strongly enough how badly Lenin misunderstands Marx's critique of capitalist society. Always with the terms like "machine" Lenin indicates his approach to an apparatus, but never a social relation.

60. Under capitalism, democracy is restricted, cramped, curtailed, mutilated by all the conditions of wage slavery, and the poverty

For many years Lenin's *State and Revolution* served as the prime account of a Marxist understanding of the state outside academic circles. This work has informed generations of Marxists with what appeared to be the basic analysis of the state and a definitive conception of communism. Other subsequent work falls into two categories. First we have sophisticated, but often academic and definitely not popularly accessible works, such as Pashukanis, Poulantzas, the German state derivation debate (with authors such as Offe, von Braunmueller, Hirsch, et al), Bob Jessop, John Holloway, Werner Bonefeld, Simon Clarke, and so on. Second, we have more popular works which do not really go beyond *State and Revolution*, or which fall short of it, such as work by Ralph Milliband and a host of near-Marxists such as William Domhoff.

Oddly, in very little of the more sophisticated work do we find a direct critique of Lenin's work and its relationship to Marx. Few people have advanced such critiques, and often the debate has remained between academic Marxists. For example, the debate between Poulantzas and Milliband generated a whole revival of the analysis of the state in Marxism, but the center of attention became Poulantzas and Milliband. Later, the German state derivation debate picked up on Evegny Pashukanis' book *Marxism and Law* from 1924, but this seems to be as close to Lenin as most of these discussions got.

Some of this may have to do with the fact that many academic Marxists have viewed *State and Revolution* as crude or simplistic. However, this appreciation misses two important issues. First, Lenin is not as crude as many people think. His work represents some of the most sophisticated development of Marxism on the state from that period. Only Luxemburg's *Reform or Revolution* and some polemics by Anton Pannekoek against Kautsky and Bernstein represent nearly as sophisticated approaches to the state from that time period, but they have a much more limited scope. Second, only Lenin's work reflects on the problem of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the *Critique of the Gotha Program* (from

here on referred to as the *Gothacritik*) and the Paris Commune in such detail. Lenin's book also has the merit of setting forth the most libertarian approach to the state that Lenin would ever put forth. And since we want to consider a work that has been central to the formation of the views of tens of thousands of Marxists, where else can we go? It would be like talking about the Leninist conception of the party without discussing *What Is To Be Done?* And yet it happens all the time.

Therefore, I am going to make an attempt at a critique of *State and Revolution* along several lines. First, I am going to take up Lenin's conception of the state, and the capitalist state in particular. In the process, I will have to discuss Engels' understanding of the state as well because Lenin's approach really comes from Engels, not Marx. Second, I am going to take up the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Lenin and Marx. Lenin makes a series of claims about both the constitution of 'socialism' (the first phase of communism) and the existence of the state. In both cases, Lenin refers heavily to Marx's *The Civil War in France* and the *Gothacritik*, but I think he fundamentally departs from these works. Third, I am going to address the relationship between Lenin's conception of the post-revolutionary society and the question of the party and consciousness. I will make a few brief comments on alternative conceptions of the relationship of revolutionary organizations to revolution and organs of workers' power. Finally, I will ask some questions to think about in terms of developing a conception of revolution (starting from Marx's notion of fetishism and the idea that communism is the real movement/struggle of the working class) for the 21st century.

This is frankly incorrect. This statement is a crude polemical chop. But that is hardly unusual for Lenin. Develop this with reference to Bakunin's writings on the Paris Commune. See if there is other material that is appropriate.

58. The distinction between Marxists and the anarchists is this:

(1) The former, while aiming at the complete abolition of the state, recognize that this aim can only be achieved after classes have been abolished by the socialist revolution, as the result of the establishment of socialism, which leads to the withering away of the state. The latter want to abolish he state completely overnight, not understanding the conditions under which the state can be abolished.

(2) The former recognize that after the proletariat has won political power it must completely destroy the old state machine and replace it by a new one consisting of an organization of the armed workers, after the type of the Commune. The latter, while insisting on the destruction of the state machine, have a very vague idea of what the proletariat will put in its place and how it will use its revolutionary power. The anarchists even deny that the revolutionary proletariat should use the state power, they reject its revolutionary dictatorship.

(3) The former demand that the proletariat be trained for revolution by utilizing the present state. The anarchists reject this.

This whole set of points largely ignores the idea of the state as a social relation. Even though the working class will have organs of social power (councils, cooperatives, and a variety of other types of organization), to refer to the armed working class as a state misses the essential point that the state presupposes the separation of the economic and the political, the separation of the doer from the means of doing, of the domination of dead over living labor. Lenin creates the state as a transhistorical "thing", defined by its functions (repression). This approach flows from the base-superstructure metaphor, from "historical materialism", which leaves class

For when *all* have learned to administer and actually to independently administer social production, independently keep accounts and exercise control over the parasites, the sons of the wealthy, the swindlers and other "guardians of capitalist traditions", the escape from this popular accounting and control will inevitably become so incredibly difficult, such a rare exception, and will probably be accompanied by such swift and severe punishment (for the armed workers are practical men and not sentimental intellectuals, and they scarcely allow anyone to trifle with them), that the *necessity* of observing the simple, fundamental rules of the community will very soon become a *habit*.

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

These paragraphs convey the full set of contradictions in Lenin's conception, both his best moments and his ultimate failure.

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

In the section on Opportunists and the State, Lenin makes this interesting revelatory comment, making it clear that whatever he thinks about Plekhanov politically, he is reserving criticism in other areas: clearly, for Lenin this reservation is held in the arena of philosophy.

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

Lenin's Conception of the State

Since Lenin begins *State and Revolution* with his understanding of the state, it seems logical to start there as well. However, Lenin follows Engels in this approach to the state, and so we must begin with the criticism of Engels.

Lenin begins with *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Engels argues in this book that the state begins when classes begin, that the division of society into classes gives rise to the state. However, this seemingly simple, obvious argument misses something essential: no state is ever a generic state. All states exist as states of a particular society. But Engels' approach does not start from there, he starts from a meta-category. Richard Gunn, in his article on "Marxism and Philosophy" (Capital and Class 37, 1989), characterizes this kind of abstraction as empiricist abstraction, abstraction that assumes a genus-species relationship with actual historical states. In other words, we have a metaphysical object called a state, and we can then line up all the actually existing states under it in a hierarchy. So under the title of a meta-category called "the state", we can line up slave states, feudal states, capitalist states, etc. The state becomes a transhistorical abstraction, an *a priori* construction that defines whether such and such a "thing" is a state. Much the way meta-theory does not ask "Is it true that roses are red?", but asks, "What is Truth?", Engels asks, "What is 'The State'?", and he proceeds to give us an answer: the special armed body of men organized to defend the interests of the ruling class. This approach falls short of giving us the means to understand what is unique about the capitalist state, however.

Any approach has to answer the question "What makes this state a capitalist state?" Engels' (and therefore Lenin's) approach treats the state as an instrument of the ruling class, as an object, a "thing" that exists and which is determined by its functions. The state is a capitalist state because the capitalists control the state. How do they control the state? The capitalists control the state through corruption, through personal ties to the state, and "alliances" between the state and capital (cf. Lenin, CW Vol. 25, pp. 397-8). Capital places its representatives into the vessel of the state, thereby taking it over. Those representatives in turn get positions in capitalist corporations after they serve their term, solidifying the linkage. This assumes that the state is an empty vessel until some class fills it with a new content.

An alternative approach to the state would have to recognize what is different about the capitalist state from other states. First, starting from Marx's notion of fetishism (that relations between people appear as relations between things mediated by people), we have to start with the state as a social relation, not as a thing. Engels and Lenin start from the reified state by treating it as a thing, a vessel, an instrument, rather than starting from the social relation underlying the state.

Second, having established the need to not reify the state, what makes the state a capitalist state? Capital, based on the separation of the producers from the means of production, and turning the labor power of the producers into a commodity, creates a separation between the market (the realm of free exchange) and production. This separation, however, also separates the means of dominating labor from the exploitation of labor power: the economic and the political become separate. Thus no direct identity exists between capital and the state; the relation appears indirect. In their effort to make that link explicit, Lenin and Engels act as if capitalists directly control the state in various ways, but this only serves to further fetishize the linkage because it assumes the identity of state and capital in appearance. But appearance and essence do not co-

53. When the *majority* of the people begin independently and everywhere to keep such accounts and exercise such control over the capitalists (now converted into employees) and over the intellectual gentry who preserve their capitalist habits, this control will really become universal, general, and popular; and there will be no getting away from it, there will be "nowhere to go".

Again, utterly horrible. Still capitalists, but why? What purpose do they serve?

54. The whole of society will have become a single office and a single factory, with equality of labor and 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. It is only a necessary *step* for thoroughly cleansing society of all the infamies and abominations of capitalist exploitation, *and for further* progress.

This is a horrifying image. Compare this to Marx and his talk of the free association of producers, of the return of the individual as the subject of history, 'the freedom of each is the precondition for the freedom of all', etc. and we can begin to see how frightening Lenin's image is and how alien to Marx.

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

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

Now this is nonsense, not in so far as Lenin correctly characterizes his state as a state without a bourgeisie, but in so far as he tries to claim this for communism.

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

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

We see what this led to, eh? This conception that socialism is all about state control, this in fact amounts to nothing more than statified capitalism, since the capital-labor relation continues unabated, only in the form of the collective boss.

incide in a fetishized world, and it is exactly this that Marx takes up in his concept of fetishism and dialectics. Lenin and Engels go from a dialectical to a positivist approach to the state, in so far as they ask, "What makes this state a capitalist state?"

Thirdly, Lenin and Engels then proceed to adopt a functionalist attitude towards the state. The state becomes nothing more than its functions: the protection of the general interests of capital. Once the state becomes a "thing", an instrument, then we have reified the state, therefore making the state more stable than it actually is. If we start from fetishism, however, the state exists as a form (a mode of existence) of the capital-labor relation, the state has to be a product of struggle, which means the state cannot be defined by a pre-determined series of functions. The 'functions' become the product of class struggle. The constitution of the state becomes a constant process; a process of continuously *constituting* a state that is fought over and reflects class struggles. The capitalist state was not simply constituted with the bourgeois revolutions or with Absolutism (as Lenin discusses). Class struggle constantly constitutes and re-constitutes the state as a fetishized social relation.

Finally, we have to ask how we can talk about "the capitalist state", in the face of so many specific capitalist states? Because capital is global, has always been global from its origins in piracy, slavery and conquest, the political, as a social relation, is also global. We can then see each state as simply the fragmenting of the political into localities. This fracturing revolves around two relations: the need to control the movement of labor and the need to attract capital. Capital moves (with varying degrees of mobility depending on whether capital moves as productive capital, commodity capital, or money capital) and only settles where the conditions appear attractive for the extraction of surplus value. A contradiction develops between the mobility of capital and the immobility of the state. In so far as capital exists as global capital (national capital is really a fiction), the identification of capital with a particular capitalist class or with a particular capitalist state makes no sense. I cannot

go into it in depth here, but this approach would seriously undermine the concept of "state monopoly capitalism" which Lenin also depends upon and develops. Lenin's state is ultimately a national state, as is his capital, and his world is a state system where some states exploit others. In a theory starting from fetishism, each state exists as a fragment, a fractured moment, of the political as a global totality. As a result, exploitation is not between imperialist states and colonial or neo-colonial states, but the exploitation of global labor by global capital.

In the end, even though Lenin says that the state needs to be smashed and he takes a revolutionary political position relative to the capitalist state, his *theory* reflects that of the Second International. In turn, we could just as correctly say that Lenin's mechanics of capitalist control of the state only differ terminologically from G. William Domhoff or other perceptive liberal critics of the state as an elite institution.

But what does that mean for our understanding of revolution? In the next section, I will lay out the differences between Marx and Lenin on their understanding of the term "dictatorship of the proletariat" and communism.

This is pretty bad. Marx nowhere says "He who does not work, neither shall he eat." That is a bourgeois law unto itself, not a socialist principle. This whole paragraph is fairly tortured.

49. Lenin seems to confuse "law" with "right", which has a totally different meaning and set of implications. Needless to say, "laws" without "a state" makes little or no sense.

50. Marx continues:

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

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

Indeed, again this confusion of law and right makes it apparent that Lenin grasps nothing. This will be covered more in reference to Paresh Chattopadhyay.

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

”bourgeois laws” which continues to prevail so long as products are divided ”according to the amount of labor performed”. Continuing, Marx says:

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

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

And so begins the flight from Marx. This whole section has to be dealt with using the most extreme care. Lenin is partially correct. A proper translation would help, but I do not know of a particularly good translation of the Critique. Rather, the problem is the last paragraph. If that is the only way in which bourgeois law (which is nothing if not the ratification of bourgeois social relations) disappears, then the revolution is doomed. The transformation of social relations will begin rather more thoroughly than that., I hope.

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

The Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Communism in Lenin and Marx

Several problems interest us here. How do Lenin and Marx understand the term “dictatorship of the proletariat”? What is the relationship between the dictatorship of the proletariat and communism? How did Lenin interpret Marx’s discussion of the two phases of communism in the *Critique of the Gotha Program*? Does Lenin have a concept of communism as the self-emancipation of the working class, as the free association of producers?

All of Lenin’s earlier work, and most of what comes later, understands the dictatorship of the proletariat to mean a particularly *dictatorial* type of state, whose task is the repression of the capitalist class after the revolution. We should be clear: Lenin, unlike in other places, does not consistently deploy this usage. He sometimes deploys the term as Marx used it.

So how did Marx understand the phrase? In an extensive discussion of the term *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat from Marx to Lenin*, Hal Draper makes a powerful argument that Marx does not understand the term as indicating a particular kind of state, but as the *social* dictatorship of the working class. In the same way Marx would refer to all capitalist states, and even capitalist society, as the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, so he referred to the dictatorship of the proletariat. In fact, if you read the handful of places where Marx uses the phrase, that meaning is quite apparent.

Second, Marx did not use the phrase often. The handful of time he uses it, Draper clearly points out its polemical edge in reference to the Blanquists and anarchists. The term actually originates with Auguste Blanqui and his followers. Marx used their term in the discussion, but he argued against a putschist notion of the social revolution, a notion Lenin comes dangerously close to. At best, we can say that Lenin sometimes takes the phrase in Marx's sense, but even in *State and Revolution*, he is inconsistent. In almost all of his other works, Lenin consistently gets it wrong.

This difference reflects another problem. While both Marx and Lenin see the working class as revolutionary, they do so for *entirely different reasons*. For example, Lenin quotes this passage from Engels as gospel:

> "As soon as there is no longer any social class to be held in subjection, as soon as class rule, and the individual struggle for existence based upon the present anarchy in production, with the collisions and excesses arising from this struggle, are removed, nothing more remains to be held in subjection — nothing necessitating a special coercive force, a state."
>
> (*Herr Eugen Duhring's Revolution in Science* [*Anti-Duhring*], pp.301-03, third German edition, quoted in Lenin, CW, Vol. 25, p. 400)

Note how Engels associates capitalist oppression with the anarchy of production, without ever discussing Marx's central critique of capital: the separation of the producer from the means of production. Compare this to Lenin:

> The overthrow of bourgeois rule can be accomplished only by the proletariat, the particular class whose economic conditions of existence prepare it for this task and provide it with the possibility and the power to

there is no freedom and no democracy where there is suppression and where there is violence.

Then, later on…

Furthermore, during the transition from capitalism to communism suppression is still necessary, but it is now the suppression of the exploiting minority by the exploited majority. A special apparatus, a special machine for suppression, the "state", is still necessary, but this is now a transitional state. It is no longer a state in the proper sense of the word; for the suppression of the minority of exploiters by the majority of the wage slaves of yesterday is comparatively so easy, simple and natural a task that it will entail far less bloodshed than the suppression of the risings of slaves, serfs or wage-laborers, and it will cost mankind far less. And it is compatible with the extension of democracy to such an overwhelming majority of the population that the need for a special machine of suppression will begin to disappear. Naturally, the exploiters are unable to suppress the people without a highly complex machine for performing this task, but the people can suppress the exploiters even with a very simple "machine", almost without a "machine", without a special apparatus, by the simple organization of the armed people (such as the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, we would remark, running ahead).

This is actually Lenin at hit best. It is in these worthy lines, esp. in the last few of the second paragraph that Lenin earns his fame. The history of the Russian Revolution after the seizure of power, however, reflects none of this. It is rather the history of Lenin and the Bolsheviks turning progressively away from this. Sadly, it begins almost instantaneously.

47. Marx not only most scrupulously takes account of the inevitable inequality of men, but he also takes into account the fact that the mere conversion of the means of production into the common property of the whole society (commonly called "socialism") does not remove the defects of distribution and the inequality of

where, in the ”petty” - supposedly petty - details of the suffrage (residential qualifications, exclusion of women, etc.), in the technique of the representative institutions, in the actual obstacles to the right of assembly (public buildings are not for ”paupers”!), in the purely capitalist organization of the daily press, etc., etc., - we see restriction after restriction upon democracy. These restrictions, exceptions, exclusions, obstacles for the poor seem slight, especially in the eyes of one who has never known want himself and has never been inclose contact with the oppressed classes in their mass life (and nine out of 10, if not 99 out of 100, bourgeois publicists and politicians come under this category); but in their sum total these restrictions exclude and squeeze out the poor from politics, from active participation in democracy.

Now, at first, I thought this was an excellent paragraph. But instead of showing how democracy is necessarily curtailed under capital's reign, it actually simply shows the most base methods, the means. In fact, Lenin's examples are merely that, "examples". If we removed these restrictions, it would still be a bourgeois state, but we have to ask "why?" This or that restriction is not the issue. Lenin here treats the question in a functionalist way, like so many social democrats. The state appears non-contradictory, i.e. non-dialectical. This follows from Lenin's initial statements in the first chapter.

46. And the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., the organization of the vanguard of the oppressed as the ruling class for the purpose of suppressing the oppressors, cannot result merely in an expansion of democracy. Simultaneously with an immense expansion of democracy, which for the first time becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the moneybags, the dictatorship of the proletariat imposes a series of restrictions on the freedom of the oppressors, the exploiters, the capitalists. We must suppress them in order to free humanity from wage slavery, their resistance must be crushed by force; it is clear that

> perform it. While the bourgeoisie break up and disintegrate the peasantry and all the petty-bourgeois groups, they weld together, unite and organize the proletariat. *Only the proletariat — by virtue of the economic role it plays in large-scale production* — is capable of being the leader of all the working and exploited people, whom the bourgeoisie exploit, oppress and crush, often not less but more than they do the proletarians, but who are incapable of waging an independent struggle for their emancipation. (CW, Vol. 25, p. 408, italics mine)

Lenin takes the position that the proletariat is the emancipatory class because of its role in large-scale production. This confuses a particular historical organization of labor power for the key relation between labor and capital. Lenin *never* grasps Marx's discussion of alienated labor and fetishism. The emancipatory power of the proletariat comes from the fact that the working class exists as the negation of property, of exploitation. The total separation of producer from means of production under capital means that the working class has no possible existence as a propertied, i.e. as an exploiting, class. The particular organization of alienated labor is secondary to the specific mode of existence of labor under capitalism.

This matters simply because the two different perspectives lead to two different views of revolution. For Lenin (and partially for Engels), the first phase of communism is the taking over of the current production process by the working class, the management of the existing production relations by the (workers') state. For Marx, the first phase of communism means the free association of labor, the abolition of the separation of the producers from the means of producing, i.e. the abolition of relations of property. What Marx considers the most basic preliminaries to communism, precursors fulfilled in the course of the revolution, of the expropriation of the expropriators, Lenin considers to be the first phase of communism.

Lenin completely misunderstands Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program* and the discussion of two stages of communism. For Marx, there is no stage of communism with a state or commodity production or wage labor. Lenin completely confuses the problem of the period of revolutionary overthrow of with the first stage of communism. Lenin phrases it this way:

> The proletariat needs state power, a centralized organization of force, an organization of violence, both to crush the resistance of the exploiters and to lead the enormous mass of the population — the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie, and semi-proletarians — in the work of organizing a socialist economy. (CW, Vol. 25, p. 409)

In doing so, Lenin breaks with Marx in the second half of the sentence. Up until that point, Lenin could argue that he represented Marx's view.

Lenin highlights his confusion of the revolutionary period with the first phase of communism in the quote below:

> In striving for socialism, however, we are convinced that it will develop into communism and, therefore, that the need for violence against people in general, for the subordination of one man to another, and of one section of the population to another, will vanish altogether since people will become accustomed to observing the elementary conditions of social life without violence and without subordination. (CW, Vol. 25, p. 461)

Clearly, Lenin still sees the first phase of communism as one of subordination because he can only conceive of it in terms of capturing state power and statification of private property. As such, Lenin goes on to say that

cient Greek republics: freedom for the slave-owners. Owing to the conditions of capitalist exploitation, the modern wage slaves are so crushed by want and poverty that "they cannot be bothered with democracy", "cannot be bothered with politics"; in the ordinary, peaceful course of events, the majority of the population is debarred from participation in public and political life.

Lenin here poses democracy in a formalistic way, not in the first part, but in the second. Democracy has two contents for us: bourgeois freedoms/rights (free speech, freedom of assembly, etc.), which is not associated with Party politics as such, and participatory politics (voting, party work, elections, etc.) Lenin clearly has the latter in mind in the second half of the paragraph.

Lenin's comparison with slavery also fails on two counts. First, historically, Greek democracy did involve all the male citizens, including farmers and urban laborers. Certainly not the slaves, but it is increasingly doubtful that the slaves ever accounted for more than 30% of the population. So, compared to level of participation in capitalist society, the level of activity of the non-slave laboring classes was very high. Second, Lenin here again treats the state generically, without looking at the roots of the capitalist state as a capitalist state. The separation of the economic and the political, the market, etc all form the underpinnings of the specific separation of the economic and the political, of the state and civil society. Capital purifies the state, bringing it to its most autonomous form. As such, I suspect that merely being crushed by want and poverty is insufficient. What really needs to be taken up is the question of how the state actively fetishizes relations, and is itself a constant process of fetishization. Lenin is incapable of grasping this.

45. Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich - that is the democracy of capitalist society. If we look more closely into the machinery of capitalist democracy, we see every-

functions will remain in existence there that are analogous to present state functions? This question can only be answered scientifically, and one does not get a flea-hop nearer to the problem by a thousandfold combination of the word people with the word state." (Marx, Critique of the Gotha Program)

This section indicates to Lenin that Marx conceives of a state under communist society. This phrase can be read two ways. Either Marx is asking "What functions of the communist state will be analogous to the bourgeois state?" or "What functions will exist that would be analogous to those carried out by the state, but which will now have to be carried out by other means?" I think a very strong case can be made for the second reading, which would immediately begin to undermine Lenin's entire approach to the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' and to communism.

43. "Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat." (Marx, Critique of the Gotha Program)

Let's be clear: Marx is very clear that some form of state will be necessary during the transition from capitalism to communism. Marx is no anarchist. He clearly recognizes the need of the working class to defend itself against capital. Nor does he have any illusions that the mass of workers will immediately be able to overcome the "muck of ages" in one fell swoop. However, Marx is also quite clear in placing the DofP

44. In capitalist society, providing it develops under the most favourable conditions, we have a more or less complete democracy in the democratic republic. But this democracy is always hemmed in by the narrow limits set by capitalist exploitation, and consequently always remains, in effect, a democracy for the minority, only for the propertied classes, only for the rich. Freedom in capitalist society always remains about the same as it was in the an-

> …in the first phase of communist society (usually called socialism) "bourgeois law" is not abolished in its entirety, but only in part, only in proportion to the economic revolution so far attained, i.e., only in respect of the means of production. "Bourgeois law" recognizes them as the private property of individuals. Socialism converts them into common property. To that extent - and to that extent alone - "bourgeois law" disappears.
>
> The socialist principle, "He who does not work shall not eat", is already realized; the other socialist principle, "An equal amount of products for an equal amount of labor", is also already realized. But this is not yet communism, and it does not yet abolish "bourgeois law", which gives unequal individuals, in return for unequal (really unequal) amounts of labor, equal amounts of products. (CW, Vol. 25, p. 472)

This utterly contradicts Marx. Marx says bourgeois right, not law, which would assume the state. Lenin focuses on the 'economic revolution' solely from the technical side, from the 'means of production', unlike Marx who focuses on the relations of production, the separator of the producer from the means of production.

The idea that "socialism" merely equals the conversion of bourgeois private property into common property completely misunderstands Marx. For Marx, private property means capitalist property as a whole, as in the total property of the capitalist class, not simply juridically recognized individual property. State capitalism turned individual property into common property, without ever violating private property, i.e. capitalist property (see Paresh Chattopadhyay, The Marxian Concept of Capital and the Soviet Experience, Praeger, 1994.) Therefore, Lenin merely posits a different

form of capitalism, since none of the social relations of production change under "socialism".[1]

Lenin even counterpoises the state to the working class here in his most libertarian work. The following two paragraphs highlight how far Lenin is from Marx.

> We are not utopians, we do not "dream" of dispensing at once with all administration, with all subordination. These anarchist dreams, based upon incomprehension of the tasks of the proletarian dictatorship, are totally alien to Marxism, and, as a matter of fact, serve only to postpone the socialist revolution until people are different. No, we want the socialist revolution with people as they are now, with people who cannot dispense with subordination, control, and "foremen and accountants". (CW, Vol. 25, p. 430)
>
> *We*, the workers, shall organize large-scale production on the basis of what capitalism has already created, relying on our own experience as workers, establishing strict, iron discipline backed up by the state power of the armed workers. We shall reduce the role of state officials to that of simply carrying out our instructions as responsible, revocable, modestly paid "foremen and accountants" (of course, with the aid of technicians of all sorts, types and degrees).
>
> A witty German Social-Democrat of the seventies of the last century called the postal service an example of the socialist economic system. This is very true. At the present the postal service is a business

[1] I do not use the term 'state capitalism' because I happen to think it represents a mistaken notion of the relation between capital and the state. See my discussion above on Lenin's conception of the state and John Holloway's article "Global Capital and the National State" in issue 52 of *Capital and Class* from 1994 for a more thorough discussion.

talist whenever they wanted to, and in some cases restoring individual capitalist's property.

Some people may feel that I am reading Lenin *too carefully*. Such a criticism misses the point that what Lenin says accidentally and incidentally can reveal to us as much or more than his most carefully worded sentences. I think moments like this offer us an incite into the limitations in the concept of revolution inherent in the best and most revolutionary Social Democratic party.

40. **Lenin is right about one thing, which the opponents of self-determination do not understand: the right of self-determination is a question of democracy, even if bourgeois democracy. The greater the level of democracy, the broader the possibilities for struggle of the working class, for self-organization, etc. The question is not whether self-determination will get rid of the evils of capitalism, or whether 'one's own' exploiter is better than a 'foreign' exploiter, but whether the arena for struggle is thereby widened.**

On to Lenin on the Critique of the Gotha Program…

41. Clearly, there can be no question of specifying the moment of the future "withering away", the more so since it will obviously be a lengthy process.

Interestingly, I think Lenin already has it wrong. Marx does not envision the state continuing to exist for a long time. Marx does not envision a "workers' state", a term he never used. For Marx, the working class will have a semi-state that is itself already in the process of withering away at its birth. Remember (and Lenin does not seem familiar with this), Marx refers to the state as "the illusory community". This is *very* important in reference to how Marx understands the state *contra post-Marx Marxism*.

42. "The question then arise: what transformation will the state undergo in communist society? In other words, what social

We also need to keep in mind that Marx approached this question of democratic republic in a period when that meant revolution, which Marx, from his notion of uninterrupted revolution, understood as opening the gates for proletarian revolution. In our century, the most democratic capitalist states have been the most solid and entrenched, with the fewest struggles. Even Engels recognized this in relation to the English working class in the 1890's, because democracy at home aligned with colonialism and empire abroad. The concrete circumstances of the 19th century or of the countries with relatively underdeveloped capitalist relations (or relatively weak relations) where struggles for bourgeois democracy automatically hemorrhaged into mass political struggles that threatened to destroy capital itself.

39. For, in order to abolish the state, it is necessary to convert the functions of the civil service into the simple operations of control and accounting that are within the scope and ability of the vast majority of the population, and, subsequently, of every single individual. And if careerism is to be abolished completely, it must be made impossible for "honorable" though profitless posts in the Civil Service to be used as a springboard to highly lucrative posts in banks or joint-stock companies, as constantly happens in all the freest capitalist countries.

This interesting little passage seems innocuous enough, until we realize that the last sentence quite directly implies that banks and joint-stock companies will continue to exist under the dictatorship of the proletariat, rather than being expropriated. Lenin's notion of revolution once again involves the change of state power (a coup, really), but not the transformation of the social relations, the abolition of the capital-labor relation, the expropriation of the expropriators. This might indicate some of the reason why the Bolsheviks did not support the workers expropriating every capi-

> organized on the lines of state-capitalist monopoly. Imperialism is gradually transforming all trusts into organizations of a similar type, in which, standing over the "common" people, who are overworked and starved, one has the same bourgeois bureaucracy. But the mechanism of social management is here already to hand. Once we have overthrown the capitalists, crushed the resistance of these exploiters with the iron hand of the armed workers, and smashed the bureaucratic machinery of the modern state, we shall have a splendidly-equipped mechanism, freed from the "parasite", a mechanism which can very well be set going by the united workers themselves, who will hire technicians, foremen and accountants, and pay them all, as indeed all "state" officials in general, workmen's wages. Here is a concrete, practical task which can immediately be fulfilled in relation to all trusts, a task whose fulfillment will rid the working people of exploitation, a task which takes account of what the Commune had already begun to practice (particularly in building up the state).
>
> To organize the whole economy on the lines of the postal service so that the technicians, foremen and accountants, as well as all officials, shall receive salaries no higher than "a workman's wage", all under the control and leadership of the armed proletariat - that is our immediate aim. This is what will bring about the abolition of parliamentarism and the preservation of representative institutions. This is what will rid the laboring classes of the bourgeoisie's prostitution of these institutions. (CW, Vol. 25, p. 430-1)

We must go even further and say that Lenin completely misunderstands Marx's discussion of bourgeois right under the first

phase of communism, believing that Marx means the continued existence of wage-labor. The first phase of communism already assumes the end of money and the wage relation. It assumes the end of the state and of capitalist relations of production. Both phases of communism depend on what Marx called "the free association of producers", in which the freedom of each is the precondition for the freedom of all.

Does this mean that Marx did not believe the proletariat needed a state, albeit a transitional and immediately dying state, to suppress the capitalist class? First, Marx clearly does have some kind of transient form of state in mind, but this state exists only as long as the expropriation of the expropriators continues. It has *nothing* to do with the first phase of communism (what Lenin and others referred to as socialism.)

Second, Marx did not conceive of the particular state form as "dictatorial", as a dictatorship in the modern sense, as I have indicated elsewhere, while leaving the question of the specific form of state open. At most, we can say that the Commune formed the core of his conception, a form that certainly has none of the features of a dictatorship in the modern sense of the term. A few of Marx's more 'statist' quotes should suffice to make the point, as his writing in *The Civil War in France*, and *Notes on Adolph Wagner* lean in an even more unambiguously anti-statist direction. Marx comments as follows:

> "... In depicting the most general phases of the development of the proletariat, we traced the more or less veiled civil war, raging within existing society up to the point where that war breaks out into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat...
>
> "... We have seen above that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat

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

This interesting comment comes from the section commenting on Engels' Critique of the Erfurt Program. Here once again Lenin clearly shows that he associates communism with planning, state owned means of production, etc., rather than situating his critique, as Marx does, in the relations of production, in the separation of the producer from the means of producing, of the alienation of the producer from production and the dominance of dead labor over living labor. This will lay the groundwork for Lenin's promotion of Taylorism, one-man management, piece wages, and other means of revitalizing production from 1919 onwards.

38. Engels realized here in a particularly striking form the fundamental idea which runs through all of Marx's works, namely, that the democratic republic is the nearest approach to the dictatorship of the proletariat. For such a republic, without in the least abolishing the rule of capital, and, therefore, the oppression of the masses nd the class struggle, inevitably leads to such an extension, development, unfolding, and intensification of this struggle that, as soon as it becomes possible to meet the fundamental interests of the oppressed masses, this possibility is realized inevitably and solely through the dictatorship of the proletariat, through the leadership of those masses by the proletariat.

This is quite odd, as Marx emphasizes in the 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte that the revolution threw up the Constituent Assembly in order to perfect bourgeois republicanism, only in order to destroy it and throw up Bonapartism in order to perfect the executive power, in order to smash it in turn. So in the specific instance, Marx rather saw the dictatorship of Bonaparte as leading to the highest point of struggle.

hardly function because the old rules of functioning do not apply.)

35. **I am not going to spend a lot of time on Engels' discussion of Authority with the anarchists, except to say that the idea that the level of development of the means of production determines the degree of subordination by some people to others is totally anathema to Marx. We are back at human beings being subordinated to machines, living labor to dead. The exact idea is that human beings come to determine their relations freely, in free association. In Engels' turn of phrase, it is the machines that control the workers, requiring relations of subordination between human beings. This discussion does NOT make Marx's point at all. Engels very much confuses the choices people make, the free association of producers, from the form that it takes. Engels clearly does not grasp the relation of form and content that Marx is always attentive to. IN this case, as so many others, Lenin takes his lead from Engels.**

As for the authoritarian and anti-authoritarian tendencies of the revolution, Engels misconstrues the problem when he fails to grapple with the fact that it is radically anti-authoritarian for the oppressed to do whatever they need to do to overthrow the oppressor. It is Engels who is playing with phrases here. The only place where Engels would make sense would be in reference to an individualistic anti-authoritarianism, one which did not respect the democratic decision-making process.

On to Bebel…

36. The only thing to say about this section is that Engels and Lenin appear at their best. Again, however, this cannot stand disconnected from how Lenin understands communism.

37. The "proximity" of such capitalism to socialism should serve genuine representatives of the proletariat as an argument proving the proximity, facility, feasibility, and urgency of the socialist revo-

to the position of the ruling class to win the battle of democracy.

"The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degree, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible." (pp.31 and 37, *Communist Manifesto*, seventh German edition, 1906, quoted in Lenin, CW, Vol. 25, p. 407)

"If the political struggle of the working class assumes revolutionary form," wrote Marx, ridiculing the anarchists for their repudiation of politics, "and if the workers set up their revolutionary dictatorship in place of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, they commit the terrible crime of violating principles, for in order to satisfy their wretched, vulgar everyday needs and to crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie, *they give the state a revolutionary and transient form, instead of laying down their arms and abolishing the state*." (*Neue Zeit* Vol.XXXII, 1, 1913-14, p.40, quoted in Lenin, CW, Vol. 25, pp. 440-1, Italics mine)

"Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat." (Critique of the Gotha Program, Marx, quoted Lenin, CW, Vol. 25, p. 464)

The Question of The Party and Consciousness

Lenin's conception of the party depends on a notion of consciousness that he derives from Kautsky and the Second International. Obviously, Lenin makes the connection clear in *What Is To Be Done?* when he makes the claim that the working class cannot get beyond trade union consciousness, to revolutionary consciousness, without external intervention by the party. Revolutionary consciousness comes from outside the class struggle, from the development of science. (For critiques of this view, see *Open Marxism: Vols. 1-3,* Bonefeld, Gunn, Psychopedis et al, 1993-4)

Many people have claimed that Lenin goes beyond that perspective at different moments, such as in *State and Revolution.* Supposedly Lenin takes a different perspective on the question of the self-emancipation of the class. Can we support this view?

I don't think so. Lenin continues to view the development of class-consciousness in a mechanical way that assumes the party as a necessary catalyst and embodiment of class-consciousness. Lenin clarifies on the role of the party in *State and Revolution* in the following way,

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

then Lenin understands something utterly different from Marx in this passage. We have to understand capital as a social relation. In the process of organizing ourselves and determining ourselves, the working class creates organs of control which are themselves the dissolution of the fundamental class relations. As such, classes do not continue to exist for very long where the revolution succeeds. However, since class is an international relation, a world relation, the absolute abolition of classes requires the overthrow of the capital-labor relation everywhere in the world, and as long as capital present a military threat, the working class will need to have coordinated, organized violence available to defend itself.

34. We maintain that, to achieve this aim, we must temporarily make use of the instruments, resources, and methods of state power against the exploiters, just as the temporary dictatorship of the oppressed class is necessary for the abolition of classes. Marx chooses the sharpest and clearest way of stating his case against the anarchists: After overthrowing the yoke of the capitalists, should the workers "lay down their arms", or use them against the capitalists in order to crush their resistance? But what is the systematic use of arms by ne class against another if not a "transient form" of state?

Here again we need to differentiate between analogous functions and the state as a social relation. Here very clearly Lenin conceives of state as a "thing with functions", rather than as a social relation. Why else use the phrase "temporarily make use of the instruments, resources, and methods of state power"? This phrase has a certain ambiguity about it when it comes to whether or not we need to smash the state or take over the already existing apparatus (in fact, the moment the workers' organs of struggle get bypassed, the old bureaucrats find their way back in because doing the old tasks requires the old skills, whereas such people could

for a certain form of state, but it does not at all call for a special military bureaucratic apparatus, with officials occupying especially privileged positions. The transition to a situation in which it will be possible to supply dwellings rent-free depends on the complete "withering away" of the state.

This whole formulation is suspect, especially the 'need' for a state to do these things.

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

"If the political struggle of the working class assumes revolutionary form," wrote Marx, ridiculing the anarchists for their repudiation of politics, "and if the workers set up their revolutionary dictatorship in place of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, they commit the terrible crime of violating principles, for in order to satisfy their wretched, vulgar everyday needs and to crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie, they give the state a revolutionary and transient form, instead of laying down their arms and abolishing the state."

(*Neue Zeit* Vol.XXXII, 1, 1913-14, p.40)

This is an important point by Marx. However, it also bears inspection in light of the 20th century and whether or not we can survive grabbing the tiger by the tail.

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

This important little passage absolutely begs the question of how we conceive of the revolution and communism. How Lenin understands communism and Marx's notion of two phases either makes or breaks this passage. If Paresh is right,

This conception of the role of the party still very much places the role of bearer of consciousness upon the party, as opposed to the working class. The party exists as the educator, the bearer of special knowledge and technique. Of course, we have a right to ask: Where does this privileged information come from, this privileged knowledge? Lenin answers us clearly: from the positive science of Marxism.

But then we have a few problems. Marx did not posit his ideas as a positive science of the world. When Marx used the term science, he used it in a negative way, indicating "a ruthless critique of everything existing" (*The Holy Family*, p.) For Marx, dialectics always means *negative dialectics*. Engels is the first person to fail to grasp this, and upon his partial mistakes grew a whole positivistic treatment of dialectics, which Lenin fully absorbs. Therefore, Lenin's notion of Marxism stands juxtaposed to Marx's Marxism.

Nor can we find a space outside the class struggle, outside alienation and fetishization, from which to claim this positive science. In Marx we find no outside to the capital-labor relation, no privileged, distanced, objective space from which we can turn the working class or our own activity or anything else into a pure object of study. Because capital is nothing but alienated labor, labor *in* capital, capital has no existence separate from labor. But because labor means nothing under capital except as alienated labor, because capitalism exists as the separation of the producers from the means of production, labor also exists *against* capital. This reveals an interconnected relation of antagonism, but an asymmetrical one: capital needs labor, but labor does not need capital. Labor exists in-against-and-beyond capital simultaneously.

In Marx, revolutionary consciousness is the special privilege of the working class, not a party of intellectuals, or even a "vanguard" of working class militants. The working class, rent by the antagonism of being in-and-against capital is the only class, as a whole, in a position to see through the process of fetishization. It is exploitation and alienated labor, not "scientific socialist ideas", which

lead to revolutionary class-consciousness for the class as a whole. Marx's notion of self-emancipation of the class (and his notions of organization, stated in *The Communist Manifesto*, his work in the International Workingmen's Association, and his letters towards the end of his life, including the *Gothacritik*) indicates a different notion of *consciousness* from Lenin. This different conception of the formation of consciousness implies a wholly different concept of *state and revolution*. It also implies a wholly different conception of organization.

If I am right, that Lenin's organizational concept embodies a departure from Marx's approach to the problem of consciousness, and hence of organization, then where do we begin?

First, we need to engage in a serious re-examination of non-Leninist forms of organization, even those that ultimately failed. (In a sense, they have all failed, but some *failed better* than others.). The council communists drew upon and developed the question of workers' councils, even if they made a fetish of councils at a certain point. Ultimately, they seemed to decide that revolutionary organizations should dissolve themselves into the councils and not propose a separate existence from workers' organs of power after the revolution. Marxist-Humanism and Socialism ou Barbarie developed different conceptions of organization opposed to the idea of vanguardism, but with a strong emphasis on theory and practice unity, even if they diverge at critical points. The Situationist International developed an important critique of 'militantism'. They also developed the councilist position on the role of Marxist organizations in the workers' councils, projecting a purely negative, anti-bureaucratic role, but one that continues after the revolution. Solidarity in England took a mix of ideas from these different groups, and developed a series of ideas worth further investigation. I only mention here what have been critical interventions for me and each of us hopefully brings other examples and ideas to the table.

Second, we might start by asking, "Since revolutionary consciousness develops in the course of class struggle, but Marxism

Marx, as far as I have seen (had it been, some Leninist would have picked it up.)

On to Chapter IV. I will treat with this very briefly, only because I am concerned with Marx and Lenin. Engels primarily exists as a bridge between the two, not standing on his own in relation to this discussion.

30. "... It must be pointed out that the 'actual seizure' of all the instruments of labor, the taking possession of industry as a whole by the working people, is the exact opposite of the Proudhonist 'redemption'. In the latter case the individual worker becomes the owner of the dwelling, the peasant farm, the instruments of labor; in the former case, the 'working people' remain the collective owners of the houses, factories and instruments of labor, and will hardly permit their use, at least during a transitional period, by individuals or associations without compensation for the cost. In the same way, the abolition of property in land is not the abolition of ground rent but its transfer, if in a modified form, to society. The actual seizure of all the instruments of labor by the working people, therefore, does not at all preclude the retention of rent relations."

(Engels, The Housing Question, p.68)

This is a particularly atrocious misunderstanding of Marx and his conception of communism. Engels completely fails to understand ground rent, much as he misunderstood Marx's other categories, as a social relation. Engels understands it in a purely economic way and Lenin proceeds from these same mistakes.

31. We shall examine the question touched upon in this passage, namely, the economic basis for the withering away of the state, in the next chapter. Engels expresses himself most cautiously. saying that the proletarian state would "hardly" permit the use of houses without payment, "at least during a transitional period". The letting of houses owed by the whole people to individual families presupposes the collection of rent, a certain amount of control, nd the employment of some standard in allotting the housing. All this calls

accountants, and pay them all, as indeed all "state" officials in general, workmen's wages. Here is a concrete, practical task which can immediately be fulfilled in relation to all trusts, a task whose fulfilment will rid the working people of exploitation, a task which takes account of what the Commune had already begun to practice (particularly in building up the state).

To organize the whole economy on the lines of the postal service so that the technicians, foremen and accountants, as well as all officials, shall receive salaries no higher than "a workman's wage", all under the control and leadership of the armed proletariat - that is our immediate aim. This is what will bring about the abolition of parliamentarism and the preservation of representative institutions. This is what will rid the laboring classes of the bourgeoisie's prostitution of these institutions.

Ad nauseum. This is horrible. Paris Commune, Section 4 next up.

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

Following on a fairly correct set of paragraphs, as far as they go, Lenin then asserts, with no further proof, that Marx was a centralist. If we read the last paragraph Lenin quotes from The Civil War in France, then Marx clearly does not talk about national unity in a centralized state. He declares that the *functions* performed by the old state should be transferred to responsible representatives, while the old repressive functions were to be amputated (destroyed.) Again, based on a sloppy reading, Lenin finds what he wants, to vindicate his 'democratic centralism', a term *never* used by

does not spring into every revolutionary workers' head, what role for Marxists?" We could do worse than to return to Marx's simple comments in the *Communist Manifesto* on the role of communists in the workers' movement as a part of our rethinking. Degrading Marx's organizational theory and practice formed an essential part of Leninism (especially post-Lenin Leninism.) Does that condemn us to a contemplative position? It did not do so for Marx, so I do not think it should for us either. We still have to ask, "What do we, as revolutionaries, *do?*" The attraction of Leninism was always that it had the answer, even if it was the wrong answer.

Towards a Conception of Revolution

I have not addressed the problem of the Bolsheviks in power or even the October, even though I thought about it and such a discussion is implicit in this whole article. That would require considerably more space than we have here. At best, I can recommend a series of works that people can refer to, each of which captures a part of what I would see as developing a further critique of Leninism, especially Leninism in power.[1]

Instead, I would like to draw some conclusions. First, I don't think we can defend the idea that Lenin develops a coherent Marxist analysis of the state. Rather, he develops a view that suffers from a strong strain of functionalism and positivism. Second, Lenin's notion of revolution has little in common with Marx's conception of revolution as the self-emancipation of the working class. Where Lenin is right, he says nothing we could not already get from Marx. Lenin generally misunderstands Marx's *Gothacritik*. His whole discussion of communism and the dictatorship of the proletariat is a *departure* from Marx, not an extension. Rather, Lenin extends the line of thought we could refer to as Lassalleanism, with its fetishization of the state. In other words, we do not just have to go beyond

[1] Places to start include Paresh Chattopadhyay, John Holloway, Werner Bonefeld, Raya Dunayevskaya, the Situationist International and Guy Debord, Maurice Brinton and Solidarity, Anton Pannekoek, Paul Mattick, Sr., Italian Autonomist Marxism, and more. A whole subterranean tradition in Marxism exists, which we need to re-examine, starting with *Marx himself*.

the proletariat. Lenin clearly has no notion of the self-emancipation of the class. This section deserves rigorous criticism.

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

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

tion of the political and the economic, the fetishized social relations at the root of the capital-labor relation.

26. Abolishing the bureaucracy at once, everywhere and completely, is out of the question. It is a utopia. But to smash the old bureaucratic machine at once and to begin immediately to construct a new one that will make possible the gradual abolition of all bureaucracy - this is not a utopia, it is the experience of the Commune, the direct and immediate task of the revolutionary proletariat.

Here is a break with Marx. Marx *nowhere* suggests the replacement of one bureaucracy with another, one state machine with another. Lenin confuses analogies with actualities.

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

We are not utopians, we do not "dream" of dispensing at once with all administration, with all subordination. These anarchist dreams, based upon incomprehension of the tasks of the proletarian dictatorship, are totally alien to Marxism, and, as a matter of fact, serve only to postpone the socialist revolution until people are different. No, we want the socialist revolution with people as they are now, with people who cannot dispense with subordination, control, and "foremen and accountants".

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

Here is the true content, and the extreme poverty, of Lenin's conception of revolution, of the dictatorship of

Lenin; we have to abandon Leninism to the dustbin of history. We have to start from somewhere else entirely.

Does that mean we just go back to Marx? We have new questions to ask, and we have new experiences to assimilate. The world has not stood still since Marx, and neither has revolution. By re-examining some of the problems Marx grappled with, as Marx grappled with them, maybe we can help reformulate a different Marxism, what John Holloway, Werner Bonefeld, Richard Gunn, et al, have called an "Open Marxism".

Certainly, after the 20th century, we can no longer think about power and revolution in the same terms. We cannot just say, "Look at what the Communards did." At least no more than we can afford to ignore that experience. I do not claim to have any answers, but I have questions. So I am not going to propose a new conception of revolution here, so much as I want to pose a series of points that may help us collectively to develop that conception.

1. Central to this discussion has been the notion of the state and how we understand it. Holloway, Bonefeld, Simon Clarke, and others Vital have begun vital work, which I think we need to pick up and develop. We have to go beyond the generic state or the state as an instrument of object external to the capital-labor relation. I cannot elaborate this approach here beyond the few things I have said in this article.

2. In discussing the problem of working class revolution, we have to re-open the discussion of the forms of workers' power we have seen, especially the factory councils and workers' councils. Not that this discussion ever exactly ended, but it became the minority discussion Marxism, on the fringes of a Leninist-dominated discussion, which assumed it knew all the answers. We must ask if the concept of 'smashing the state' really appreciates the whole problem

of the relationship of state and revolution adequately. We need to re-open the question of the contours of revolution, starting with the recognition that we really no longer know what it looks like (having mistaken one type of revolution for another in Russia and having seen relatively few since, in a world that has drastically changed in the last 30 years.)

3. We have to grapple with the notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat. First, do we even want to use this term anymore? It already seemed to be outdated in Marx's time and Engels even proposed talking about the revolutionary state not as a state but using the German for the word Commune (see his Letter to Bebel from 1875 dealing with this topic, quoted in *State and Revolution* in the section on Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program.*) Beyond that, though, we have to ask if the "transient state", as Marx's calls it, will be a necessary barrier we must overcome or a deadly detour from which no revolution can recover?

4. How do we understand communism? We have Marx's insights, his discussions after the Commune. We have a wide range of non-Leninist ideas to draw from and, dare I say it, we even need to revisit anarchism in a serious way.

5. We need to revisit the problem of organization and the role of revolutionaries. I posed those questions above, but only in the briefest outline.

These are simply some provisional questions and suggestions, but maybe that is where we need to begin. Not only do we no longer have all the answers, we have to reckon with the fact that we never did. We have to try our best to see Marx with fresh eyes and rediscover revolution.

and that, on the other hand, the "attention" of the people may be "engaged". meanwhile the chancelleries and army staffs "do" the business of "state".

This approach has a certain appeal, however it utterly fails to account for why workers "fall for it", why this so-called deception works. It gives the parliamentary form a purely fake character, as if it was a conspiracy by perfectly conscious manipulators, rather than the outcome of class struggles which have partially won/failed. We have to go beyond this approach is we want to understand the actually constituted state. Lenin also seems to have a view of the state as something once-constituted: this "thing" we call the state. He recognizes enough in Marx to not be that crass (unlike some of his detractors), but the kernel is still there because all that gets modified are the functions of the state. Lenin still starts from a functionalist approach.

25. We cannot imagine democracy, even proletarian democracy, without representative institutions, but we can and must imagine democracy without parliamentarism, if criticism of bourgeois society is not mere words for us, if the desire to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie is our earnest and sincere desire, and not a mere "election" cry for catching workers' votes, as it is with the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, and also the Scheidemanns and Legiens, the Smblats and Vanderveldes.

There is something here than sticks in my craw. Lenin still conceives of the political revolution as separate from the social revolution. As if there were any tasks for the state to carry out which were not already tasks of the class as a whole in the revolution of everyday life, of all social relations. The state is still left as a thing above the class (even if a very representative, democratic thing). The self-emancipation of the class appears nowhere in this formulation. So while it may criticize parliamentarism, Lenin never criticizes the separa-

in their own way a new society in place of the old society that was being destroyed.

This is one of the best moments in the whole piece. Lenin comes closer here than anywhere else to Marx.

23. In the section **What Is To Replace the Smashed State Machine?** Lenin proceeds with what seems like a profoundly democratic discussion, and yet nowhere does he conceive of any kind of direct democracy. Does Marx? Need to re-read Civil War in France cover to cover, carefully. Maybe also 18th Brumaire and Class Struggles in France.

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

"A working, not a parliamentary body" - this is a blow straight from the shoulder at the present-day parliamentarian country, from America to Switzerland, from France to Britain, Norway and so forth - in these countries the real business of "state" is performed behind the scenes and is carried on by the departments, chancelleries, and General Staffs. parliament is given up to talk for the special purpose of fooling the "common people". This is so true that even in the Russian republic, a bourgeois-democratic republic, all these sins of parliamentarism came out at once, even before it managed to set up a real parliament. The heroes of rotten philistinism, such as the skobelevs and tseretelis, the Chernovs and Avksentyevs, have even succeeded in polluting the Soviets after the fashion of the most disgusting bourgeois parliamentarism, in converting them into mere talking shops. In the Soviets, the "socialist" Ministers are fooling the credulous rustics with phrase-mongering and resolutions. In the government itself a sort of permanent shuffle is going on in order that, on the one hand, as many Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks as possible may in turn get near the "pie", the lucrative and honorable posts,

Appendix: Lenin Quotes, State and Revolution

1. Summing up his historical analysis, Engels says:

"The state is, therefore, by no means a power forced on society from without; just as little is it 'the reality of the ethical idea', 'the image and reality of reason', as Hegel maintains. Rather, it is a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel. But in order that these antagonisms, these classes with conflicting economic interests, might not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, it became necessary to have a power, seemingly standing above society, that would alleviate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of 'order'; and this power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it, and alienating itself more and more from it, is the state." (pp.177-78, sixth edition)

This expresses with perfect clarity the basic idea of Marxism with regard to the historical role and the meaning of the state. The state is a product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms. The state arises where, when and insofar as class antagonism objectively cannot be reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state proves that the class antagonisms are irreconcilable.

2. 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”, which legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between classes.

3. Engels continues:

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

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

”The second distinguishing feature is the establishment of a public power which no longer directly coincides with the population organizing itself as an armed force. This special, public power is necessary because a self-acting armed organization of the population has become impossible since the split into classes… This public power exists in every state; it consists not merely of armed men but also of material adjuncts, prisons, and institutions of coercion of all kinds, of which gentile [clan] society knew nothing…”

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

4. 3. The State: an Instrument for the Exploitation of the Oppressed Class (section heading in Chapter 1)

5. In a democratic republic, Engels continues, ”wealth exercises its power indirectly, but all the more surely”, first, by means of the ”direct corruption of officials” (America); secondly, by means of an ”alliance of the government and the Stock Exchange” (France and America).

At present, imperialism and the domination of the banks have ”developed” into an exceptional art both these methods of upholding and giving effect to the omnipotence of wealth in democratic republics of all descriptions. Since, for instance, in the very first months of the Russian democratic republic, one might say during the honeymoon of the ”socialist” S.R.s and Mensheviks joined in wedlock to the bourgeoisie, in the coalition government. Mr.

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

Lenin correctly fixates on this as the central task of the working class in revolution relative to the state. However, Marx no longer seems to be thinking in terms of taking power. At the same time, one should not make a fetish of Marx, either, eh?

22. Secondly, particular attention should be paid to Marx’s extremely profound remark that the destruction of the bureaucratic-military state machine is ”the precondition for every real *people’s* revolution”. This idea of a ”people’s revolution seems strange coming from Marx, so that the Russian Plekhanovites and Mensheviks, those followers of Struve who wish to be regarded as Marxists, might possibly declare such an expression to be a ”slip of the pen” on Marx’s part. They have reduced Marxism to such a state of wretchedly liberal distortion that nothing exists for them beyond the antithesis between bourgeois revolution and proletarian revolution, and even this antithesis they interpret in an utterly lifeless way.

If we take the revolutions of the 20th century as examples we shall, of course, have to admit that the Portuguese and the Turkish revolutions are both bourgeois revolutions. Neither of them, however, is a ”people’s” revolution, since in neither does the mass of the people, their vast majority, come out actively, independently, with their own economic and political demands to any noticeable degree. By contrast, although the Russian bourgeois revolution of 1905-07 displayed no such ”brilliant” successes as at time fell to the Portuguese and Turkish revolutions, it was undoubtedly a ”real people’s” revolution, since the mass of the people, their majority, the very lowest social groups, crushed by oppression and exploitation, rose independently and stamped on the entire course of the revolution the imprint of *their* own demands, *their* attempt to build

ertyless in general) and dictatorial in a new way (against the bourgeoisie).

Further. The essence of Marx's theory of the state has been mastered only by those who realize that the dictatorship of a single class is necessary not only for every class society in general, not only for the proletariat which has overthrown the bourgeoisie, but also for the entire historical period which separates capitalism from "classless society", from communism. Bourgeois states are most varied in form, but their essence is the same: all these states, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The transition from capitalism to communism is certainly bound to yield a tremendous abundance and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same: the dictatorship of the proletariat.

For all the problems present in Lenin's piece, he nonetheless takes a much less statist position, at least by not identifying the dictatorship of the proletariat with one specific type of state, although even here, that is not completely broken with.

On to the Paris Commune, Chapter 3…

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

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

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

(*Neue Zeit*, Vol.XX, 1, 1901-02, p.709.)

Palchinsky obstructed every measure intended for curbing the capitalists and their marauding practices, their plundering of the state by means of war contracts; and since later on Mr. Palchinsky, upon resigning from the Cabinet (and being, of course, replaced by another quite similar Palchinsky), was "rewarded" by the capitalists with a lucrative job with a salary of 120,000 rubles per annum — what would you call that? Direct or indirect bribery? An alliance of the government and the syndicates, or "merely" friendly relations? What role do the Chernovs, Tseretelis, Avksentyevs and Skobelevs play? Are they the "direct" or only the indirect allies of the millionaire treasury-looters?

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

This quote is very important and captures the whole of the matter quite succinctly, in terms of exactly how crudely Lenin and Engels conceive of the state.

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

"The state, then, has not existed from all eternity. There have been societies that did without it, that had no idea of the state and state power. At a certain stage of economic development, which was necessarily bound up with the split of society into classes, the state became a necessity owing to this split. We are now rapidly approaching a stage in the development of production at which the existence of these classes not only will have ceased to be a necessity, but will become a positive hindrance to production. They will fall as they arose at an earlier stage. Along with them the state will

inevitably fall. Society, which will reorganize production on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers, will put the whole machinery of state where it will then belong: into a museum of antiquities, by the side of the spinning-wheel and the bronze axe."

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

Another important passage, especially for Engels' crude economic determinism, decision of what is progressive by level of productivity/forces of production, not alienation/fetishization, but also for Lenin completely missing Engels' correct point of the free and equal association of producers, which is the important and powerful kernel of this statement.

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

"The proletariat seizes from state power and turns the means of production into state property to begin with. But thereby it abolishes itself as the proletariat, abolishes all class distinctions and class antagonisms, and abolishes also the state as state. Society thus far, operating amid class antagonisms, needed the state, that is, an organization of the particular exploiting class, for the maintenance of its external conditions of production, and, therefore, especially, for the purpose of forcibly keeping the exploited class in the conditions of oppression determined by the given mode of pro-

18. In 1907, Mehring, in the magazine *Neue Zeit* (Vol.XXV, 2, p.164), published extracts from Marx's letter to Weydemeyer dated March 5, 1852. This letter, among other things, contains the following remarkable observation:

"And now as to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economists, the economic anatomy of classes. What I did that was new was to prove: (1) that the existence of classes is only bound up with the particular, historical phases in the development of production (historische Entwicklungsphasen der Produktion), (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat, (3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society."

We will see later that Marx invests this last point with a radically different content than Lenin, who assumes Marx means the first stage of communism, rather than the transition to the first stage of communism.

19. Only he is a Marxist who extends the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. That is what constitutes the most profound distinction between the Marxist and the ordinary petty (as well as big) bourgeois. This is the touchstone on which the real understanding and recognition of Marxism should be tested.

Clearly, this is *reductio ad absurdum*. Marx has much, much more than this. In fact, this is the smallest point because Marx himself only uses the phrase in argument with the anarchists and Blanquists. For Marx, the historicity of capital, its existence as a social relation, fetishism, etc.

20. ...In reality, this period inevitably is a period of an unprecedently violent class struggle in unprecedentedly acute forms, and, consequently, during this period the state must inevitably be a state that is democratic in a new way (for the proletariat and the prop-

doctrine which shows the inevitability of this connection, a doctrine which the petty-bourgeois democrats either ignorantly and flippantly deny, or still more flippantly admit "in general", while forgetting to draw appropriate practical conclusions.

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

Lenin grasps part of the quote, but he fails to really grapple with the formation of the state, the particularization of the state as a capitalist state and its relation to class struggle. Lenin sees it from the bourgeoisie down, rather than from the class struggle.

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

The unification of the state and capital into State-monopoly capital implies certain peculiarities about Lenin's notion of capital from which a large portion of the left has never recovered. The fusion of the state and capital is only ephemeral and represents the outcome of certain types of class struggles, not from monopolization as such.

duction (slavery, serfdom or bondage, wage-labor). The state was the official representative of society as a whole, its concentration in a visible corporation. But it was this only insofar as it was the state of that class which itself represented, for its own time, society as a whole: in ancient times, the state of slave-owning citizens; in the Middle Ages, of the feudal nobility; in our own time, of the bourgeoisie. When at last it becomes the real representative of the whole of society, it renders itself unnecessary. As soon as there is no longer any social class to be held in subjection, as soon as class rule, and the individual struggle for existence based upon the present anarchy in production, with the collisions and excesses arising from this struggle, are removed, nothing more remains to be held in subjection — nothing necessitating a special coercive force, a state. The first act by which the state really comes forward as the representative of the whole of society — the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society — is also its last independent act as a state. State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies down of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The state is not 'abolished'. It withers away. This gives the measure of the value of the phrase 'a free people's state', both as to its justifiable use for a long time from an agitational point of view, and as to its ultimate scientific insufficiency; and also of the so-called anarchists' demand that the state be abolished overnight."

(Herr Eugen Duhring's Revolution in Science [Anti-Duhring], pp.301-03, third German edition.)

It is safe to say that of this argument of Engels', which is so remarkably rich in ideas, only one point has become an integral part of socialist thought among modern socialist parties, namely, that according to Marx that state "withers away" — as distinct from the anarchist doctrine of the "abolition" of the state. To prune Marxism to such an extent means reducing it to opportunism, for this "interpretation" only leaves a vague notion of a slow, even, gradual

change, of absence of leaps and storms, of absence of revolution. The current, widespread, popular, if one may say so, conception of the "withering away" of the state undoubtedly means obscuring, if not repudiating, revolution.

This quote by Engels is again another mixed bag of his crude materialism alongside some profound restatings of Marx, Engels at his best.

8. As a matter of fact, Engels speaks here of the proletariat revolution "abolishing" the *bourgeois* state, while the words about the state withering away refer to the remnants of the *proletarian* state *after* the socialist revolution. According to Engels, the bourgeois state does not "wither away", but is "abolished" by the proletariat in the course of the revolution. What withers away after this revolution is the proletarian state or semi-state.

Lenin here reads into Engels what Engels does not say (and which we shall see later, contradicts Marx in the Critique of the Gotha Program!!)

9. Secondly, the state is a "special coercive force". Engels gives this splendid and extremely profound definition here with the utmost lucidity. And from it follows that the "special coercive force" for the suppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, of millions of working people by handfuls of the rich, must be replaced by a "special coercive force" for the suppression of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat (the dictatorship of the proletariat). This is precisely what is meant by "abolition of the state as state". This is precisely the "act" of taking possession of the means of production in the name of society. And it is self-evident that such a replacement of one (bourgeois) "special force" by another (proletarian) "special force" cannot possibly take place in the form of "withering away".

More of the same. Again, we will return to this in detail.

10. Revolution alone can "abolish" the bourgeois state. The state in general, i.e., the most complete democracy, can only "wither away".

another half million, this appalling parasitic body, which enmeshes the body of French society and chokes all its pores, sprang up in the days of the absolute monarchy, with the decay of the feudal system, which it helped to hasten." The first French Revolution developed centralization, "but at the same time" it increased "the extent, the attributes and the number of agents of governmental power. Napoleon completed this state machinery". The legitimate monarchy and the July monarchy "added nothing but a greater division of labor"…

"… Finally, in its struggle against the revolution, the parliamentary republic found itself compelled to strengthen, along with repressive measures, the resources and centralization of governmental power. All revolutions perfected this machine instead of smashing it. The parties that contended in turn for domination regarded the possession of this huge state edifice as the principal spoils of the victor."

(The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte pp.98-99, fourth edition, Hamburg, 1907)

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

The centralized state power that is peculiar to bourgeois society came into being in the period of the fall of absolutism. Two institutions most characteristic of this state machine are the bureaucracy and the standing army. In their works, Marx and Engels repeatedly show that the bourgeoisie are connected with these institutions by thousands of threads. Every worker's experience illustrates this connection in an extremely graphic and impressive manner. From its own bitter experience, the working class learns to recognize this connection. That is why it so easily grasps and so firmly learns the

the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie, and semi-proletarians — in the work of organizing a socialist economy.

Lenin clearly here has in mind communism not as the free association of laborers, but as a specific system of rule, a new "economic" system. This is directly at odds with Marx's critique of political economy, which starts from the idea of 'economics' as an alienated, fetishized form of human relations. We need to return to the notion Marx elaborates in The German Ideology, among other places.

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

Lenin cannot resist resorting to his notion of consciousness from What Is To Be Done? and his vanguardism. Lenin *never* breaks with this approach, and therefore with a notion of the development of working class self-consciousness that is opposite of Marx.

16. "But the revolution is throughgoing. It is still journeying through purgatory. It does its work methodically. By December 2, 1851 [the day of Louis Bonaparte's coup d'etat], it had completed one half of its preparatory work. It is now completing the other half. First it perfected the parliamentary power, in order to be able to overthrow it. Now that it has attained this, it is perfecting the executive power, reducing it to its purest expression, isolating it, setting it up against itself as the sole object, in order to concentrate all its forces of destruction against it. And when it has done this second half of its preliminary work, Europe will leap from its seat and exultantly exclaim: well grubbed, old mole!

"This executive power with its enormous bureaucratic and military organization, with its vast and ingenious state machinery, with a host of officials numbering half a million, besides an army of

The failure to grapple with the state as a social relation, as a mode of existence of the capital-labor relation, a fetishized social relation. On to Section 2 (I here skip the discussion of violent overthrow of the state in quotes, in part because we are not certain as to the character of revolution.)

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

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

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

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

(pp.31 and 37, seventh German edition, 1906)

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

This section and comment of Marx deserves careful attention. Does it contradict his later writings (or his earlier ones in 1843-47)? What can we say about this, which seems clear? Does Lenin grasp it clearly? Let us see.

12. The proletariat needs the state — this is repeated by all the opportunists, social-chauvinists and Kautskyites, who assure us that this is what Marx taught. But they "forget" to add that, in the first place, according to Marx, the proletariat needs only a state which is withering away, i.e., a state so constituted that it begins to wither away immediately, and cannot but wither away. And, secondly, the working people need a "state, i.e., the proletariat organized as the ruling class".

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

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

This is the core of Lenin's 'libertarian' moment. This is actually not bad in many ways, but can Lenin maintain this and draw out the logical conclusions? Does Marx continue to defend such a notion (I think not, given the post-Paris Commune Intorduction)? More importantly, can we defend such a train of thought after the 20th century? Needless to say, Lenin continues to treat the state as an instrument, rather than as a set of social relations, so what can we say here? We should never be afraid of the idea that Marx may not have followed through consistently on this. Alan Shandro's argument is worth considering in this light.

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

Some very clear problems arise here indicating a definite difference in the conception of what makes the working class revolutionary. For example, there is no notion of alienation/fetishization present here, and yet this is a central aspect of what makes the proletariat revolutionary, NOT its organization in large-scale industry. That is a secondary issue.

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

The proletariat needs state power, a centralized organization of force, an organization of violence, both to crush the resistance of the exploiters and to lead the enormous mass of the population —