

Dictatorship of the Proletariat, Permanent Revolution and Revolutionary War

L'Ouvrier Communiste

1930

What must the proletariat do to break its chains, to conquer its freedom once and for all, to transform capitalist society, based on the profit of a minority, that is, of the bourgeoisie and its state apparatus, into a communist society, a society in which production can develop freely to satisfy the needs of the entire great working community? It is certain that it will have to destroy, sweep away, the parasitic state apparatus which represents an immense bureaucratic, police and military octopus, which holds tight in its tentacles the whole of society and all its activities. This fact is necessary to the extent that we know that the present state is a formidable weapon in the hands of powerfully concentrated capitalism, a weapon of domination, corruption, repression and sometimes terror. When the working class has destroyed this colossal apparatus, certainly after a fierce and violent struggle, problems of extreme gravity will appear. How will the proletariat be able to wage and continue its struggle against the bourgeois remnants, against the individualist infection which will remain alive for a certain time in certain petty-bourgeois social strata, whether in the city or in the countryside? And finally, what will the working class be able to do if it finds itself isolated in a single country to lead the revolution? These problems are of tremendous importance insofar as, if they are not solved, it will be impossible for the proletariat to triumph definitively; and they are therefore the subject of heated polemics in the workers' camp. Given the way in which the bourgeois state and its parasitic tendencies are developing today, the theory of universal democracy, which sees in the state an ever-widening manifestation of the collective consciousness, an ever-more authentic expression of the thought of the majority, appears inconceivable. Universal suffrage, which in the hands of capitalist magnates represents a soft ground in which they can inscribe their will by means of moral and material corruption, of the weapon of publicity which takes charge of forming public opinion, is certainly not such a brilliant demonstration of the correctness of this theory. The gradual passage from the State to the non-State, that is to say its progressive absorption in the social organization, is resoundingly denied by the facts. Rather, the opposite is true: the absorption of all economic and social activities by this apparatus, the consequent crushing of all collective energies, of all new initiatives, by this enormous apparatus of parasites who, producing nothing, collaborate with capital in limiting productive development. All legal forms of association end up being absorbed by this apparatus: unions, cooperatives and the rest, are annexed to the state by the formation of a bureaucratic state

above them. Bureaucracy thus presents itself as the typical aspect of the present bourgeois state, it is, we would say, almost its very essence. We cannot therefore speak today of free associations developing as Kropotkin spoke of them in his time, we cannot speak of communities which, on peaceful terrain, develop their activities, which will gradually influence the social context. Legal activity always ends up being transformed into activity in favor of the bourgeois state and capitalism. All theories of peaceful revolution fail and fascism, which is the classic reaction of the contemporary era, clearly proves that, when the influence of the state weakens, when its bases seem to be undermined, capitalism ensures, with extra-legal formations, to strengthen it and even to increase its prerogatives. The gigantic development of the state is general, and there is no exception even in a single country. The traditional democracy of America and England, for which Marx seemed to have sympathy, has been transformed, as Lenin's analysis in *State and the revolution*, in a bureaucratic State which has totally absorbed trade unionism into its apparatus.

Classically, it has been proven that the state — the monarchical state, the republican state, the democratic state, the social-democratic state, the Bolshevik state — has an inexorable tendency to develop. An incursion into the terrain of history would demonstrate the truth of this assertion. Bakunin's assertions in this regard are highly perceptive. It seems that, when he speaks of the replacement of the modern state by another state, a revolutionary state or a workers' state, he is foreshadowing, with a profound and prophetic eye, the formation of a new state. On the other hand, it seems to us that a careful examination of Marxist theory should lead us to consider the proletarian dictatorship not as a state, but as a form of organization that is no longer the state. It's true that this expression is still used by Marx himself, but it's also true that he sees this state as the class, as the proletariat in its unity. And of course, his concept no longer refers to the classical, bureaucratic state, etc., but to a special organization of the class that participates as a whole in social and economic activities. This Marxist formulation clearly exposes the lie of those scholastic theorists who, starting from the premise that the state is the product of class conflict, consequently speak of a bourgeois state and a proletarian state, bringing the two forms together in their interpretation, and regarding them as almost identical. Trotsky arrived at precisely this pedantic and erroneous interpretation of Marxism or, more accurately, of Marx's method. Many anarchist workers dislike what they call the authoritarian side of Marxist doctrine precisely because social-democratic scholasticism has given it a pedantic and false interpretation. Lenin himself authentically embodies this scholasticism, since it leads him to see the proletarian dictatorship as a bureaucratic apparatus which, like the old bourgeois apparatus, will have repressive functions.

However, the Social Democratic and Bolshevik scholastics fail to realize the substantial difference between the proletarian dictatorship and the state in general. The proletarian dictatorship is not an organization of repression, it is a form of liberation, it does not fight to repress the energies, the collective material and spiritual initiatives of the workers, it is, composed of workers, a means to develop these energies and to lead these initiatives to total emancipation from all individualistic prejudices. The class brings with it a precious element, namely the ethical principle of work, a profound difference in quality. The proletarian class as a unit, and not as an individual or a minority, has, of course, no interest in exploitation.

As a unit, as a majority in principle and as a totality later on, it works to transform the production process and consequently the social aggregate, creating a society of simple producers of social, material and intellectual wealth. This profound difference between the two classes implies an equally profound difference between the bourgeois state and the proletarian dictatorship.

Lenin incompletely highlights a certain difference between these two forms, but only in theory, because in practice, his state apparatus is no different from the bourgeois state apparatus. In Bolshevik Russia, the withering state becomes the growing state. It's true that, in the final analysis, the Russian Revolution can be defined as a bourgeois revolution carried out by the proletariat, and that, consequently, the form of the state in Russia could only take on a bourgeois character, but it's also fair to state that the term "state", which Marx still adopted, even if it was for the state reduced to its simplest expression, or for the organized class as a class, can no longer be accepted today after the tremendous development of the proletariat, after the experience of class struggle.

The dictatorship of the proletariat or proletarian democracy cannot be a state, must not be a state. Indeed, it cannot have the bureaucratic, police or military character of the bourgeois state. The term dictatorship, which so frightens the anarchist workers, acquires its meaning and value only to the extent that it implies the use of violence against the parasitic layers, against attempts to return to capitalism, as well as terror also against the bourgeois forces. It cannot take on a bureaucratic character to the extent that it will be the councils and only the councils, which must not detach themselves from their living base: the factory, the workplace, which will have to exercise their function of directing production and society. The councils, which the workers must, will be able to control without ceasing, the councils whose elements must be continually renewed, whose delegates to the federal levels of the councils must never be the same, which will ensure that they will not abandon their living base: the factory, and that they will not detach themselves from their roots, that is, from their source of strength and activity, will no longer be able to be bureaucratic forms. Any activity which involves crossing these limits must, if necessary, assume a provisional character. This proletarian dictatorship will not be a police dictatorship, it will not need to create a Cheka and a GPU, the councils and only the councils, with the working masses, in permanent, living contact with this mass of factories, will apply measures not of order, but revolutionary measures against the class enemy and against the traitors. The police have nothing to do with the dictatorship of the proletariat: the latter does not need it, it will make its revolution, its permanent revolution, without the collaboration of this useless and dangerous organ. Indeed, this permanent revolution is precisely a continuous struggle against the bourgeoisie which is still alive even after the first defeat, against the State which is still alive after its crushing, as a tradition. The permanent revolution falsified by Trotsky is the continuous ascent of the proletariat to sublime heights, it is the continuous absorption of society in the work ethic. It is an ascent without real stages, a march forward in the course of which the new society is created. And it is above all a struggle, a violent struggle and a struggle of minds: but then, will we need weapons, a standing army? Weapons, yes, and all weapons; but a standing army, no; weapons for all the proletarians, everywhere in the factories, or in the neighboring depots. It is the proletariat in arms. Indeed, if the working class has made its revolution in Italy, it will not be able to limit this development within the borders of the bourgeois fatherland. By the very fact that the revolution is present, the frontiers no longer exist, the fatherland is dead, and since the proletarians have no fatherland, the proletarian revolution has no fatherland. Not only does a proletarian fatherland not exist, but the revolution in progress is a permanent civil war inside and outside, or, more precisely, it is the struggle against the international bourgeoisie.

For a genuine proletarian revolution there is no way out in compromise. The capitalists of the other bourgeois fatherlands, under whose heel our brothers will everywhere grow impatient, will want to crush us, not as Italy, of course, but as a revolution. As Thiers and Bismarck did with the Paris Commune of 1871. Will we compromise? We, the armed proletarians, the army that

includes all the workers, one part of whom will create the means of struggle and another part of whom will employ them, will we accept that the bourgeoisie return, in some form or other, to the terrain that we have wrested from them, will we renounce the freedom that we have begun to create? No, a thousand times no! And before the capitalist enemy launches the offensive, we, appealing to the proletarians of all countries, without waiting for the adversary to catch his breath, will implement the civil war on the international front, the revolutionary war against the international bourgeoisie. In Italy, in 1920, many hesitated to start the revolution because they thought that it would not have been able to defend itself. It was from those who later formed the Communist Party that came, through the pen of Sanna, who today imposes a prudent and respectful silence towards the regime, an attempt to prove, in the polemic with the Serratians, the possibility of a defense of Italy in the event of a revolution. But no one thought that the proletarian revolution had to be offensive in order to defend itself, no one thought that the revolution of the councils, by its very nature, is a permanent revolution, that it is a civil war against capitalism at home and abroad, that it is a revolutionary war. Everyone was afraid of frightening the proletariat by considering too great sacrifices, of placing it before the irrevocable reality: the struggle without quarter, the struggle or death. This lack of confidence in the possibility of heroism of the proletarian class is characteristic of the orthodox Marxists at the time of the struggle. The Milan Congress of September 1920 gave clear proof of it. And yet, Marxism, or rather the thought of Marx, is clear and precise: Danton's phrase is his watchword in revolutionary action: audacity, nothing but audacity. But the orthodox Marxists have never believed too much in the possibility of a proletarian upsurge, they have always hoped and still hope in a social-democratic way, in a Bolshevik way, to implement their policy of compromise by taking advantage of the movements, the revolutions, which they always think they can stop at the right moment, valorizing *ad usum delphini*, naturally.

We do not fear, and we will not fear, to speak this truth and we also believe that the proletarian masses, in fighting against the bourgeoisie and the allies of the bourgeoisie, will be able to fulfill their historical mission in history, consciously and heroically.

And in the next revolution they will not take the path of the "NEP", but that of the revolutionary offensive, of the civil war against the international bourgeoisie. And for the saboteurs of revolutionary action, for the allies of capitalism of all colors, the proletariat will reserve lead as for the bourgeoisie itself.

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