

Вера А. Вратуша Жуњић<sup>1</sup>  
Универзитет у Београду, Филозофски факултет,  
Одељење за социологију  
Београд (Србија)

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## ВЕК И ПО ОД ЛЕЊИНОВОГ РОЂЕЊА

### РЕЛЕВАНТНОСТ ЛЕЊИНОВЕ ДРЖАВЕ И РЕВОЛУЦИЈЕ ЗА ТЕОРИЈСКУ ПРИПРЕМУ БОЉШЕВИКА ДА ПОЛИТИЧКИ ОРГАНИЗУЈУ НОВИ ТАЛАС КРЕАТИВНЕ РЕВОЛУЦИОНАРНЕ ПРАКСЕ РАДНИХ МАСА У ПРЕДВЕЧЕРЈЕ ОКТОБАРСКЕ РЕВОЛУЦИЈЕ

Сажетак: Овај рад истражује релевантност Лењинове теоријског дела *Држава и револуција* за припремање борбеног таласа креативне револуционарне праксе радних маса у предвечерје Октобарске револуције 1917. године након рођења најутицајнијег марксисте XX века и инспирације потенцијалних револуционара у XXI веку.

Основни метод употребљен у овом раду јесте анализа основних аспекта садржаја Лењинове *Државе и револуције* и смештање ове анализе у контекст историјских специфичних друштвених и економских околности времена у којем је Лењин завршио писање овог рада током лета и јесени 1917. године.

Основни налаз ове анализе је да је Лењинова *Држава и Револуција* изразито релевантна за припремање борбеног таласа креативне револуционарне праксе радних маса у предвечерје Октобарске револуције 1917. године у Русији. У овом раду Лењин је разјаснио како себи сам тако и својим партијским друговима, револуционарни програм разбијања израбљивачке и тлачитељске буржоаске државе као и инвенције и организовања нове комуналне форме полу-државе која одумире, без стајаће војске, полиције или бирократије, у којој сви писмени грађани могу да учествују у управљању заједничким друштвеним проблемима.

Кључне речи: држава, револуција, диктатура буржоазије, диктатура пролетаријата, социјални демократи, анархисти, пролетаријат, уношење револуционарне свести споља, сила, прелаз из капитализма кроз социјализам до комунизма.

<sup>1</sup> vera.veritas@gmail.com





















**људи не постану бољи и другачији.** Они напротив желе социјалистичку револуцију са људима какви они јесу у датом моменту, са људима који не могу да елиминишу сваку контролу, управљање и подређивање. Лењин је очекивао да ће државни службеници у диктатури пролетаријата једноставно извршавати инструкције наоружаних радника као послодаваца који могу да их опозову.

Као што је врло добро познато из историје Октобарске револуције у Русији, Лењинова очекивања да су контролне функције предрадника и рачуновођа већ у његово време доспеле у оквир способности просечних грађана, који ће на смену вршити ове функције за просечну радничку плату, тако да ће то постати навика свакога, а не посебна функција одвојеног дела становништва, нису се остварила. Лењин је снажно веровао да ће **нова генерација образована у слободним друштвеним условима** постати навикнута да поштује елементарне услове друштвеног живота без насиља и потчињавања. Историјско искуство ССРП и СФРЈ сведочи да ће за развој поменуте навике бити потребно више од једне генерације.

Лењин у *D&P* поставља значајно **епистемолошко и методолошко питање**: на основу којих чињеница можемо да се бавимо с теоријом историјског развоја, од питања надолазећег колапса капитализма, преко питања о социјализму као прелазној фази, до питања будућег развоја комунизма? Лењин одговара да је ова темељна чињеница у томе да будући развој комунизма потиче из непомирљивих класних противречности у капитализму, да се историјски развија из капитализма, да је резултат деловања друштвене снаге коју је изнедрио капитализам. Лењин је изгледа заборавио на овом месту на реченицу из Марковог и Енгелсовог *Манифеса комунистичке партије* (1848/2004) да се перманентна борба између тлачитеља и потлачених, увек завршава **било револуционарном реконструкцијом друштва у целини, или у заједничкој пропasti сукобљених класа**. Другим речима, противречни интереси пролетаријата и буржоазије не представљају гаранцију за прелаз из капитализма у комунизам кроз „политички транзициони период” диктатуре пролетаријата.

Попут Маркса и Енгелса, Лењин увек изнова наглашава да нема ни трага њиховом покушају да конструишу утопије. Лењин је убеђен да је Маркс третирао питање комунизма на исти начин као што би природњак третирао питање развоја, на пример, нове биолошке врсте, када једном схвати начин њеног настанка и смера преobraхаја. Лењин, међутим, није у целини развио ову **биолошку аналогију**, пошто није пружио ниједан пример таквог предвиђања будућег настанка нове биолошке врсте.

Лењин подвлачи неколико пута да већ развој капитализма ствара предуслове који омогућавају свим људима да узму учешћа у управљању државом, као што су универзална писменост, „тренирање и дисциплиновање” милиона радника од стране огромних, сложених, подруштвљених апарата поштанске службе, железница, великих фабрика, трговине на велико, банкарства, итд. Лењин, међутим, не помиње да би такво дисциплиновање радничке класе од стране капиталистичких организација и институција, могло да доведе до њиховог **уکључивања у капиталистички систем** а не до револуционарне побуне против њега.

Лењинова формулатија која се тиче потпуног потчињавања свих грађана држави совјета радничких и војничких депутатата, имплицира да би сви грађани у

првој фази транзиције из капитализма у комунизам, или у социјализму, **остали у најамном односу према држави**, док год буржоаски закон формалне једнакости и даље доминира друштвеним процесом репродукције.

Лењин је, међутим, уверен да чим буде постигнута једнакост за све чланове друштва у односу на власништво над средствима за производњу, човечанство ће неизбежно да буде суочено са питањем **напредовања даље од формалне једнакости** у социјализму буржоаског закона „једнаког права” у расподели потрошачких добара у складу с количином обављеног рада, **ка стварној једнакости** комунистичког закона производње и расподеле према принципу „од свакога према његовој способности, свакоме према потребама”. Историјско искуство није потврдило ово Лењиново чврсто уверење, с обзиром да је **постепено дошло до рестаурације капитализма** после Октобарске револуције (Vratuša, 2012).

Више о актуелности *D&P* током и после Октобарске револуције упркос чињеници да се већина Лењинових очекивања још увек нису остварила, биће анализирана у неком евентуалном будућем раду<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Једна од главних тема овог будућег рада ће бити да одговори на стару дилему: *Социјализам или варварство*, јесте да не постоји алтернатива, доли да се бори (Joffre-Eichhorn, 2020, p. xv).

Vera A. Vratiša Žunjić<sup>1</sup>

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy,  
Department of Sociology  
Belgrade (Serbia)

## A CENTURY AND A HALF SINCE LENIN'S BIRTH

### RELEVANCE OF LENIN'S STATE AND REVOLUTION FOR THE THEORETICAL PREPARATION OF BOLSHEVIKS TO POLITICALLY ORGANIZE THE NEW WAVE OF CREATIVE REVOLUTIONARY PRAXIS OF THE WORKING MASSES ON THE EVE OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

(*Translation In Extenso*)

**Abstract:** This paper examines the relevance of Lenin's theoretical work *State and Revolution* for the preparation of Bolsheviks to politically organize the new wave of creative revolutionary praxis of the working masses on the eve of the October 1917 Revolution in Russia, 150 years after the birth of the most influential Marxist of the XX century and inspiration of potential revolutionaries in the XXI century.

The basic method used in this paper is the analysis of the main aspects of Lenin's *State and Revolution* content and placement of this analysis within the context of the historically specific social and economic circumstances of the time in which Lenin finished writing it in the summer and autumn of 1917.

The main finding of this analysis is that Lenin's *State and Revolution* is the most relevant for the preparation of the Bolsheviks for the political organization of the new wave of revolutionary praxis of the working masses on the eve of the October 1917 revolution in Russia. In this work Lenin clarified both to himself and to his party comrades the revolutionary program of smashing the exploiting and oppressing bourgeois state as well as invention and organization of the new communal social form of semi-state withering away, without a standing army, police or bureaucracy, in which all literate citizens could take part in the administration of the common social problems

**Keywords:** state, revolution, dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, dictatorship of the proletariat, social democrats, anarchists, proletariat, introduction of revolutionary consciousness from without, force, transition from capitalism through socialism to communism.

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<sup>1</sup> vera.veritas@gmail.com



finish writing the book on the authentic Marxist conception of the state and revolution, in the Preface to the First Edition of the work *State and Revolution*

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/preface.htm>).

Lenin claims that the situation in Russia in the summer of 1917 was revolutionary for reasons to be discussed below and concludes that just because of that the question of the state acquires particular importance both in theory and in practice.

First of all, the imperialist war<sup>3</sup> immensely accelerated the process of transformation of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism, intensifying the monstrous oppression of the working people. This provoked discontent of workers and poor small-holding peasants (compare FN1, point 1) in all warring states. Lenin sums up his motives and aims of completing writing S&R in the summer of 1917 in its subtitle: *The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution*.

The key trigger that encouraged Lenin to begin to write S&R as early as 1916<sup>4</sup> was the chauvinist behavior of European social democratic parties in 1914, which voted for the war credits in the parliaments of their respective countries just before the Great War, instead of converting the “imperialist war” into the continental-wide “civil war” between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie united with aristocracy (Fisher, 1964, p. 85). According to Lenin, the Second International and its most prominent leader Karl Kautsky (1854–1938) suffered miserable bankruptcy and revealed their revisionism and opportunism of **ideological representatives of the bourgeoisie**. They identified namely the interests of imperialist thieves with the interests of the fatherland, as the war was exterminating millions of people just in order to settle the issue as to whether Britain or Germany – this or that finance capital – was to rule the world.

The liberation of working masses from such imperialist bourgeois ideology was especially important in the summer of 1917, when, according to Lenin, the Russian February Revolution was finishing its first phase of development and began to cross over to the second phase. The February Revolution, according to Lenin, represented a bourgeois democratic revolution, the unfinished attempt to inaugurate the full power of the soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers in the whole of Russia. The February Revolution only led to the attainment of the aims of the bourgeoisie: abdication of the Czar Nicholas II on March 15 1917 (Service, 2000, p. 243).

The Provisional government in fact did not carry out any reforms for the improvement of the living conditions of workers and peasants and continued with the exhausting and unpopular war efforts (Rice, 1990, pp. 136–138). Lenin criticized the Provisional government as a coalition of opportunistic socialists only with the name of bourgeois imperialists. In these circumstances, the most urgent theoretical and practical task for Lenin

<sup>3</sup> Lenin explained the class content of the predatory war which began in 1914 while it was still raging, in the text *Imperialism as the Last Stage of Capitalism* (Lenin, 1917/2008).

<sup>4</sup> Lenin started writing S&R in 1916 while he was in emigration in Switzerland while discussing with Nikolai Bukharin (1888–1938) the thesis about the withering away of the state (Service, 2000, p.289). There he finished the greater part of the work on the notes, remarks and analysis of texts on the state and revolution by Marx and Engels, as well as Kautsky, Pannekoek and other social democrats and anarchists.

became to “explain to the masses what they will have to do in order to liberate themselves from the capitalist tyranny”.

In the above quoted sentence we recognize Lenin’s at first glance elitist conviction from the text summarizing his revolutionary party organization tactics and strategy *What is to be Done*“ (Lenin, 1902/1999), according to which **the proletariat and poor peasantry are not able to spontaneously acquire revolutionary consciousness**. The revolutionary party in a Gramsciane sense is a collective organic intellectual whose members are, of course, beside highly educated small bourgeois intellectuals, also workers and peasants, who succeeded through party education to lift themselves above strictly economic trade union fights with the bourgeoisie, to the demand for emancipation from class relationships of exploitation and oppression as such. Lenin from his side contributes to the theory of the communist party pointing out that by educating the workers’ party inspired by authentic Marxism, the vanguard of the proletariat is educated, capable 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”. In harsh contrast, Lenin criticizes the prevailing opportunism of the social democrats who train the members of workers’ parties to become the representatives of the better-paid workers and who consequently lose touch with the masses (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch02.htm#s1>).

In order to be able to participate in the events after the February Revolution in Russia, Lenin succeeded in negotiating with the German government to travel in a sealed train through Germany and Finland to Petrograd with 31 other Russian dissidents (Fisher, 1964, pp. 109–113). On the train, Lenin wrote his “April Theses” (April 7, 1917/1999) on the immediate revolutionary perspectives in Russia<sup>5</sup>. He published them upon arrival in Petrograd, provoking at first disbelief even within the Bolshevik Party, including the closest comrades, like his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya (1869–1939) (Harding, 1996, p.152).

In July 1917 an exceptionally tense situation and armed clashes erupted between Bolshevik oriented soldiers and sailors and the Provisional government. Uncertain what to do, armed sailors looked for Lenin, demanding from him to address them. Lenin himself seemed to have been uncertain at that moment whether the armed rebellion should proceed. He delivered a calming speech which disappointed the gathered armed masses. After this speech which Lenin himself disliked, he fled to Finland to avoid being killed by the Provisional government as the alleged German agent, and to be able to finish writing *S&R* as the theoretical preparation for action in the next revolutionary situation (Service, 2000, pp. 283–285).

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<sup>5</sup> In *April Theses* Lenin implicitly confirmed that he shared the view which Trotsky (Lev Davidovich Bronstein, 1879–1940) summarized in the book *The Permanent Revolution* (Trotsky: 1906/1993), that a “bourgeois-democratic revolution” of the middle-classes which satisfies itself with the toppling of the czarist regime did not have to be a protracted phase of development. Their views on the socialist revolution in Russia were contrary to the prevalent expectation of Marx (1818–1883) and Engels (1820–1895) that a social revolution would first erupt in the industrially most developed western countries. This expectation was somewhat corrected in Marx’s answer to the question of Vera Zasulich (1851–1919; Marx-Zasulich Correspondence, 1881/2014) on the possibility of Russia peasant commune avoiding going through capitalist disintegration, under the condition that the revolution in Russia became the trigger for the revolution in the developed capitalist countries.

In other words, in July 1917 the revolutionary leader of the working masses felt the need to clarify to himself and to his party comrades the revolutionary program of the armed smashing of the bourgeois state and what to replace it with.

### Unearthing authentic Marx's and Engels' theory of the state and revolution from the deposits of small bourgeois ideology

From the very beginning of the *S&R*, Lenin attempts to unearth Marx's and Engels' authentic theory of the state and revolution undistorted by the deposits of small bourgeois ideology, in order to bring original Marxism, as Lenin interprets it, to the knowledge of the readers, especially of the members of his own Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and the agitators, just at the moment when it was time for the next phase of the revolution in Russia. Without this theoretical intervention small bourgeois ideologists and politicians would maintain, according to Lenin, their influence in the workers movement, hindering it in the revolutionary emancipation from capitalist exploitation.

Lenin begins with the analysis of Engels' finding (1884/1993) that the state is the product of irreconcilable class contradictions ever since they emerged with the appearance of the private property. The state becomes a committee for managing the affairs of the entire ruling class torn by inner conflict of interests. In contrast, German Social Democrats, according to Lenin, offer an interpretation of the state which is acceptable to the bourgeoisie, namely that the state serves to reconcile class conflicts

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch01.htm#s1>).

Lenin adds later that the theory of class struggle alone is also acceptable to the bourgeoisie and that only that person can be called a Marxist who extends the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin therefore criticizes Karl Kautsky, a former Marxist, a perfect example of the petty-bourgeois distortion of Marxism, because he limits the recognition of class fight to the sphere of bourgeois relationships. Kautsky namely, according to Lenin, suppresses the transitional period of complete abolishment of the bourgeoisie (Kautsky, 1918/2004), which is, in Lenin's opinion, an unavoidable period of violent class fight without precedent, since all bourgeois states, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the dictatorships of the bourgeoisie

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch02.htm#s3> ).

The foundation of the bourgeois state's public power, according to Engels and Lenin, consists of special repressive organizations of armed men like a standing army and police, judiciary, prisons, etc., which are imposed to the society and are alienated from it, serving to maintain the exploitation of the oppressed classes by the ruling class.

Following Engels, Lenin answers the question concerning the privileges of officials, pointing out that "**wealth exercises its power indirectly**", but all the more surely". The first means of indirect control is the "corruption of officials"; the second means is an "alliance of the government and the Stock Exchange"

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch01.htm#s3> ).

Lenin quotes Engels' famous citation (Engels, 1878/ 1996): "As soon as there is no longer any social class to be held in subjection ... nothing more is 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<sup>6</sup> – is also its last independent act as a state... The **state is not 'abolished? It withers away'**

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch01.htm#s4>).

Opportunistic interpreters ignore that the words on the state withering away refer to the remnants of the proletarian semi-state after the armed and violent socialist revolution.

Namely, Lenin, like Marx and Engels, underlines that **force also plays a revolutionary role in history**, that it is the “midwife” of every old society which is pregnant with a new one. Lenin therefore insists on the necessity that Bolsheviks systematically imbue the masses with the idea of the necessity of the violent revolution as the rule in the struggle against the bourgeois state.

Lenin, however, **also criticizes anarchists** for wanting, according to him, to dispense with the state immediately<sup>7</sup>. According to Lenin, it is necessary to maintain the semi-state of the working masses until the resistance of the bourgeoisie is crushed completely, avoiding simultaneously that the state of the working masses does not degenerate into a new oppressive apparatus ruling over the majority of the people.

### Lenin's unearthing of Marx's and Engels' conception of the state and revolution before and after the revolution in Western Europe 1848–1851

Lenin first analyses Marx's and Engel's concept of the state and revolution contained in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848/1987), which appeared just on the eve of 1848 revolution. He points out that therefore *Manifesto* contains not only the general principles of Marxism, but also reflects to a certain degree the concrete revolutionary situation of the time

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch02.htm#s1>).

Lenin underlines the importance of the formulation from the *Manifesto* concerning the state after the proletarian revolution: using political supremacy, the proletariat will

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<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately Lenin does not elaborate further the institutional problems related to nationalization and socialization of the production means, new organization of production corresponding to the communal organization of the workers' state and overcoming of the “commodity fetishism” imbedded in a class division of labour on managing and executing, about which Marx wrote in the first volume of *Capital* (1867/1995-6).

<sup>7</sup> Lenin criticizes anarchists who demand the abolition of bureaucracy and subordination to authority “over the night”, immediately, everywhere and in totality. Lenin criticizes anarchists' leaning on the Marx' and Engels' 1873 articles against Proudhonists. Lenin tirelessly argues that the revolutionary and transitory state of the armed working people is necessary until the crashing of the resistance of the bourgeoisie.

Lenin insists throughout the *S&R* that the demand for the immediate abolishment of the state, presents mere utopia of the anarchists, while the electability, possibility of recall, the average workmen's wage for still necessary officials, as well as the education of everybody to exercise in turn the management functions, will gradually bring to the abolishment of bureaucracy (compare for instance <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch04.htm#s2> ).

wrest all capital from the bourgeoisie in order to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, that is of the proletariat organized as a ruling class, because only the proletariat is the class that can unite all the exploited people in the struggle against the bourgeoisie. The exploited classes need political rule in order to completely abolish all exploitation in the interest of the vast majority of the people, and against the interest of the insignificant minority consisting of the modern slave-owners – the landowners and capitalists.

On the basis of his interpretation of Marx's findings from *The Eighteenth Brumaire* (Marx, 1852/1996), written just after the *coup d'état* of Louis Bonaparte which marked the definitive victory of the counter-revolution in France, Lenin points out that all former revolutions, carried out by the toiling classes by their mass participation, have only perfected the massive parliamentary and executive machinery of state power, instead of smashing it. The parties that contended in turn for domination regarded the possession of this machinery as the principal spoils of the victor

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch02.htm#s2>).

### Lenin's drawing lessons from Marx's analysis of the experiences of the 1871 Paris Commune (Marx, 1871/2009)

Lenin, like Marx, underlines the enormous historical significance of the Paris Commune, even though this mass revolutionary movement did not last long enough to achieve its aims (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch03.htm#s1>)<sup>8</sup>.

Lenin draws his conclusions on the relevance of the Paris Commune experience for the theoretical preparation of the second phase of the revolution in Russia, from Marx's and Engels' last jointly written "Preface" to the new German edition of the *Manifesto* (June 24 1872/2004). In this text they summarize in what sense the experience of the Paris commune induced them to correct their view of the state elaborated in the *Manifesto*: the **working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes**. Lenin criticizes social democrat opportunists who ignore this finding of Marx and Engels, advocating for the takeover of the existing state and its further slow development.

Lenin ascertains that Marx's answer to the question what should replace the smashed state machinery in the *Manifesto* was as yet necessarily abstract, indicating the tasks which should be carried out, but not always the ways of accomplishing them: "the proletariat organized as the ruling class", the "winning of the battle of democracy"

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch03.htm#s2>).

Lenin stresses that Marx's first finding on the basis of the analysis of the 1871 Paris Commune revolutionary experience (1871/2009) is that the state power, which represented the national war instrument of capital against labour, was replaced by the Paris Commune

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<sup>8</sup> Lenin contrasts Marx's revolutionary attitude toward the Paris Commune with the opportunistic attitude of Plekhanov (1856–1918), who is, according to Lenin, just another Russian renegade from Marxism. In November 1905, namely, Plekhanov spoke encouragingly about the workers' and peasants' struggle, but after the failure of the revolutionary movement in December 1905, he just cried out like liberals: "They should not have taken up arms."

as the “specific form” of a proletarian socialist republic that was not only to remove the monarchical form of class rule, but class rule itself.

The Paris Commune began to accomplish **the abolishment of the class rule as such**, by inaugurating the following **decrees**:

- 1) suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people, the revolutionary “self-acting armed organization of the population” capable of serving the exploited instead of the exploiters<sup>9</sup>;
- 2) election and recall of all public officials;
- 3) exercise of public service for the average workmen’s wages. These measures have immediately realized a responsible and “cheap government”.

Lenin praises Paris communards for **abolishing parliamentarism** in the sense that the Commune became a working body, legislative and executive at the same time. The traditional separation between the making of rules and carrying them out was abolished, since the rules are made by the same people, eliminating in this way the subversion of the unaccountable state bureaucracy

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch03.htm#s3>).

According to Lenin, the bourgeois parliament is instead a “mere talking shop”, the front or show room into which everybody can allegedly come through elections. In fact, the bourgeois parliament is the democratic fig-leaf that keeps out of sight the state executive branch, the unaccountable state bureaucracy, the chancelleries and army staffs, who “do” the real business of the “state” behind the backs of people.

Lenin concludes that that instead of deciding once every few years which members of the ruling class are to repress and crush the people through parliament, the universal voting right should serve to people constituted in communes, like the individual voting right serves to every employer in the search to hire workers, foremen and accountants who are necessary to him in his enterprise.

### Lenin's further analysis of Marx's and Engels' concept of “withering away” of the state

Political authority of the state will, according to Engels (1878/1996) and Lenin, disappear as the result of the coming social revolution, when public functions begin to lose their political character and become ever more simple administrative functions of overseeing of social interests. **The revolution itself is the most authoritative thing that exists**, because it is the act through which one part of the population imposes its will to the other part, by guns, bayonets and cannons (Engels, 1872b/marxist.org s.a.). The winning side, according to Engels and Lenin, has to maintain its power over the minority of exploiters by terror which its arms inspire in the reactionaries.

Lenin criticizes Social Democrats, following arguments from Engels' letter to Bebel (written on March 18–28, 1875/marxist.org s.a.)<sup>10</sup> and Marx's letter to Bracke (written on

<sup>9</sup> Lenin criticizes the opportunists in the ranks of Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks in the provisional government in Russia after the February first phase of the revolution, who refused to carry out the Paris Commune decree on the suppression of the standing army and its replacement by the armed people.

<sup>10</sup> The fact that Marx's letter to Bracke (written on May 5, 1875/ marxist.org 1999), criticizing the use of the term “the free people’s state” was first published only 15 years later in the organ of the

May 5, 1875/1999)<sup>11</sup>, due to their opportunistic use of the expression “**the free people’s state**”. In this way German Social Democrats forget that in the bourgeois society the state is free with respect to the citizens, in other words, that it is despotic. Lenin points out that as long as the proletariat needs the state, it is not necessary to it in the interest of freedom, but to oppress its opponents; as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom, the state as such ceases to exist

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch04.htm#s3>).

Lenin, like Engels, also criticizes the 1891 Draft of the Erfurt Program (June 1891/[marxist.org](http://marxist.org) s.a.) of the German Social-Democratic party

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch04.htm#s4> ).

Lenin demonstrates that Engels correctly observed the imperialist changes in the capitalist mode of production: when joint-stock companies become trusts which assume control over, and monopolize, whole industries, they introduce the elements of planning. Lenin criticizes opportunistic Social Democrats that tend to confuse state monopoly capitalism with state socialism, since trusts cannot provide complete planning. Lenin concludes that the “**proximity**” of **monopoly capitalism to socialism** should serve genuine representatives of the proletariat as an argument **proving the proximity and urgency of the socialist revolution**, and not at all as an argument for the efforts to make capitalism look more attractive, like reformists are doing.

Lenin also draws attention of readers to the Engels’ warning (March 18, 1891/2009) that after every bourgeois revolution, as soon as the bourgeoisie comes to power in the state, its first commandment is to **disarm the workers**. In this way every revolution won by the workers, ended with the defeat of the workers.<sup>12</sup> From this experience Lenin draws the lesson for the proletariat in the coming second phase of revolution, that once in power, working masses must, on the one hand, do away with the entire old machinery of oppression previously used against them, and, on the other hand, **safeguard themselves against their own deputies and officials**, elected on the basis of universal suffrage to all administrative, judicial and educational posts, by declaring them all subject to recall at any time by electors, as well as by paying all officials the average wages received by other workers

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch04.htm#s5>).

Lenin adds that **only the new generation** raised in the new, free social conditions will be able to discard imposed traditional revisionist and superstitious belief of the Social Democrats that the interests which are common to the entire society can be looked after and carried out only through the state and its lucratively positioned officials.

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German Social Democrats *Die Neue Zeit*, suggests that there existed some kind of censorship within the leadership of the German Social Democrats at the time.

<sup>11</sup> Similar criticism of the use of the term “the free people’s state” in the Gotha program, which Engels sent in a letter to Bebel, written on June 29, 1875, was published in the journal of the Social Democratic Party *Die Neue Zeit*, also with many years of delay.

<sup>12</sup> Lenin criticizes the similar behaviour of the Social-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks in the Provisional government after the February Revolution, who joined the determination of the bourgeoisie to disarm the Petrograd workers.

The economic basis of the withering away of the workers' state: transition from capitalism through socialism to communism  
(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch05.htm> ).

Lenin returns several times to the analysis of the revolutionary transition period between capitalist and communist society, to which the socialist period of political transition corresponds within which the dictatorship of the proletariat replaces the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (comp. FN1 points 7 and 8)

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch05.htm#s2>).

Lenin claims that the expression “the state withers away” is very well-chosen, for it indicates both the gradual and the spontaneous nature of the process. New habits will develop that people observe the necessary rules of social intercourse when there is no exploitation, when there is nothing that arouses indignation, evokes protest and revolt, and creates the need for suppression. During the transition period the majority of the formerly exploited suppresses the minority of former oppressors, which will entail far less bloodshed than the suppression of the risings of slaves, serfs or wage-labourers and will be carried out by the simple organization of the armed people such as the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

Lenin writes with approval about **the conversion of all citizens into workers** and employees of one huge “syndicate” and the complete subordination of the entire work of this syndicate to the “genuinely democratic state, the state of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies”, as the unavoidable transition phase from capitalism to communism.

### Welcome interruption to writing S&R by revolutionary praxis

In the “Postscript” Lenin states that he had already made a plan for the seventh chapter of the S&R under the title “Experience of the revolution 1905 and 1917”. However, he did not have time to write a single sentence beside the title. The writing was interrupted by the “political crisis” – the eve of the October Revolution of 1917. Such interruption, Lenin claims, can only be welcome and he adds that it is more pleasant and more useful to go through the experience of revolution than to write about it

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/postscpt.htm>).

### Some questions opened by Lenin's theoretical preparation for the new wave of revolutionary praxis

Lenin's theoretical work *State and Revolution*, in which he advocates for the dictatorships of the proletariat of the Paris Commune type, played the important role of a strategic theoretical orienting program and preparation of the Bolsheviks after the February revolution in Russia to politically organize the new wave of creative revolutionary praxis of the working masses. Lenin finished writing S&R just in time to implement its main theses in the revolutionary praxis of the workers, peasants and soldiers, putting these theses to the test of experience. Since Lenin's S&R was written just on the eve of October Revolution, the same could be said about it as Lenin said of Marx's and Engels' *Manifesto*: S&R contains not only the general principles of Leninism, but also reflects to a certain degree

the concrete situation of the time, characterized by revolutionary fermenting among workers, peasants and soldiers.

Lenin's criticism of the Social Democrats' betrayal in 1914, when they voted for war credits, opened the way to transition of Lenin and Bolsheviks from the revolutionary theory which orients revolutionary action, to the Communist Bolshevik Party organization of the coming new wave of creative revolutionary praxis of the working masses.

It is Lenin's merit that on the eve of the October Revolution he **summarized the lessons of the Paris Commune decrees** on the armed people organized as a ruling class, election of public officials by universal suffrage, ability to recall all officials who work for the average worker's pay, as measures relevant not only for the October Revolution but to the present day as well, as a **dependable barrier to place-hunting and careerism**.

Lenin's main theoretical argument throughout S&R that development towards communism proceeds through the dictatorship of the proletariat, **the education of the vanguard of the oppressed as the ruling class for the purpose of suppressing the minority of oppressors**, was the most relevant for the Communist Party preparation for the organization of the creative revolutionary praxis of the working masses on the eve of the October Revolution. Lenin repeatedly argues that transition to the first phase of communism or socialism cannot proceed otherwise but through armed force of the working masses, for the resistance of the capitalist exploiters cannot be broken by anyone else or in any other way.

In numerous reviews of Lenin's *S&R*, the authors never miss to mention Lenin's definition of the state as the result of irreconcilable class contradictions (for instance Caldwell, 2016; Leather, 2017; Escalante, O'Shea, 2019). Nevertheless, these reviewers often overlook that Lenin notices that **a democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism**, and, therefore, once capital has gained possession of this very best shell, it establishes its power so securely, so firmly, that no change of persons, institutions or parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic can shake it (comp. FN1 point 5). This insight can account for the long periods of stabilization of capitalism in the imperialist countries of the world.

Marx, Engels and Lenin **deeply believe in the revolutionary mission of the proletariat** since it represents the class which capital itself wields together, unites and organizes within the large scale production, while capital fragments and disintegrates all other classes. The **experience of fragmentation of the empirical working class**, in contrast to the abstract concept of the proletariat, along the qualification, gender and ethnic lines, calls into question to a certain extent this belief. This fragmentation experience of the working masses probably contributed to the fact that during the lifetime of Marx, Engels and Lenin, all the way to the present day, the proletariat did not carry out its revolutionary mission worldwide, as they expected.

Lenin's statements on the gradual elimination of bureaucracy through the education of everybody to perform in turn the functions of management, foremen and bookkeeping for the average worker's pay, at first glance contain the elements of utopianism in Lenin's *S&R*. Lenin, however, underlines that real **revolutionaries do not postpone a revolution until the people become better and different**. They, on the contrary, want a socialist revolution with the people as they are in a given moment, with the people who cannot eliminate all control, management and subordination. Lenin expected that in the dictatorship

of the proletariat State officials would simply execute the instructions of the armed workers as the employers who could recall them.

As it is very well known from the history of the October Revolution in Russia, Lenin's expectations that control functions of foremen and accountants had already in his time come within the scope of average citizens' capabilities, who would in turn exercise these functions for the average worker's salary, so that it would become the habit of everybody, and not the special function of the separate part of the population, did not materialize. Lenin strongly believed that the **new generation raised in the free social conditions** would become accustomed to observing the elementary conditions of social life without violence and subordination. The historical experience of the USSR and SFRY witnesses that for the development of the mentioned custom more than one generation will be needed.

In *S&R* Lenin poses an important **epistemological and methodological question**: On the basis of what facts can we deal with the theory of historical development, from the question of the forthcoming collapse of capitalism, over the question on socialism as a transition phase, to the question of the future development of communism? Lenin answers that this basic fact is that future development of communism has its origin in irreconcilable class contradictions in capitalism, that it develops historically from capitalism, that it is the result of the action of a social force to which capitalism gave birth. At this place Lenin seems to have forgotten the sentence from the Marx's and Engels' *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848/2004) that constant class fight between the oppressors and the oppressed, each time **ends either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes**. In other words, contradictory interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie are not a guarantee for transition from capitalism into communism through the "political transition period" of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Like Marx and Engels, Lenin reiterates again and again that there is no trace of an attempt on their part to construct the utopias. Lenin is convinced that Marx treated the question of communism in the same way as a naturalist would treat the question of the development of, say, a new biological variety, once he comprehended the mode of its emergence and the direction of its transformation. Lenin, however, did not fully develop this **biological analogy**, since he did not give any example of such prediction of the future emergence of the new biological variety.

Lenin underlines several times that already the development of capitalism creates the preconditions that enable all people to take part in the administration of the state, like universal literacy, the "training and disciplining" of millions of workers by the huge, complex, socialized apparatus of the postal service, railways, big factories, large-scale commerce, banking, etc. Lenin does not mention, however, that such disciplining of the working class by the capitalist organizations and institutions might lead to their **incorporation into the capitalist system** and not to the revolutionary rebellion against it.

Lenin's formulation concerning the complete subordination of all citizens to the state of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, implies that in the first phase of transition from capitalism to communism, or socialism, all citizens would **remain in the hire relationship to the state**, as long as the bourgeois law of formal equality still dominates the social reproduction process.

Lenin is, however, assured that as soon as equality is achieved for all members of the society in relation to ownership of the means of production, humanity will inevitably be

confronted with the question of **advancing further from formal equality** in socialism of the bourgeois law of “equal right” in the distribution of consumer goods according to the amount of labour performed, **to actual equality** of the communist law of production and distribution according to the principle “from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs”. Historical experience did not confirm this Lenin’s firm belief, since **there was gradual restoration of capitalism** after the October Revolution (Vratuša, 2012).

The contemporaneity of *S&R* during and after the October Revolution in spite of the fact that most of Lenin’s expectations have still not materialised, will be analysed in a potential future paper<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> One of the main themes of this future paper will be that the answer to the old dilemma *Socialism or Barbarism* is that there is no alternative, but to fight (Joffre-Eichhorn, 2020, p. xv).

