



Contra State and Revolution

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Introduction

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 Evgeny 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.

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"¹, 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

1. *Capital and Class* 37, 1989

called a state, and we can then line up all the actually existing states under it in a hierarchy. 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 must 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 capital². 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

2. cf. Lenin, Collected Works Vol. 25, pp. 397-8

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 coincide 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.

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 Lenin's other works, he 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.³

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.

3. Herr Eugen Duhring's *Revolution in Science* [Anti-Duhring], pp.301-03, third German edition, quoted in Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 400

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 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.⁴

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.

4. Collected Works, Vol. 25, p. 408, italics mine

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.⁵

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.⁶

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 stratification of private property. As such, Lenin goes on to say that:

...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.

5. Collected Works, Vol. 25, p. 409

6. Collected Works, Vol. 25, p. 461

"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.⁷

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".

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

7. *Collected Works*, Vol. 25 p. 472

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".

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 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.⁸

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...

8. *Collected Works*, Vol. 25 p. 430-1

... 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.⁹

"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."¹⁰

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.¹¹

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.¹²

9. Communist Manifesto, p. 31,37, quoted in Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 25, p. 407

10. Neue Zeit Vol.XXXII, 1, 1913-14, p.40, quoted in Lenin, CW, Vol. 25, pp. 440-1, Italics mine

11. Critique of the Gotha Program, Marx, quoted Lenin, CW, Vol. 25, p. 464

12. 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.¹³

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.

13. *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p.430?

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 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.

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 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. 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.

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