

THE STATE AND REVOLUTION

V. I. LENIN



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Proletarians of all countries, unite!



V. I. Lenin

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The State and Revolution

Preface to the First Edition¹

The question of the state is now acquiring particular importance both in theory and in practical politics. The imperialist war has immensely accelerated and intensified the process of transformation of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism. The monstrous oppression of the toiling masses by the state, which is merging more and more with the all-powerful capitalist associations, is becoming ever more monstrous. The advanced countries are being converted — we speak here of their “rear” — into military convict prisons for the workers.

¹Lenin wrote *The State and Revolution* while underground in August and September 1917. He first spoke of the necessity of theoretically elaborating the question of the state during the latter half of 1916. At that time he wrote a note entitled “The Youth International” (see *Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. XXIII, pp. 153–56), in which he criticized Bukharin’s anti-Marxist stand on the question of the state and promised to write a detailed article on the Marxist attitude to the state. In a letter to A. M. Kollontai dated February 17, 1917, Lenin stated that he had almost finished his material on the Marxist attitude to the state. This material was closely written in small handwriting in a blue-covered notebook entitled *Marxism on the State*. It contained a collection of quotations from Marx and Engels and excerpts from books by Kautsky, Pannekoek, and Bernstein, with Lenin’s critical annotations, conclusions, and generalizations.

According to the outlined plan, *The State and Revolution* was to contain seven chapters, but the seventh and last chapter, “The Experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917,” remained unwritten; all we have is a detailed plan for it. (See *Lenin Miscellany*, Russ. ed., Vol. XXI, 1933, pp. 25–26.) Concerning the publication of the book Lenin indicated in a note to the publisher that if he “should take too long to finish this seventh chapter, or if it should turn out to be too bulky, the first six chapters should be published separately as Part One.”

On the first page of the manuscript the author of the book appears under the pseudonym of F. F. Ivanovsky. Lenin proposed to use it because the Provisional Government would otherwise confiscate the book. The book was not published until 1918, when there was no longer any need for a pseudonym. A second edition containing a new section, “The Presentation of the Question by Marx in 1852,” added by Lenin to Chapter II, appeared in 1919.

The unprecedented horrors and miseries of the protracted war are making the position of the masses unbearable and increasing their indignation. The international proletarian revolution is clearly maturing. The question of its relation to the state is acquiring practical importance. The elements of opportunism that accumulated during the decades of comparatively peaceful development have given rise to the trend of social-chauvinism which dominates the official socialist parties throughout the world.

This trend — socialism in words and chauvinism in deeds (Plekhanov, Potresov, Breshkovskaya, Rubanovich, and, in a slightly veiled form, Messrs. Tsereteli, Chernov, and Co., in Russia; Scheidemann, Legien, David, and others in Germany; Renaudel, Guesde, and Vandervelde in France and Belgium; Hyndman and the Fabians² in England, etc., etc.) — is distinguished by the base, servile adaptation of the “leaders of socialism” to the interests not only of “their” national bourgeoisie, but precisely of “their” state — for the majority of the so-called Great Powers have long

²*Fabians* — members of the reformist and opportunist Fabian Society, formed by a group of British bourgeois intellectuals in 1884. The society took its name from the Roman General Fabius Cunctator (the “Delayer”), famous for his procrastinating tactics and avoidance of decisive battles. The Fabian Society represented, as Lenin put it, “the most finished expression of opportunism and liberal-labor politics.” The Fabians sought to deflect the proletariat from the class struggle and advocated the possibility of a peaceful, gradual transition from capitalism to socialism by means of reforms. During the imperialist world war (1914–18) the Fabians took a social-chauvinist stand. For a characterization of the Fabians, see Lenin’s “Preface to the Russian Edition of *Letters by J. F. Becker, J. Dietzgen, F. Engels, K. Marx, and Others to F. A. Sorge and Others*” (V. I. Lenin, *Marx–Engels–Marxism*, Moscow, 1953, pp. 245–46), “The Agrarian Program of Social-Democracy in the Russian Revolution” (*Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. XV, p. 154), and “English Pacifism and English Dislike of Theory” (*Ibid.*, Vol. XXI, p. 234).

been exploiting and enslaving a whole number of small and weak nationalities. And the imperialist war is precisely a war for the division and redivision of this kind of booty.

The struggle for the emancipation of the toiling masses from the influence of the bourgeoisie in general, and of the imperialist bourgeoisie in particular, is impossible without a struggle against opportunist prejudices concerning the "state."

First of all we examine the teachings of Marx and Engels on the state and dwell in particular detail on those aspects of this teaching which have been forgotten or have been subjected to opportunist distortion.

Then we deal specially with the one who is chiefly responsible for these distortions, Karl Kautsky, the best-known leader of the Second International (1889–1914), which has met with such miserable bankruptcy in the present war.

Finally, we shall sum up the main results of the experiences of the Russian revolutions of 1905 and particularly of 1917. Apparently, the latter is now (the beginning of August 1917) completing the first stage of its development; but this revolution as a whole can only be understood as a link in a chain of socialist proletarian revolutions being called forth by the imperialist war.

Hence, the question of the relation of the socialist proletarian revolution to the state acquires not only practical political importance but also the importance of a most urgent problem of the day, the problem of