

# The State and Revolution Study Guide

## I. Class Society and the State

- A. The State: A Product of the Irreconcilability of Class Antagonisms
  - 1. Classes, and state, have not always existed
  - 2. The state exists to maintain order between classes that conflict
    - a) This order is maintained by class rule, one class oppressing the other
  - 1. Opportunists, and bourgeoisie, often try to omit, obscure, or distort the revolutionary side of Marxism and revolutionaries
- B. Special Bodies of Armed Men, Prisons, etc.
  - 1. The State is the power alienated and above society, made up of armed men, police, prisons, and other similar establishments/groups (the enforcer)
- C. The State: an Instrument for the Exploitation of the Oppressed Class
  - 1. The State is used to enforce further oppression upon the populace
    - a) Taxes
    - b) Immunity for Officials
  - 2. How wealth corrupts the State under Capitalism
    - a) Direct corruption of officials
    - b) Alliance of the government and the Stock Exchange
  - 3. Universal suffrage is an illusion under Capitalism
- D. The “withering away” of the state, and violent revolution
  - 1. Bourgeois state
    - a) This is the current situation. The bourgeoisie uses the state to oppress the proletariat
  - 2. Revolution
    - a) The proletariat revolts to abolish the bourgeois state
  - 3. Proletariat state
    - a) The proletariat is in control of the state and uses it to maintain proletarian class rule
  - 4. Withering away of the Proletariat state
    - a) Over generations, certain legs of the state will become redundant and will no longer need to operate

Social Chauvinism - Socialism in words, Chauvinism in deeds

## **Questions**

1. What does it mean to say that class antagonisms are irreconcilable? Can we think of any current examples?
2. The state under capitalism is maintaining the order between which conflicting classes? What about feudalism?
3. What is the difference between a bourgeois state and a proletariat state? What are some challenges we can predict would occur in a future proletarian state?
4. What is the difference between state and government? Can one exist without the other?
5. What are examples of displays of state power today? How do these displays tie in with the exploitation and oppression of people today?
6. What are examples of opportunism or social chauvinism today? What problems do these cause?
7. How does imperialism combat attempts of the proletariat to wither away the state? Does this prove the correctness of the proletariat state?
8. Explain the withering away of the state using the features of Dialectical Materialism (as found in Dialectical and Historical Materialism by Stalin).





### III. Experience of the Paris Commune of 1871

- A. What Made the Communards' Attempt Heroic?
  - 1. The working class (the masses) cannot simply take control of the current (bourgeois) state and wield it for its own purpose
    - a) Some opportunists will say otherwise
  - 2. The Commune proved the masses must break up, smash the "ready-made state machinery"
- B. What is to Replace the Smashed State Machine?
  - 1. Standing army abolished and replaced by the armed people
  - 2. Abolition of representative allowances and monetary privileges to officials
  - 3. Officials are paid an average amount of workers wage
  - 4. All officials elected are subject to recall at any time
- C. Abolition of Parliamentarism
  - 1. Parliamentary elections decide which member of the *ruling class* gets to represent the *working class*
  - 2. The Abolition of Parliamentarism is not the abolition of representation
    - a) Instead of career politicians, delegates should represent sectors of the working class and to be held accountable to them
  - 3. Marxists don't want to abolish all administration and subordination in one swipe, that is an anarchist idea
    - a) The subordination must be to the proletariat
    - b) Our current knowledge and experience in production will shape our path forward
- D. Organization of National Unity
  - 1. Marx and Proudhon both call for the smashing of the state; Bernstein claims they both want federalism
    - a) Marx advocates for centralism
    - b) Proudhon advocates for federalism
- E. Abolition of the Parasite State
  - 1. Marx drew his conclusions from study and observation; meanwhile:
    - a) Utopians want to find a new political form to transform society into;
    - b) Anarchists dismiss the question of political forms altogether; and
    - c) Opportunists want to keep bourgeois parliamentary democratic forms
  - 2. The Commune showed:
    - a) The proletarian revolution, which the economic emancipation of labor can take place
    - b) The first attempt at smashing the bourgeois state and why we need to

## **Questions**

1. Why did Marx and Engels edit what was written in the Communist Manifesto?
2. What's the purpose of the new rules for representatives in the DOTP?
3. What does Marx mean when he says "working body"?
4. What issues of parliamentarianism that Lenin discusses do we see today?
5. What are the issues with the ideas the following groups in regard to the state:
  - a. Utopians
  - b. Anarchists
  - c. Opportunists
  - d. Based on your understanding about dialectical materialism, what do you think about these three examples?
6. What is centralism? What is federalism? What are some examples of both?
7. What is the significance of the commune?
8. Why can't the bourgeoisie be voted out?

## IV. Supplementary Explanation by Engels

- A. The Housing Question
  - 1. Capitalism, the Bourgeois state, resolves housing problems via supply and demand, which can never resolve the housing question
  - 2. Every socialist country would handle the question according to their material reality; each transition period will look different
    - a. Most likely, in large cities, current existing housing is sufficient to remedy housing shortages
- B. Controversy with the Anarchists
  - 1. Marxism wants to smash the bourgeois state and replace it with the proletariat state
    - a. The proletariat state is needed only temporarily to crush a continued resistance of the bourgeoisie
  - 2. Anarchists want to abolish all form of authority (including state), overnight
- C. Letter to Bebel
  - 1. The state is a transitional institution used in the struggle
  - 2. A “free peoples state” is nonsense
    - a. The state is not needed for freedom, but to hold down its adversaries.
- D. 2. Criticism of the Draft of the Erfurt Programme
  - 1. Monopoly Capitalism (Imperialism) is incapable of providing for society as a whole.
  - 2. Engels made three suggestions in his letter
    - a. Republic
      - a) The Democratic Republic, ie., Democratic Centralism
    - b. National question and state organization
      - a) The progression to a federal republic would be a “step forward” for the national question
        - (1) Engels recognized the federal republic left much to be desired
    - c. Local self-government
      - a) Governance for provinces, districts and communes
        - (1) Elected officials by universal suffrage
      - b) The abolition of local/provincial appointed authorities by the state
- E. The 1891 Preface to Marx’s “The Civil War in France”
  - 1. The bourgeois class aim to have a monopoly on violence
    - a. They seek to disarm the proletariat
  - 2. As materialists, it is important to not let idealism in any form to influence the Party
    - a. Lenin/Engels mention religion as the example

3. The proletariat must abolish the old state; it cannot keep the bourgeois state
    - a. The state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another
  4. How to transform officials from servants of society into masters? The Commune did it in two ways
    - a. Filled all posts by election on the basis of universal suffrage, subject to recall at any time
    - b. All officials were paid the wages received by other workers
  5. Democracy will not bring socialism
    - a. Democracy is not a single thing
    - b. Democracy is interconnected to all kinds of areas of life... economic, social, etc...
- F. Engels on the Overcoming of Democracy
1. Engels defines Democracy as - the state recognizing the majority rule over the minority
  2. With the abolition of the state and its inevitable withering away, this Democracy will also be abolished and withered away
    - a. Majority over the minority will still exist without the state

### **Questions**

1. Is the housing question ever resolved with capitalism's method? Why or why not?
2. What issue does Marx have with anarchists?
3. What's the matter with the term "free peoples state"?
4. What problems may arise if the state is abolished immediately after a revolution?
5. Why must the proletariat abolish the old state?
6. How did the Commune handle political officials and what's your opinion on it?

7. Explain how the state will wither away in your own words.

8. What is the relationship between the state and Democracy?

## V. The Economic Basis of the Withering Away of the State

- A. Presentation of the Question by Marx
  1. Communism can only develop out of what comes before it.
    - a. The Dialectical Method shows us how the new Mode of Production *emerges* from the old Mode of Production
    - b. This answer is scientific. We do not think Communism can happen suddenly or out of nowhere; we are not utopian.
- B. The Transition from Capitalism to Communism
  1. Between capitalism and communism, there can only be the transitional period of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat
    - a. Dictatorship of the Proletariat wins the struggle of Democracy for the Proletariat
      - Under capitalism, democracy is for the minority, capitalists
      - Many wage-laborers do not even engage in politics
      - Restrictions and obstacles placed upon democracy in a capitalist society seem small to the capitalists, but squeeze out the proletariat from politics
      - “The oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representative of the oppressing class shall represent and repress them in parliament”
    - b. DOTP will expand democracy for the masses, to do so, it must oppress the bourgeois class
    - c. Classes, State, and Democracy wither away under communism
      - People will gradually become accustomed to observing the rules of social intercourse over generations
      - Life will be observed without force, coercion, subordination - the state
      - Quantitative change leading to a Qualitative Change
  2. Only communism makes the state unnecessary
- C. First phase of communist society (socialism)
  1. Worker will not receive the “full product of his labor”, a portion will be contributed to society
  2. Everyone does socially necessary work, receives a certificate, and uses it for consumer goods. Every worker receives from society as much as he has given to it
  3. The first phase of communism cannot provide equality, workers have different levels of capabilities. “Equality” in work is in reality unequal
  4. The socialization of the means of production will only be advanced as far as the economic revolution allows
    - a. This takes times to socialize; it is a process
  5. Socialist principles
    - a. He who does not work shall not eat
    - b. An equal amount of products for an equal amount of labor

D. Higher phase of communist society (communism)

1. "Bourgeois law" can be lifted after individuals are no longer subordinate to labor, increased productive forces, and society benefits from the wealth
  - a. Productive forces will be able to flourish when society moves passed Capitalism
2. Remnants of the old surviving in the new will confront the proletariat at every step
  - a. Bourgeois state aspects will remain for a time but will be eliminated
3. Democracy
  - a. Formal Equality - Socialism
    - Formal - equality of wages, labor, and ownership of the means of production
  - b. Actual Equality - Communism
    - From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs
  - c. The formal recognition of the equality of citizens to determine the structure and administration of the state
    - The development of democracy encourages the revolutionary struggle against capitalism
4. Proper education of society will not allow Capitalism to seize back control

**Questions**

1. What does Lenin mean by the term "Bourgeois Law"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What are some of the differences between Socialism (the lower stage of communism) and Communism (the higher stage of communism)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Why is a transitory phase necessary between capitalism and communism?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Why do many wage-laborers not engage in politics? Is this still happening today?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Why do aspects of the bourgeois state exist even after the bourgeoisie has been removed from power?
  - a. What feature of dialectics does this resemble?

6. Why is socialism unable to provide actual equality?
  
7. How long does it take to transition from socialism to communism? Can/should the process be quickened? Why or why not?
  
8. Why will the productive forces be able to grow quickly under Socialism?
  
9. Why would a properly educated socialist society not allow Capitalism to seize back control?

## VI. The Vulgarization of Marxism by Opportunists

- A. Plekhanov's Controversy with the Anarchists
  - 1. Ignoring Marxism, Plekhanov's pamphlet "anarchism and socialism" ignored the relation of the revolution to the state and the state as a whole
    - a. Ignoring Marxism meant slipping into Opportunism
- B. Kautsky's Controversy with the Opportunists
  - 1. Kautsky's "Bernstein and the Social-Democratic Programme"
    - a. Kautsky fails to refute Bernstein, falling to Opportunism himself
      - a) Ignores the proletariat MUST smash the state
      - b) Says to "leave the solution of the problems to... the future"
  - 2. Kautsky's "The Social Revolution"
    - a. Kautsky, throughout the pamphlet, talks of winning state power
      - a) Speaks no further than winning state power
      - b) Fails to recognize the different character between proletarian democracy and bourgeois parliament
      - c) Opportunists benefit; No addressing of the smashing of the state and not recognizing the qualitative difference after the proletariat revolution.
  - 3. Kautsky's "The Road to Power"
    - a. Recognizes the era of revolution (1909), but when WW1 began, showed exactly where they stood.
    - b. Lenin puts Kautsky's "progression" as such:
      - a) I abide by revolutionary views (1899)
      - b) I recognize, above all, the inevitability of the social revolution of the proletariat (1902)
      - c) I recognize the advent of a new era of revolutions (1909)
      - d) Still, I am going back on what Marx said as early as 1852, since the question of the tasks of the proletarian revolution in relation to the state is being raised (1912).
- C. Kautsky's Controversy with Pannekoek
  - 1. Pannekoek accurately accuses Kautsky for being a "passive radical" and "refusing to see the process of revolution."
  - 2. Kautsky fails to recognize the distinction between Marxists and Anarchists
    - a. Lenin clarifies the distinction between Marxists and Anarchists
      - a) State abolition
        - (1) Marxism - Aims for complete abolishment of the state and recognizes that this can only be achieved after classes have been abolished by the socialist revolution
        - (2) Anarchists - Want to abolish the state completely as well, but overnight
      - b) State machine/political power

- (1) Marxism - Recognizes that after the proletariat has won political power it must destroy the old state machine and replace it with a new one of armed workers
    - (2) Anarchists - Usually deny proletariat use of state power and reject dictatorship
  - c) Use of present state
    - (1) Marxism - Proletariat should be trained for revolution by using the present state
    - (2) Anarchists - Proletariat should NOT use the present state to train for revolution
- 3. Kautsky continues to ignore Pannekoek's argument
  - a. Talks of "opposition" and "Centralism" when the argument was about revolution
- 4. Kautsky falsely equates elected officials to bureaucracy (even under Socialism)
- 5. Arguments of the state
  - a. Opportunists - We must not even think of destroying the old state machine, how can we do without ministries and officials?!
  - b. Anarchists - We must think ONLY of destroying the old state machine, we will not learn from earlier experiments
  - c. Marxism - We must destroy the state and learn from the examples before us.
    - a) Socialism will guarantee the destruction of bureaucracy and achieve the withering away of the state by:
      - (1) Shortening the workday
      - (2) Raise people to a new life
      - (3) Conditions that allow all people to perform "state functions"
- 6. Kautsky is an opportunist who wishes ONLY to win power in the current state
  - a. Marxists are not trying to shift the balance of state power, but are trying to overthrow the bourgeoisie, to destroy bourgeois democracy, and replace it with the DOTP
  - b. Kautsky solidifies his place in history as an opportunist

## **Questions**

1. What does Lenin find as the main problem with Plekhanov's pamphlet?

2. What is wrong with Kautsky's idea of "We can quite safely leave the solution of the problems of the proletarian dictatorship of the future"?
3. Thinking of quantitative change to qualitative change, compare the anarchist and Marxist stances on state abolition
4. Why do these opportunistic arguments appeal to people?
5. How do these ideas contribute to the withering away of the state:
  - a. Shortening the workday?
  - b. Raising people to a new life?
  - c. Allowing all people to perform "state functions"?
6. Why does Lenin talk about these arguments made by Kautsky?

## **Postscript**

- I. Lenin has the October revolution of 1917 to complete.