

Marxism and state communism the withering away of the state - G.I.C. 1932 ¹

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With the conquest of the means of production, the economic revolution begins.

As soon as the rule of the working class in an industrialized country has become a reality, the proletariat will be confronted with the task of starting the transformation of the economy on new foundations, that of common labour. The abolition of private property is easily pronounced: this will be the first measure of the political rule of the working class. But this is only a legal act which will lay the foundation for real economic life. The actual transformation and truly revolutionary work will start from this point.

Leninist state communism. The wage laborer remains a wage laborer.

To the extent that this issue is dealt with by the official communists, it is considered a foregone conclusion that the state has to accomplish this task.

The Russian Bolshevik Party has consistently implemented the idea of bringing the means of production to the State since the 1917 revolution.

¹ Published first in 1932 as a pamphlet in Dutch language by Group (s) of International Communists. Source of this transcription: Collection A.A.A.P., copy from the estate of Adhémar Hennaut Ixelles (Brussels):
<http://www.aaap.be/Pages/Pamphlets-GIC.html> - marx.

That this has only succeeded to a limited extent, depends on the backward state of social production in Russia; a natural limit to some extent, which is set to bringing the means of production to the state. Therefore, is not the question whether and to what extent this transit can take place. Rather, whether **transfer by** the victorious working class **of the means of production to the state**, as reflected in the Bolshevik theory and practice, **is the way leading to communism**.

To this, the development of Russian enterprises under Bolshevik government gave a clear answer. It is now an established fact that the workers in the statified enterprises remained wage laborer. The state has replaced the former private capitalists, and to this state he sells his labor. The state determines these wages by law and allows the union, which has become itself a part of the state, to accomplish the implementation of the labor laws. The wage laws at this time in force in Russia, show 17 wage classes, further piecework, premiums, etc. In one word:
when industry is brought into hands of the state, it is exactly the same way as in private capitalist production based on the exploitation of labor.

The state bureaucracy becomes the ruling class.
In this system Soviet Elections are a sham.
The "free" workers finally conquer "participation" of the workers.

The state itself - which is called in Russia the state of workers and peasants - as owner of the means of production **opposes** the class of wage laborers. The centralized top of the state bureaucracy is the legislative and executive organ of the state and at the same time leader of production. It occupies the same place as monopoly capital in private capitalism, and it represents in fact the new ruling class: state bureaucracy and peasantry. The workers sell their labor power to the state, but can do so only according to the labor laws, in which the price and the conditions are set by the state bureaucracy. An unheard sharp exploitation is prescribed by law and all opposition suppressed as counterrevolutionary in principle. Discipline and subordination to the state complete this compulsory organization. One wonders, in what way the first requirement of communism, "liberation from wage labor" has been accomplished.

On the other hand, the workers, as well as the whole population, for influencing economics and politics of the state, are referred to Soviet elections and participation in party and trade union life. Given, however, that the Soviet elections are being influenced decisively by the powerful state bureaucracy (and the wealthy peasant class), that party and union are mighty tools of the bureaucracy, one will recognize that the influence of the proletariat can not persist this way. **There remains practically no more than the "participation" of the workers as Social Democrats demanded in capitalism.**

"The association of free and equal producers".

According to Marx, the state is a special oppressive instrument
- In capitalism: the domination of the working class

- Under the proletarian dictatorship: to hold down the bourgeoisie and counter-revolution. However, far from this follows that the state in a communist society should become the exclusive power in society through central leadership and concentration of the entire economic life in its hands. Quite the contrary, both Marx and Engels expressed the view that the mark of a communist society exists in "the association of free and equal producers" and that the state must disappear, when there is nothing to suppress, - i.e. if the resistance of the bourgeoisie and its ideological domination over the workers has been overcome. "The association of free and equal producers" has no more class antagonism and thus in such a society the state as an instrument of power has become obsolete.

Lenin is the founder of **state communism**. Where in "The State and Revolution" he rises the ground pillar for this theory, he refers to Marx and Engels. Although this document is written in defense of the proletarian dictatorship against Menshevism and in this respect its merits are lasting, but the form this dictatorship should take, according to Lenin, is contrary to the beliefs that the founders of scientific communism had about this subject. This can even be shown in the quotes that Lenin takes from the writings of Marx and Engels. So Lenin quotes a.o. Engels:

"The state, then, has not existed from all eternity. There have been societies that did without it, that had no idea of the state and state power. At a certain stage of economic development, which was necessarily bound up with the split of society into classes, the state became a necessity owing to this split. We are now rapidly approaching a stage in the development of production at which the existence of these classes not only will have ceased to be a necessity, but will become a positive hindrance to production. They will fall as they arose at an earlier stage. Along with them the state will inevitably fall. Society, which will reorganize production on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers, will put the whole machinery of state where it will then belong: into a museum of antiquities, by the side of the spinning-wheel and the bronze axe." ²

Engels says in another place, that the means of production will be state-owned. Therefore, Lenin founds his theory on this statement. ¹

But it must be a peculiar state, because it is only created (dictatorship of the proletariat), to give away, blow upon blow, all its power, to gradually make itself superfluous.

But what if the state concentrates in its hand "the administration of things and the leadership of the production", and thereby secures its control over the workers even more by its management of the production system?

If the administrative apparatus lies in the hands of a small party that also has political power, it is in fact the control over broad masses. The excuse that the party is "the party of the proletariat", does not change anything. One should always remember that this management device, such as the Russian example teaches, can be managed only from the center, as a centrally organizational unit. Within this unit there is no place for "independent producers" (the workers). It would not correspond

² Lenin's "The State and Revolution"

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/index.htm>. The GIC quoted from the translation into Dutch by Gorter.

to a central leadership. Therefore, we also see that strict discipline, subordination to the commands of the top leadership has become a dogma of faith in Russian economy and politics.

The Soviet elections should provide - in theory - a guarantee that the state, "in the name of society" takes over the means of production actually in the name of community manages business, and leads the production apparatus. Practice shows that the state bureaucracy enforces its plans with all means of power, and that soviet elections result in nothing. Thus influencing the management of the state by Soviet elections does not take place, even not by the State party (K.P.R.) and by the union. The state bureaucracy does not permit the development of any position other than its own policy. It need not be said that democracy in this state communism, namely, by party and trade union organization and Soviet elections can provide no guarantee that the state dies, as Marx and Engels demanded and also Lenin imagined.

Production centralized in one hand defines a new form of domination.

The state can not die as a result.

Democracy can not die either.

Democracy remains the fig leaf to conceal oppression.

We conclude that this government or central leadership can not die, but on the contrary it will confirm itself more and more, as a result of the way it took possession of the means of production. It actually means the subordination of the producers, who want to be free, to the government, their economic dependence on it and thus their domination. As a consolation, they then have the prospect that they can influence their own dominance in accordance with their interests. However, this road is beyond their role as producers, it is the way of democracy.

Undoubtedly, as producers the workers are a power, but as such, they must comply under the central leadership. Outside the enterprises they would only be a decisive power if they were armed. However, we see in Russia that the workers have been disarmed and that by contrast a Red Army has been formed, which is available to the central government. As a result, in this democracy the workers don't have the least impact. Essentially, it doesn't distinguish itself in any way from bourgeois democracy, and there is nothing to do against a strong incumbent governing bureaucracy. (That this has been the case in Russia, first of all depends upon the social relations in that country. These made the Russian State Communism win. But at the same time one can see from this what a blow it must be for the working class, if in high capitalist countries attempts are made to implement state communism according to Russian model).

The result of taking possession of the means of production by the state according to the theory of Lenin, so its central organizational leadership and management, will result a new, stronger and more capable instrument of domination of the ruling bureaucracy. Democracy will be, as in bourgeois society, the fig leaf, which has to cover the new domination of the workers.

Despite this, Lenin expressed in *The State and Revolution*, that this state must die, and, he even comes to the correct conclusion that democracy must also die.

“(...) in speaking of the state ‘withering away’, and the even more graphic and colorful ‘dying down of itself’, Engels refers quite clearly and definitely to the period after ‘the state has taken possession of the means of production in the name of the whole of society’, that is, after the socialist revolution. We all know that the political form of the ‘state’ at that time is the most complete democracy. But it never enters the head of any of the opportunists, who shamelessly distort Marxism, that Engels is consequently speaking here of democracy ‘dying down of itself’, or ‘withering away’.”³

Undoubtedly Lenin mean by that democracy in state communism. Apart from the actual development in Russia, which is opposite, we are left to repeat the words of Engels who says the exact opposite:

“The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The state is not 'abolished'. It withers away.”⁴

It is clear, that the theory of Lenin here is in contradiction with itself.

The contradiction in the Leninist theory of the state.

Thing is, to expose the contradiction in the Leninist theory of the state. If the withering away of the proletarian state and of its democracy is to be achieved, one can not at the same time force society politically and economically under the most oppressive central leadership of the government. Because this is tantamount to the existence of a new state with greater power and wider competences than bourgeois state capitalism. However, only political infants can believe that the state would release its power at a given time, even the state would be able do so, without collapse of the entire central apparatus build for production and administration. On the contrary, it will attempt to confirm its power and to grow to the biggest instrument for oppression, society have ever seen.

A new ruler caste grows in this new state communism. It consists of the leaders that rose up from the working class and of defectors from the bourgeoisie, who put themselves into service of state communism and make themselves master of the central administration. Precisely this is shown clearly in today's Russia. Only a vanishing small part of the Russian workers was able to take a leading position in the administrative machinery of production drawn to the state. To kick start the economy, one needed to take the officials and the leaders of the capitalist system. These people, legitimized as communists by integration into the Communist Party, control together with competent workers - the leaders - the production of the country. They form a new ruler caste and already now use their position of power to take a much better material position than the workers. Withholding complaints of Russian workers, that even penetrate into official newspapers - such as the "Pravda" - (that tells a lot in today Russia) highlight that the bureaucrats only cares for its own,

³ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch01.htm> - s4.

⁴ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch01.htm> - s4.

without heeding the most glaring emergencies of the workers. It is therefore hardly surprising that in Russia itself, the word "Soviet bourgeoisie" arose.

State communism stands in contrast to the argument that in communism the state needs to wither away. Only one of two can be possible: either state communism, ie central organizational leadership and management of production by the state – in that case the state remains, and strengthened its power - either the withering away of the state and democracy, while the society passing to the association of free and equal producers and therefore a state oppressive power is unnecessary. But then the central apparatus for the leading of production covered by the state, has to disappear.

Lenin as a state communist.

“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 fulfilment 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.”⁵

Lenin plainly says here that the central leadership and management of the production in the state communism will be based on the model of the post, or rather, made in the manner of a state capitalist monopoly. "Technicians, foremen and accountants, as well as all officials" are correctly state officials, officials in the state production monopoly that controls the entire production." "A mechanism of general public enterprise, which is organized to the example of the capitalist state

⁵ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch03.htm>.

monopoly"⁶, that is indeed is the characteristic description for State Communism, as Lenin develops.

It's necessary to point out here that Engels (and Marx in a different place) said: "The proletariat seizes from state power and turns the means of production into state property to begin with."⁷

It has the appearance as if he says the same thing as Lenin, but he emphasizes, that the means of production will be "first" into state ownership and he further claims that the settlement from the means of production in the name of society at the same time "last independent act" ¹¹ of the proletarian state.

This clearly shows that the taking into possession of the means of production should initiate just another act which only can be – if we don't want to put the teachings of Marx and Engels on their head - "the association of free and equal producers". If taking possession of means of production by the proletarian state initiates this association, then "management of affairs" and "management of production processes" will develop while the associated society of free and equal producers arranges its life itself on free economic foundation. Only to the degree to which this association is gathering pace, the coercive force of the state becomes redundant, the state can and will die away. At the same time, the set up of this association, which facilitates the withering away of the state, is the only task of the proletarian dictatorship. Only in this sense we can understand the statement of Marx and Engels. Marx and Engels were careful not to present the taking into possession of the means of production by the state as a "mechanism of the general public company, organized to the example of the capitalist state monopoly."

Such a view is merely the product of "a witty social democrat", but it hasn't to anything do with Marx and Engels. Lenin has adopted here the way the "witty social democrat" explains Marxist doctrine, and by this he necessarily overtook the rigid, mechanistic conception of socialist society, as shown in state capitalism. The state, which holds the monopoly of production, represents in this view society - in this respect there is not the slightest difference to the social democratic theory of nationalization.

"Nationalization" and "socialization"⁸

⁶ The GIC probably cites the Dutch translation of *The State and Revolution* by Gorter.

⁷ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/ch24.htm>. See also Endnote I.

⁸ This fragment in the original Dutch version corresponds to the chapter with the same title in "The Basics of communist production and distribution": <http://www.aaap.be/Pages/Transition-en-Fundamental-Principles-1930.html - I.3>. However, this latter is mainly based upon the English translation and edition *Mike Baker*, marked up by *Jonas Holmgren* (who made small corrections). The translation by *Mike Baker* is "edited" in the sense that he sometimes tries to "ameliorate" and "complete" the work of the G.I.C.; he inserts, deletes and changes words and formulations, and he tends for instance to translate "state-communism" with "state-capitalism", which, in the spirit of the G.I.C., is not wrong, but it is not what the G.I.C. wrote at the time, and it also obscures the development of the historical debate. He also added comments in notes (90 pages) which can be consulted in the pdf of the whole book. Further, he used the edition of 1930, ignoring the second, extended Dutch edition of 1935, which incorporated the additions of 1931 (seperately translated and

Although Marx made no "picture" of communist industrial life, it may be well known that regulation of production would be established according to him "not by the state but by the organisation of free associations of the socialist society" a conception which Marx according to the reformist Cunow would have derived from the liberal-anarchist currents of his time, (H. Cunow "Die marxsche Geschichts-, Gesellschafts- und Staatstheorie", I, p. 309).

The management and administration of production and distribution would accrue directly to the producers and consumers themselves and not along the detour of the state.

The equation of state and society is only an invention of later years.

Around 1880-1890 this position was also taken by Social Democracy, which for example, is clearly reflected in a speech which was held by the old Liebknecht following attempts to put into hands of the state the railways, coal mines and other large industries. He said:

"The more bourgeois society recognize that eventually it cannot defend itself against the onslaught of socialist ideas, the closer we get to the time that state socialism will seriously be proclaimed and the final battle, which social democracy will have to fight, will be fought under the slogan: "Here social democracy - there state socialism!" "

Cunow gives following note to this "Accordingly, the Congress (of the Social Democratic Party) also declared itself against the transfer of the enterprises to the state; because social democracy and state socialism were called 'irreconcilable opposed.'" (Cunow, supra, p. 340).

However, about 1900, in the struggle for "social reforms" this position was abandoned, and "nationalization", bringing to the state or municipality different branches of business, were presented as an ever further move to socialism. In social democratic terminology such enterprises therefore are called "social enterprises" although the producers have nothing to do with their management and leadership.

The Russian revolution went also totally according to the scheme of "nationalization" of industry. Again the branches of business were that were 'mature' to do so, joined the central state apparatus. In 1917, producers began to expropriate the owners in different companies, to great discomfort of those who wanted to lead and manage the economic life "from above". The workers wanted to organize production on new bases according communist rules.

Instead of these rules they got stones for bread: The Communist Party gave guidelines according to which companies should unite into trusts, as to get them under central management. What could not be included in the central disposal plan was returned to the owners, as these companies were not yet "ripe". So we see how

published by Mike Baker) and 1935 (not translated, probably unknown to Mike Baker), both published in German. Actually the fragment on aaap.be contains more citations from Cunow and other sources.

already the first All-Russian Congress of Economic Councils, adopted following resolution:

"In terms of the organization of production an overall nationalization is necessary. It is necessary to proceed from the implementation of nationalization of individual companies (of which 304 have been nationalized and confiscated) to effective nationalization of industry. Nationalization should not be an "occasional" nationalisation, and should come about only by the Supreme Economic Council of Deputies and approved by the Supreme Economic Council."

(A. Goldschmidt, Wirtschaftsorganisation in Sowjet-Russland, p. 228).

Thus the Communist Party gave no guidance to which the workers themselves added their enterprise to the communist sector, it gave no guidelines to which the administration and management of the production process indeed would proceed to society, for her the liberation of the workers was not the work of the workers themselves, but the implementation of communism was a function of the "men of science", of the "intellectuals", the "statisticians" and how all those learned men may still be called. The Communist Party believed that it was sufficient to dislodge the old generals of industry and to take control itself of the Commando Law over labor, to lead all into the safe haven of communism! The working class was just good enough to sweep away the old rulers over work - and to put new one in their place. Its function did not reach further and could not have reached further, because the basis for self-organization was not given by providing generally applicable rules of production.⁹

How Lenin "simply knows" how to solve the difficulty

Lenin has been certainly aware that the concentration of the entire production owned by the State monopoly, which is based on the most stringent organizational centralism, means a **strengthening of state power**. However, when "The State and Revolution" was written, he could not in any way have foreseen the actual development in Russia. Here it was necessary - as the Bolsheviks wanted to remain in power - to strengthen state power as much as possible, so to build a monopoly over production, without taking into account any other purpose. So the situation in Russia itself has developed Lenin's theory of State Communism. The way to make the state increasingly stronger, closer, was gradually prescribed to those who had taken Russian state power. This process, which was started as a "mechanism of the general public enterprise, organized to the example of the capitalist monopoly of the state is " had to become increasingly opposed to the "free and equal producers".

Russia has developed the best example of Leninist state communism in reality, not as bearers wished but as it had to develop.

Lenin could neither foresee all details of the actual outcome, but it was still clear to him that the proletarian state is a coercive institution as well. Moreover, he puts this

⁹ Here the fragment identical to "*Basic principles ...*" ends.

in the foreground several times. Lenin now tries to solve the contradiction in an original way, how this state, that is still - according the theory of Lenin - a permanent institute of central leadership and management of overall production, will make itself redundant, will die down. In "The State and Revolution" Lenin proposes:

"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). This is *our* proletarian task, this is what we can and must *start with* in accomplishing the proletarian revolution. Such a beginning, on the basis of large-scale production, will of itself lead to the gradual "withering away" of all bureaucracy, to the gradual creation of an order--an order without inverted commas, an order bearing no similarity to wage slavery--an order under which the functions of control and accounting, becoming more and more simple, will be performed by each in turn, will then become a habit and will finally die out as the *special* functions of a special section of the population." ¹⁰

One recognizes clearly mechanical organization to the extreme: in the economic field - as producers - the workers must adapt to the most severe discipline of state production monopoly, and obey the state officials. These state officials are the "employers" who find their supreme leadership in the government. The workers have as well their supreme representation in government. By means of political democracy (Soviet- elections-party activity) they can influence government and thereby control production with its state officials.

We repeat that in such a system all power is concentrated in government, that the workers are more severely oppressed in this society than under capitalism, that democracy here is made to joke again and that the prosperity of such society finally depends on the good will and capacities of the governmental men and their administration. Under such circumstances, the state *with* its democracy must give itself firmer foundations, rather than be redundant and die down, as Lenin wants as well. Lenin assures us that in despite of this the state will die, even, precisely because of this severe organization this would happen. But he gives no argument for this than the quoted obscure reasoning that "the functions of control and accounting, becoming more and more simple, will be performed by each in turn, will then become a habit and will finally die down as the special functions of a special section of the population."

As said already, this is obscure, because if one generally can imagine, then in mere fantasy. To present the leadership of the state production monopoly (system post or trust) as **functions of supervision and settlement, which are very easy to create**, is putting things upside down.

¹⁰ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch03.htm> - s3. Italics after 'we' added by editor, as found in the Dutch original by GIC and in Lenin *Werke*, Dietz Verlag, Berlin 1981, Bd. 25, p. 439. According to the latter edition Lenin writes "Let's organise as workers *ourselves* large-scale production ...".

Therefore, we should stigmatize this argument of Lenin as a phrase without content, by which he moved from his neck findings troublesome for him too, that follow from the teachings of Marx and Engels about the withering away of the state.

State communism clashes with the councils concept.

If one tries to follow the thoughts of state communism, one will soon find two peculiarities.

First, state communism considers all problems only from a mechanical point of view. It sees everything solely from the point, how this and that area can be integrated by controlling organization and central leadership and management.

That brings them to see the implementation of communism as the continuation of the concentration of business, as already happens under capitalism. But what means, the organization of production created by the concentration of capital? What does it mean on the one hand, seen from the angle of the wage labourers and also from the position of the capitalists? **It is the control of labor, the organized control of the wage workers.** The Marxist analysis of capitalism makes thereabouts not the slightest doubt. For Marx the social position of the capitalist to the wage-laborer is characterized by his disposition over the work, over the workers in production. The socialization theories of all directions of social democracy also are all centered to the same point of control over the working class. That the work must be dominated, is obvious for them and so (because it is a social, inseparably linked system) requires a strict central organization, is as "natural".

But it is equally important that State Communism puts decisive weight on the ability of leaders. Certainly this is a result of central organizational conjunction, because now everything depends on the skill and firmness of principle of the leaders placed in the center, to which the mass must subordinate with stringent discipline.

One must admit the Bolsheviks, that the working class only wins power, if it is a closed Unity, ready for struggle. However, whether this can be accomplished along the way of organizational discipline and its subordination under a central command, is another question that will not be investigated now.

We draw attention to this phenomenon, because it shows how state communism can be understood. **Decisive is, that all "leaders"-problems here are oppsed to the councils thought.**

A questionable departure from Marxism.

The whole tactic of the workers' organizations, which are part of the 3rd Intern. that therefore see their purpose in State Communism, depart from the view, to compass great masses by organizing and putting them under central leadership. Once created the organization, the leader is the main thing. However, in this the success of the proletarian revolution is made highly conditional upon the ability of leaders - a dubious deviation from Marxism.

This issue of leadership, we encounter every day in the tactics of the parties and organizations of the 3rd Intern. (we mention only the trade union issue,

parliamentarism and organizational issues in the C.P. itself), has been transferred in communism also to the economic field. The ability and the attitude of the leader according to this view, determines to a large extent the fate of such a society. Likewise can be explained, the glorification of Lenin and others, a sick worship of persons.

"The emancipation of the workers must be the work of the workers themselves." These words do not lose their validity when considering the economic liberation of the workers. The most skilled leaders, even when the workers follow them in absolute discipline, can not take over its own liberating labor from the proletariat. Moreover, if the proletarian dictatorship petrifies to the relationship of leader to mass, as reflected in State Communism, then this leadership develops, despite all democracy, into a new ruling class, from which society is dependent.

The unified power of the workers is necessary.

When Russia, the country where a determined, heaven storming, revolutionary vanguard which led a multimillion-headed gloomy, dull mass into revolution, has given birth to the doctrine of State Communism, when this doctrine, as the flaming fire signal of the first successful proletarian revolution, roused the enthusiasm of the workers in all countries, then it brings evidence in its rigid bureaucracy, in re-established state power by monopolization of production, that the final emancipation of the working class by **cannot happen by state communism**, not by leaders to whom the mass is disciplinary obedient, but only by the autonomous strength of the workers themselves.

Of course, the united power of armed workers must crush the bourgeoisie, because only this way the concentrated power of the bourgeois state can be overcome. But here too it is the workers themselves, armed according to the enterprises, form the new state power.

The political unity of the workers' state, led by Councils or Soviets, whose head is the Council Government, is a **necessary consequence of this struggle**. The abolition of private ownership of means of production and its declaration to "State" - more accurately, social property, should be pronounced by the proletarian State, thus by government.

The lessons of the Paris Commune (1871).

But now State Communism deviates from Marxism, because in organizing State Possession order the central organizational leadership of government, it denies the immediate producers access to the means of production and puts it in the hands of government.

Marx and Engels however, demanded the transfer of the means of production into social property, social production by association, that is to say, **association of free and equal producers**. However, as we will demonstrate below, this is completely different from the central organization of production drawn to itself by the state.

Marx in his "**Civil War in France**" learned lessons from the Paris Commune (1871), this first attempt to establish the power of the workers. Lenin in "The State and

Revolution" serves himself with various quotations from it, to defend the dictatorship of the proletariat against the Social-Democrat Marx-falsifiers. Some quotations which Lenin utilized, will be used by us because we want to prove that by "dictatorship of the proletariat" Marx understood something quite different than it has become in Russia.

"The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people."

"The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at any time."

"The Commune," Marx wrote, "was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time...."

"Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to represent and repress [ver- and zertreten] the people in parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people constituted in communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for workers, foremen and accountants for his business."¹¹

The council system following Marx

Marx thus gave a striking characteristic of the proletarian council system, as it now has become standard tenet of revolutionary workers' parties.

It must be well kept in mind that the Council appointed according to this statement any time can be deposited directly by its voters, just like employers appoint or dismiss workers, foremen and accountants. The voters are the workers, in this case they are completely master their "business"! How completely different the construction of the Commune was thought compared to the central Russian State Communism, is shown by the following sentences from Marx:

"In a brief sketch of national organization, which the Commune had no time to develop, it states explicitly that the Commune was to be the political form of even the smallest village...." The communes were to elect the "National Delegation" in Paris.

"... The few but important functions which would still remain for a central government were not to be suppressed, as had been deliberately mis-stated, but were to be transferred to communal, i.e., strictly responsible, officials.

"... National unity was not to be broken, but, on the contrary, organized by the communal constitution; it was to become a reality by the destruction of state power which posed as the embodiment of that unity yet wanted to be independent of, and superior to, the nation, on whose body it was but a parasitic excrescence. While the merely repressive organs of the old

¹¹ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch03.htm> - s3.

governmental power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority claiming the right to stand above society, and restored to the responsible servants of society." ¹²

The question of mass and leaders in the communes.

Unambiguously and clearly it states here that the "few but important functions which would still remain for a central government" are to be exercised by communal officials who are strictly responsible at any moment to their immediate constituents. The executive officers of the Central Government are not **state** officials, but **communal** officials, not responsible to the government of the State, but to their direct voters in the Commune. Assuming the possibility of such an order (ie the central social functions are exercised by communal and therefore responsible officials of the Commune, which guarantee the unity of the country or society), also a withering away of the state can be imagined. But when such an order exists, there is no "State" at all, because what still can be called a central government has no separate power, because it is in the hands of the Communes. The implementation in the whole country of the **commune-** or **council** system, would thus be the simultaneous elimination of the parasitic State. "The merely repressive organs of the old governmental power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority claiming the right to stand above society, and restored to the responsible servants of society". Once such order actually is implemented, then the state really died off, while society does not need it anymore.

The conditions for the withering away of the state.

It's clear that this situation can not exist under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Only when the former legitimate functions of State Power, now to be called the central functions of society, can be transferred to the communal officials, a State Power - here proletarian dictatorship - will be unnecessary. Whether these functions can be transferred depends on the commune exercising these central functions voluntarily and that these functions and measures to hold together society will find no resistance. The former State Power must, as it were to come to life in the Communes, by creating a voluntary centralization for the exercise of the central functions and monitoring of the resulting measures.

But because the main central functions of proletarian dictatorship consist of the abolition of private property and, furthermore all privileges, by transferring the means of production into social possession (by association of free and equal producers), **all individuals that can loose these privileges or private property, or even their ideology, will** resist to these central functions. The functions of the new social order can therefore not be transferred to these persons or classes; as long as this resistance exists proletarian dictatorship is necessary. However, those Communes by which this resistance has been overcome, (for example when there is a large majority of workers who are loyal to Communism), could take over these functions themselves. Otherwise the gradual withering away of the state is unthinkable.

¹² <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch03.htm> - s3.

But from this also follows that the proletarian state from the beginning must be aware of depriving itself of all power, by reassigning power into voluntary centralization, i.e. transferring it to the Communes. **The ability to create these conditions is the task of the dictatorship, becoming superfluous is its goal.**

Contradiction of the two systems.

According to Marx, the few but important functions of the central government will be transferred to communal officials (strictly responsible to the Commune). Thus, when the local communal self-government has become a matter of course, the central state power is superfluous by voluntary centralization of Communes. **Lenin** agrees with this line of thinking and even makes it his own. However, according to the theory of **state communism** (also developed by Lenin), all means of production are state owned, centralized on "the manner of a State Capitalist monopoly". These organizational "**mechanization of the general public enterprise**" assumes the leadership of the government. It is therefore an instrument of power of the State and not of the Communes.

And the functions of this monopoly, this organizational "mechanism of the general public enterprise", to be exercised by officials that are responsible to the central government and not to the communes. A more glaring contrast than that which is reflected between the two systems, is not feasible.

Both views, however, Lenin thought to unite in his writings **The State and revolution** and that this is possible even today all supporters of the 3rd International believe.

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Translation by F.K. 25-5-2016.

¹ "The proletariat seizes from state power and turns the means of production into state property to begin with." Anti-Dühring, quoted by Lenin in "The State and Revolution" under 4. The "Withering Away" of the State, and Violent Revolution. This fragment can also be found in Engels "The development of Socialism: Utopian and Scientific" (separate reissue of some of the Anti-Dühring). Engels notes in the Preface to the German edition of 1891, "The development ..." that he has added significant text by the end of Part III of the "now become important new form of production of the Trusts." (MEW Bd. 19, p. 523).

For example:

"But, the transformation — either into joint-stock companies and trusts, or into State-ownership — does not do away with the capitalistic nature of the productive forces. In the joint-stock companies and trusts, this is obvious. And the modern State, again, is only the organization that bourgeois society takes on in order to support the external conditions of the capitalist mode of production against the encroachments as well of the workers as of individual capitalists. The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine — the state of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital. The more it proceeds to the taking over of productive forces, the more does it actually become the national capitalist, the more citizens does it exploit. The workers remain wage-workers — proletarians. The capitalist relation is not done away with. It is, rather, brought to a head. But, brought to a head, it topples over. State-ownership of the productive forces is not

the solution of the conflict, but concealed within it are the technical conditions that form the elements of that solution.

This solution can only consist in the practical recognition of the social nature of the modern forces of production, and therefore in the harmonizing with the socialized character of the means of production. And this can only come about by society openly and directly taking possession of the productive forces which have outgrown all control, except that of society as a whole. The social character of the means of production and of the products today reacts against the producers, periodically disrupts all production and exchange, acts only like a law of Nature working blindly, forcibly, destructively. But, with the taking over by society of the productive forces, the social character of the means of production and of the products will be utilized by the producers with a perfect understanding of its nature, and instead of being a source of disturbance and periodical collapse, will become the most powerful lever of production itself.”

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/soc-utop/ch03.htm>.

^{II} This is a more extensive quote from the same statement, in continuation of the quote in our latter endnote:

“Active social forces work exactly like natural forces: blindly, forcibly, destructively, so long as we do not understand, and reckon with them. But when once we understand them, when once we grasp their action, their direction, their effects, it depends only upon ourselves to subject them more and more to our own will, and by means of them to reach our own ends. And this holds quite especially of the mighty productive forces of today. As long as we obstinately refuse to understand the nature and the character of these social means of action — and this understanding goes against the grain of the capitalist mode of production and its defenders — so long these forces are at work in spite of us, in opposition to us, so long they master us, as we have shown above in detail. But when once their nature is understood, they can, in the hands of the producers working together, be transformed from master demons into willing servants. The difference is as that between the destructive force of electricity in the lightning of the storm, and electricity under command in the telegraph and the voltaic arc; the difference between a conflagration, and fire working in the service of man. With this recognition, at last, of the real nature of the productive forces of today, the social anarchy of production gives place to a social regulation of production upon a definite plan, according to the needs of the community and of each individual. Then the capitalist mode of appropriation, in which the product enslaves first the producer and then the appropriator, is replaced by the mode of appropriation of the products that is based upon the nature of the modern means of production: upon the one hand, direct social appropriation, as means to the maintenance and extension of production — on the other, direct individual appropriation, as means of subsistence and of enjoyment.

Whilst the capitalist mode of production more and more completely transforms the great majority of the population into proletarians, it creates the power which, under penalty of its own destruction, is forced to accomplish this revolution. Whilst it forces on more and more the transformation of the vast means of production, already socialised, into state property, it shows itself the way to accomplishing this revolution. *The proletariat seizes political power and turns the means of production in the first instance into state property.* But, in doing this, it abolishes itself as proletariat, abolishes all class distinctions and class antagonisms, abolishes also the state as state. Society thus far, based upon class antagonisms, had need of the state, that is, of an organisation of the particular class, which was *pro tempore* the exploiting class, for the maintenance of its external conditions of production, and, therefore, especially, for the purpose of forcibly keeping the exploited classes in the condition of oppression corresponding with the given mode of production (slavery, serfdom, wage-labour). The state was the official representative of society as a whole; the gathering of it together into a visible embodiment. But it was this only in so far as it was the state of that class which itself represented, for the time being, society as a whole: in ancient times, the state of slave-owning citizens; in the Middle Ages, the feudal lords; in our own time, the bourgeoisie. When at last it becomes the real representative of the whole of society, it renders itself unnecessary. 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 our present anarchy in production, with the collisions and excesses arising from these, are removed, nothing more remains to be repressed, and a special repressive force, a state, is no longer necessary. The first act by

virtue of which the state really constitutes itself the representative of the whole of society — the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society — this is, at the same time, its last independent act as a state. State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies out of itself; the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The state is not "abolished". *It dies out*. This gives the measure of the value of the phrase "a free people's state", both as to its justifiable use at times by agitators, and as to its ultimate scientific insufficiency ^[117], and also of the demands of the so-called anarchists for the abolition of the state out of hand.

Since the historical appearance of the capitalist mode of production, the appropriation by society of all the means of production has often been dreamed of, more or less vaguely, by individuals, as well as by sects, as the ideal of the future. But it could become possible, could become a historical necessity, only when the actual conditions for its realisation were there. Like every other social advance, it becomes practicable, not by men understanding that the existence of classes is in contradiction to justice, equality, etc., not by the mere willingness to abolish these classes, but by virtue of certain new economic conditions. The separation of society into an exploiting and an exploited class, a ruling and an oppressed class, was the necessary consequence of the deficient and restricted development of production in former times. So long as the total social labour only yields a produce which but slightly exceeds that barely necessary for the existence of all; so long, therefore, as labour engages all or almost all the time of the great majority of the members of society — so long, of necessity, this society is divided into classes. Side by side with the great majority, exclusively bond slaves to labour, arises a class freed from directly productive labour, which looks after the general affairs of society: the direction of labour, state business, law, science, art, etc. It is, therefore, the law of division of labour that lies at the basis of the division into classes. But this does not prevent this division into classes from being carried out by means of violence and robbery, trickery and fraud. It does not prevent the ruling class, once having the upper hand, from consolidating its power at the expense of the working class, from turning its social leadership into an exploitation of the masses.

But if, upon this showing, division into classes has a certain historical justification, it has this only for a given period, only under given social conditions. It was based upon the insufficiency of production. It will be swept away by the complete development of modern productive forces. And, in fact, the abolition of classes in society presupposes a degree of historical evolution at which the existence, not simply of this or that particular ruling class, but of any ruling class at all, and, therefore, the existence of class distinction itself has become an obsolete anachronism. It presupposes, therefore, the development of production carried out to a degree at which appropriation of the means of production and of the products, and, with this, of political domination, of the monopoly of culture, and of intellectual leadership by a particular class of society, has become not only superfluous but economically, politically, intellectually a hindrance to development. This point is now reached. Their political and intellectual bankruptcy is scarcely any longer a secret to the bourgeoisie themselves. Their economic bankruptcy recurs regularly every ten years. In every crisis, society is suffocated beneath the weight of its own productive forces and products, which it cannot use, and stands helpless face to face with the absurd contradiction that the producers have nothing to consume, because consumers are wanting. The expansive force of the means of production bursts the bonds that the capitalist mode of production had imposed upon them. Their deliverance from these bonds is the one precondition for an unbroken, constantly accelerated development of the productive forces, and therewith for a practically unlimited increase of production itself. Nor is this all. The socialised appropriation of the means of production does away, not only with the present artificial restrictions upon production, but also with the positive waste and devastation of productive forces and products that are at the present time the inevitable concomitants of production, and that reach their height in the crises. Further, it sets free for the community at large a mass of means of production and of products, by doing away with the senseless extravagance of the ruling classes of today and their political representatives. The possibility of securing for every member of society, by means of socialised production, an existence not only fully sufficient materially, and becoming day by day more full, but an existence guaranteeing to all the free development and exercise of their physical and mental faculties — this possibility is now for the first time here, but it is *here*. ^{*11}

With the seizing of the means of production by society production of commodities is done away with, and, simultaneously, the mastery of the product over the producer. Anarchy in social production is replaced by systematic, definite organisation. The struggle for individual existence disappears. Then for the first time man, in a certain sense, is finally marked off from the rest of the animal kingdom, and emerges from mere animal conditions of existence into really human ones. The whole sphere of the conditions of life which environ man, and which have hitherto ruled man, now comes under the dominion and control of man who for the first time becomes the real, conscious lord of nature because he has now become master of his own social organisation. The laws of his own social action, hitherto standing face to face with man as laws of nature foreign to, and dominating him, will then be used with full understanding, and so mastered by him. Man's own social organisation, hitherto confronting him as a necessity imposed by nature and history, now becomes the result of his own free action. The extraneous objective forces that have hitherto governed history pass under the control of man himself. Only from that time will man himself, with full consciousness, make his own history — only from that time will the social causes set in movement by him have, in the main and in a constantly growing measure, the results intended by him. It is the humanity's leap from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom.

To accomplish this act of universal emancipation is the historical mission of the modern proletariat. To thoroughly comprehend the historical conditions and thus the very nature of this act, to impart to the now oppressed class a full knowledge of the conditions and of the meaning of the momentous act it is called upon to accomplish, this is the task of the theoretical expression of the proletarian movement, scientific socialism.”

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/ch24.htm>)