

The State and Revolution

By NIKOLAI LENIN

1. The State Is the Product of the Irreconcilability of Class Contradictions

The teachings of Marx are faring now as have fared more than once in the course of history, the teachings of revolutionary thinkers and leaders of the oppressed classes in their struggle for freedom. During their lifetimes, the great revolutionists have met, at the hands of the oppressing classes, only constant persecutions, and their teachings have encountered the most savage hostility, the most insane hatred, the most irresponsible flood of lies and slanders. After their death the effort is always made to transform them into harmless ikons, to canonize them, as it were, and to surround their names with a certain halo, so that they may be used for the "consolation" of the oppressed classes and for their stupefaction, by emasculating the content of the revolutionary doctrine, removing its revolutionary edge, and vulgarizing it. At present the bourgeoisie and the opportunists within the workers' movement are united in the performance of this "operation" on Marxism. They forget, gloss over, pervert the revolutionary side of the doctrine, they steal its revolutionary soul. They place in the foreground and magnify whatever is acceptable or appears acceptable to the bourgeoisie. And don't forget that all Social-Chauvinists are now "Marxists"! More and more the German bourgeois scholars, who but yesterday were specialists in the extermination of Marxism, talk of our "national-German" Marx, as if he had originated the workers' unions, so magnificently organized for the waging of a war of conquest!

In view of this situation, in view of the wide currency of Marxist distortions, our task becomes, first of all, to reveal once more the true teaching of Marx concerning the state. For this purpose we shall have to reprint a large number of long selections from the words of Marx and Engels themselves. Of course, it is true that long extracts make a presentation somewhat heavy, and will in no

way contribute to its popularity. But it is impossible to dispense with them. All, or at least all the important, passages from the works of Marx and Engels with regard to the state must absolutely be quoted in the fullest possible form, so that the reader may form an independent idea of the whole system of the views of the founders of scientific socialism, and of the development of these ideas, and also, so that the distortion of them at the hand of the now dominant "Kautskianism" may be proved by means of documents and made evident to every eye.

Let us begin with the most widely known work of Friedrich Engels: *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, of which the sixth edition appeared at Stuttgart in 1894. We are obliged to translate the quotations from the German original, as the Russian translations, although they are very numerous, are for the most part either incomplete, or executed in an extremely unsatisfactory manner.

"The state," says Engels, drawing the final conclusions of his historical analysis—"does not represent in any way a power that is imposed upon society from without. Nor is the state the 'realization of the moral idea,' 'the form and reality of reason,' as Hegel affirms. The state is a product of society at a certain stage of its development, the state is the recognition of the fact that society has become lost in a maze of unsolvable self-contradictions, has been split by irreconcilable oppositions, which it is powerless to escape from. And in order that these oppositions, these classes with contradictory economic interests, should not consume each other and the state in fruitless conflict, for this purpose there was needed a power, standing, apparently, over society, but placing itself over society, a power which should moderate their collisions, and maintain it within the bounds of 'order.' And this power arising out of society, but placing itself over society, and estranging itself more and more from it, is the

state." Sixth German edition, pp. 177-178.

Here we have with absolute clearness the fundamental Marxist thought on the state, its historic role and its significance. The state is a product and an expression of the irreconcilability of class contradictions. The state comes into being wherever, whenever, and insofar as the class contradictions, as an objective fact, can no longer be reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state is a proof of the fact that the class contradictions are irreconcilable.

And it is at this most important and fundamental stage of the discussion that the distortion of Marxism sets in, proceeding along two principal directions.

On the one hand, the bourgeois and particularly the petit bourgeois ideologists, under the pressure of indisputable historical facts, recognize that the state exists only where there are class contradictions and class struggle, and "correct" Marx in such manner as to make the state appear as the organ of the reconciliation of classes. But Marx said that the state could never arise or maintain itself if any reconciliation of classes were still possible. But the petit bourgeois and philistine professors and publicists would have it appear—and often with condescending use of Marx as an authority!—that it is precisely the state that reconciles the classes. But according to Marx the state is the organ of class rule, the organ of the oppression of one class by another, the creation of "order," which legalizes and perpetuates this oppression, by moderating the clashes between the classes. But in the opinion of the petit bourgeois politicians, order is precisely the reconciliation of classes, and not the oppression of one class by another; to regulate the clashes means to conciliate and not to deprive the oppressed classes of certain ways and means in the struggle for the overthrow of the oppressors.

For example, the S. R.'s (Social-Revolutionaries) and Mensheviks in the 1917 revolution, when the question of the function and significance of the state arose in all its magnitude, as a practical question requiring immediate action and furthermore, action on a mass scale—all accepted, suddenly and completely, the petit bourgeois theory of the "conciliation" of the classes by the "state." Countless resolutions and articles by the politicians of these two parties are permeated absolutely with this philistine, petit bourgeois doctrine of "conciliation." The fact that the state is the organ of the rule of a certain class, which cannot be reconciled with its opposite (the class opposed to it), is altogether beyond the comprehension of the petit bourgeois democracy. Their relation to the state is one of the most striking indications that our S. R.'s and Mensheviks are not Socialists at all (we Bolsheviks have repeatedly pointed this out), but petit bourgeois democrats with an almost socialistic phraseology.

On the other hand, the Kautskian distortion of Marxism is even thinner. "Theoretically" it does not deny that the state is the organ of class rule, nor that class contradictions are irreconcilable. But it loses sight of, or obscures this fact: if the state is the product of the irreconcilability of class contradictions, if it is a power standing over society, and "more and more estranging itself from society," then it is clear that the liberation of the oppressed class is not possible unless there is not only a revolution by force, but also an annihilation of the mechanism of state power created by the ruling class, in which this "estrangement" is incorporated. This inference, which is theoretically clear enough to stand on its own bottom, was drawn by Marx with the utmost definiteness, on the basis of a concrete historical analysis of the tasks of revolution. And just this conclusion, as we shall clearly show in our further exposition, is forgotten and distorted by Kautsky.

(To be Continued)

Industrial Parliaments

The intensity of the industrial unrest in England is shown by the convening of an "Industrial Parliament" on February 27. This parliament, while its purpose was to allay the unrest, indicated that a real industrial crisis is on, of which the flaring up of great strikes is another indication.

This "Industrial Parliament," an adaptation of the "Industrial Councils" idea decided upon by the British government about two years ago, was composed of 500 delegates of organized labor and 300 delegates of the employers. The parliament decided upon motion of Arthur Henderson, to elect a committee of sixty composed of 30 delegates each of labor and capital, to "inquire" into the causes of industrial unrest, the general conditions of industry, unemployment and measures for its prevention, and methods for co-operation between labor and capital. The committee will report to another session of the "Industrial Parliament" on April 5.

The sessions of the parliament indicated that the official trades unions officials and the employers are each eager for "industrial peace," each are in dread of a proletarian revolution. The union delegates were very moderate, John Robert Clynes warning labor not "to demand too much in too brief a space of time." But Arthur S. Draper, in a cable to the New York Tribune, said: "The labor leaders are much more moderate than the workers and are rather doubtful of their ability to hold them in check."

The trades union officials at the parliament insisted upon the state ownership of mines, railways and mercantile transportation. But these demands are repudiated by larger minority of the workers, who are insisting upon industrial self-

government, the Soviet administration of industry. The parliament is accepted by the union officials, but is being repudiated by large groups of the workers, who want no conciliation with capital. A delegate of the Transport Workers' Federation bitterly attacked the resolution for an investigating commission declaring: "The conference has been called for the purpose of side-tracking all the efforts of the men and women workers to improve themselves."

The parliament was a temporary victory for the union officials and the employers—for the union officials, in that it maintained their prestige; for the employers, in that they have secured a respite from large strikes, particularly in the case of the miners. The most serious problem of the British government is to maintain the apathy of the reactionary union officials; the revolt against these misleaders is assuming formidable proportions, they have been repudiated in strike after strike, the workers turning to mass action and they are becoming the bulwark of capital against proletarian revolution.

FORTY THOUSAND MINERS ON STRIKE

LONDON, March 19.—While awaiting the report of the special parliamentary committee on its investigation of the mining situation, forty thousand coal miners in Nottinghamshire have gone on strike, it was announced today.

The walkout was unexpected, as the miners' officials had dropped the strike, recently voted by an overwhelming majority, until March 20, so that the committee's report, scheduled to be presented tomorrow, could be debated.