

12. Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, 108-9.
13. Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, 15-16.
14. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1961), 2-3.
15. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 37.
16. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 46.
17. Szymanski, "The Revolutionary Uses of Freudian Theory," 32.
18. Szymanski, "The Revolutionary Uses of Freudian Theory," 30.
19. Szymanski, "The Revolutionary Uses of Freudian Theory," 30.
20. Szymanski, "The Revolutionary Uses of Freudian Theory," 36.
21. Szymanski, "The Revolutionary Uses of Freudian Theory," 36.
22. Szymanski, "The Revolutionary Uses of Freudian Theory," 36.
23. Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey (New York: Norton), 168.
24. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, 72.
25. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, 72-73.
26. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, 88-89.

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Gramsci and Lenin on Ideology, the State, and Revolution

While the classical elite theorists Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, and Robert Michels held the masses in contempt and sided with the ruling classes as the engines of social development, V. I. Lenin (1870-1924) and Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), like Karl Marx and Frederick Engels before them, threw in their lot with the laboring masses and saw the working class as the leading revolutionary force to transform capitalist society. This chapter takes a brief look at the central arguments of Gramsci and Lenin on the nature and role of the state and ideological hegemony and explores the underlying class contradictions of capitalist society, which, they argued, would lead to its revolutionary transformation.

CLASS STRUGGLE AND THE STATE

Outlined in its clearest and most concise form in his classic work *The State and Revolution*, Lenin explains that in all class societies, the *class essence* of the state's rule over society is rooted in domination and exploitation by a propertied ruling class of the propertyless oppressed class.

In our epoch, writes Lenin, "every state in which private ownership of the land and means of production exists, in which capital dominates, however democratic it may be, is a capitalist state, a machine used by the capitalists to keep the working class and the poor peasants in subjection."¹

Democracy in capitalist society, Lenin points out, is always bound by "the narrow limits set by capitalist exploitation, and consequently always remains, in effect, a democracy for the minority, only for the propertied classes, only for the rich."²

Freedom in capitalist society always remains about the same as it was in the ancient Greek republics: freedom for the slave-owners. Owing to the conditions of capitalist exploitation, the modern wage slaves are so crushed by want and poverty that "they cannot be bothered with democracy," "cannot be bothered with politics"; in the ordinary, peaceful course of events, the majority of the population is debarred from participation in public and political life. . . .

Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich—that is the democracy of capitalist society. . . .

Marx grasped this *essence* of capitalist democracy splendidly when, in analyzing the experience of the Commune, he said that the oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class shall represent and repress them in parliament!³

"People always have been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics," Lenin continues elsewhere, "and they always will be until they have learnt to seek out the *interests* of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises."⁴

In class society, Lenin points out, the state has always been "an organ or instrument of violence exercised by one class against another."⁵ And in capitalist society, this violence is exercised by the capitalist class against the working class. In an important passage in *The State and Revolution*, Lenin stresses that the state in capitalist society is not only the political organ of the capitalist class; it is structured in such a way that it guarantees the class rule of the capitalists and, short of a revolutionary rupture, its entrenched power is practically unshakable:

A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism, and, therefore, once capital has gained possession of this very best shell . . . it establishes its power so securely, so firmly, that no change of persons, institutions or parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic can shake it.⁶

The question remains: With the obvious contradictions and conflicts between labor and capital, and with the ever-more-visible unity of capital and the state, how is capital able to convince broad segments of the laboring masses of the legitimacy of its class rule and the rule of the capitalist state over society?

IDEOLOGICAL HEGEMONY

In explaining the process by which the capitalist class disseminates its ideology through control of the state and its dominance over society, Gramsci draws attention to the ideological apparatuses of the capitalist state and introduces the concept of bourgeois cultural and ideological *hegemony*.⁷ He stresses that it is not enough for the capitalist class simply to

take control of the state machine and rule society directly through force and coercion; it must also convince the oppressed classes of the legitimacy of its rule: "The state is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules."⁸ Through its dominance of the superstructural organs of the state, the ruling class controls and shapes the ideas, hence consciousness, of the masses. Thus,

Hegemony involves the successful attempts of the dominant class to use its political, moral, and intellectual leadership to establish its view of the world as all-inclusive and universal, and to shape the interests and needs of subordinate groups.⁹

With the acceptance of its ideas and the legitimization of its rule, the capitalist class is able to exercise control and domination of society through its ideological hegemony at the level of the superstructure, with the aid and instrumentality of the state. Gramsci, writes Martin Carnoy, "assigned to the State part of this function of promoting a single (bourgeois) concept of reality, and, therefore, gave the State a more extensive (enlarged) role in perpetuating class,"¹⁰ hence preventing the development of working-class consciousness. As such,

it was not merely lack of understanding of their position in the economic process that kept workers from comprehending their class role, nor was it only the "private" institutions of society, such as religion, that were responsible for keeping the working class from self-realization, but it was the *State itself* that was involved in reproducing the relations of production. In other words, the State was much more than the coercive apparatus of the bourgeoisie; the State included the hegemony of the bourgeoisie in the superstructure.¹¹

Although the dialectics of the accumulation process, which involves first and foremost the exploitation of labor, ultimately results in class struggle, civil war, and revolution to seize state power, the ideological hegemony of the ruling class, operating through the state itself, prolongs bourgeois class rule and institutionalizes and legitimizes exploitation.¹² Gramsci argues that "the system's real strength does not lie in the violence of the ruling class or the coercive power of its state apparatus, but in the acceptance by the ruled of a 'conception of the world' which belongs to the rulers."¹² "False consciousness," or the lack of working-class consciousness and the adoption of bourgeois ideas by the laboring masses, Gramsci argues, is the result of a complex process of bourgeois ideological hegemony that, operating through the superstructural (i.e., cultural, ideological, religious, and political) institutions of capitalist society, above all the bourgeois state, has come to obtain the consent of the masses in convincing them of the correctness and superiority of the bourgeois worldview.

In his doctrine of "hegemony," Gramsci saw that the dominant class did not have to rely solely on the coercive power of the State or even its direct economic power to rule; rather, through its hegemony, expressed in the civil society *and* the State, the ruled could be persuaded to accept the system of beliefs of the ruling class and to share its social, cultural, and moral values.¹³

"The philosophy of the ruling class," writes Giuseppe Fiori, "passes through a whole tissue of complex vulgarizations to emerge as 'common sense': that is, the philosophy of the masses, who accept the morality, the customs, the institutionalized behavior of the society they live in."¹⁴ "The problem for Gramsci then," Fiori continues, "is to understand *how* the ruling class has managed to win the consent of the subordinate classes in this way; and then, to see how the latter will manage to overthrow the old order and bring about a new one of universal freedom."¹⁵

The increasing awareness of the working class of this process, hence the development of working-class consciousness, stresses Gramsci, helps expand the emerging class struggle from the economic and social spheres into the sphere of politics and ideology, so the struggle against the capitalist ideology promoted by the bourgeois state and other ruling-class institutions becomes just as important, perhaps more so, as the struggle against capital develops and matures in other spheres of society. Countering the ideological hegemony of the capitalist class through the active participation of workers in their own collective organizations, the class-conscious organs of workers' power—militant trade unions, workers' political parties, and so forth—come to play a decisive role in gaining the political support of the laboring masses. In turn, through their newly gained awareness of their own class interests, the workers transcend the bounds of bourgeois ideological hegemony and develop their own counter (proletarian) political outlook, a process that accelerates with the further development of a proletarian class consciousness. Thus, as the struggle against the state becomes an important part of the class struggle in general, the struggle against capitalism takes on a truly political and ideological content.

Gramsci's contribution to the Marxist theory of the state and of bourgeois ideological hegemony, then, both affirms and extends the analyses of the Marxist classics and advances our understanding of the processes of ruling-class domination and hegemony and the responses needed for the revolutionary transformation of capitalist society.

THE STATE AND REVOLUTION

Writing in August 1917, on the eve of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia, Lenin points out both the class nature of the state and, more important, the necessity of its revolutionary overthrow:

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If the state is the product of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms, if it is a power standing *above* society and "*alienating* itself *more and more* from it," it is clear that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution, *but also without the destruction* of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class and which is the embodiment of this "alienation."¹⁶

Thus, for Lenin the transformation of capitalist society involves a revolutionary process in which a class-conscious working class, led by a disciplined workers' party, comes to adopt a radical solution to its continued exploitation and oppression under the yoke of capital and exerts its organized political force in a revolutionary rupture to take state power.

The victory of the working class in this struggle for power and control over society leads to the establishment of a socialist workers' state. The socialist state constitutes a new kind of state ruled by the working class and the laboring masses. The cornerstone of a workers' state, emerging out of capitalism, is the abolition of private property in the major means of production and an end to the exploitation of labor for private profit.

The establishment of a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat (as against the dictatorship of capital) distinguishes the socialist state from its capitalist counterpart. As the class essence of the state lies at the heart of an analysis of the nature and role of the state in different epochs throughout history, the class nature of the socialist state gives us clues to the nature and role of the state in a socialist society developing toward communism. For, as Marx points out in *Critique of the Gotha Program*, the dictatorship of the proletariat (i.e., the class rule of the working class) is a transitional phase between capitalism and communism:

Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*.¹⁷

During this period, the state represents and defends the interests of the working class against capital and all other vestiges of reactionary exploitative classes, which, overthrown and dislodged from power, attempt in a multitude of ways to recapture the state through a counterrevolution.

"The theory of the class struggle, applied by Marx to the question of the state and the socialist revolution," writes Lenin,

leads as a matter of course to the recognition of the *political rule* of the proletariat, of its dictatorship, i.e., of undivided power directly backed by the armed force of the people. The overthrow of the bourgeoisie can be achieved only by the proletariat becoming the *ruling class*, capable of crushing the inevitable and desperate resistance of the bourgeoisie, and of organizing *all* the working and exploited people for the new economic system.¹⁸

In this context, then, the proletarian state has a dual role to play: (1) to break the resistance of its class enemies (the exploiting classes), and (2) to protect the revolution and begin the process of socialist construction.

THE WITHERING AWAY OF THE STATE

The class character of the new state under the dictatorship of the proletariat takes on a new form and content, according to Lenin: "During this period the state must inevitably be a state that is democratic *in a new way* (for the proletariat and the propertyless in general) and dictatorial *in a new way* (against the bourgeoisie)."¹⁹ Thus,

simultaneously with an immense expansion of democracy, which *for the first time* becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the money-bags, the dictatorship of the proletariat imposes a series of restrictions on the freedom of the oppressors, the exploiters, the capitalists.²⁰

Used primarily to suppress these forces and build the material base of a classless, egalitarian society, the socialist state begins to wither away. Once there is no longer any need for it. As Engels points out,

The first act in which the state really comes forward as the representative of society as a whole—the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society—is at the same time its last independent act as a state. The interference of the state power in social relations becomes superfluous in one sphere after another, and then ceases of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the processes of production. The state is not "abolished," *it withers away*.²¹

In this sense, the state no longer exists in the fully matured communist stage, for there is no longer the need in a classless society for an institution that is, by definition, an instrument of class rule through force and violence. Lenin writes,

Only in communist society, when the resistance of the capitalists has been completely crushed, when the capitalists have disappeared, when there are no classes (i.e., when there is no distinction between the members of society as regards their relation to the social means of production), *only* then "the state ceases to exist" and "*it becomes possible to speak of freedom*." Only then will a truly complete democracy become possible and be realized, a democracy without any exceptions whatever.²²

It is in this broader, transitional context that the class nature and tasks of the state in socialist society must be understood and evaluated, according to Lenin.

Thus, Lenin characterizes the period of transition to communist society as exhibiting an infinitely higher form of democracy than that found in capitalist society, for democracy under socialism, he argues, is democracy for the masses, democracy for the great majority of the laboring population working together to build an egalitarian, classless society.

NOTES

1. V. I. Lenin, *The State, in On Historical Materialism*, by Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, and V. I. Lenin (New York: International Publishers, 1974), 641.
2. V. I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution, in Selected Works in Three Volumes*, by V. I. Lenin (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), 2:301.
3. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, 2:301-2.
4. V. I. Lenin, "The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism," in *Selected Works in One Volume* by V. I. Lenin (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 24.
5. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, 2:374.
6. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, 2:247.
7. By "hegemony," Gramsci meant the ideological predominance of the dominant ruling class(es) over the subordinate. At the same time, and in response to this, he introduced the concept of counterhegemony, which occurs when the proletariat, with the aid of "organic" intellectuals, exerts hegemony and exercises its superiority over society through the establishment of a proletarian socialist state.
8. Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 244.
9. Martin Carnoy, *The State and Political Theory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 70.
10. Carnoy, *The State and Political Theory*, 66.
11. Carnoy, *The State and Political Theory*, 66; emphasis in the original.
12. Giuseppe Fiori, *Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary* (London: New Left Books, 1970), 238.
13. Carnoy, *The State and Political Theory*, 87.
14. Fiori, *Antonio Gramsci*, 238.
15. Fiori, *Antonio Gramsci*, 238.
16. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, 242; emphasis in the original.
17. Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme, in Selected Works*, by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (New York: International Publishers, 1972), 331; emphasis in the original. For an extended discussion of the concept of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," see Etienne Balibar, *On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (London: New Left Books, 1977).
18. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, 255; emphasis in the original.
19. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, 262; emphasis in the original.
20. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, 302; emphasis in the original.
21. Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 307.
22. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, 302-3; emphasis in the original.