

MARXISM

an introductory course

in five parts

**The State
and
Democracy**

Threepence

READING:

Lenin and Stalin on the State

(in "Little Lenin Library")

Lenin : State and Revolution

(in "Little Lenin Library",
also in Selected Works,
vol. 7, and in The Essentials
of Lenin, vol. 2).

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THE STATE AND DEMOCRACY

Lesson I

WHAT IS THE STATE?

The word "State" is used to describe the government, parliament, the armed forces, the police, and everything under central and local government control, like government departments, the post office, and now nationalised industries, and even the medical service. The State is usually thought of as something "impartial" that works in the "common interest" on the instructions of parliament and the government of the day.

In order, however, to understand the real nature of the State, we must examine it as it developed in history: how and in whose interests it arose, and how it grew into the immense machine that it is today.

1. The Class Origin of the State

In the earliest stage of human society, Primitive Communism, there was no division of the people into classes; and because society as a whole had common aims and interests, its affairs could be arranged by

custom and the authority of the tribal elders. Members of the tribe acted together against anyone who violated tribal customs, or against external enemies. There was therefore no need for any special "State," separate from the people as a whole, responsible for keeping order or defence.

Gradually, however, private property developed, and society became divided into *classes* with conflicting interests—the property owners, interested in making slaves work for them, and the slaves, wanting freedom from exploitation. In order to keep the slave system going, it was necessary for the property-owning class to set up special bodies of armed men to keep "order," that is, to put down any attempt by the slaves to revolt, to punish slaves who tried to escape, and so on. These special bodies of armed men were the first form of State, and similar bodies have remained the permanent and essential form of the State all through history, with the same purpose of maintaining the rule of the property-owning class, whether in the slave period, in the feudal period, or the capitalist period.

Engels, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, says that the State has two characteristics: (1) the grouping of the subjects on a territorial basis; (2) the establishment of a *public force*, separate from the people, "because a self-acting armed organisation of the population has become impossible since the cleavage of society into classes.

This public force exists in every State, it consists, not merely of armed men, but of material appendages, prisons and repressive institutions of all kinds, of which gentilic (tribal) society knew nothing."

In order to maintain this public force, the ruling class has to raise finance; and in order to maintain the system of production, the ruling class also develops other public activities (such as the ancient systems of irrigation), which grow more and more complicated as society develops, so that alongside the armed forces a "civil service" grows up as a part of the State machine.

Nevertheless, in spite of the change of economic systems, and the different forms of the class struggle at different periods, the State has served the same ultimate purpose: to maintain the existing system of society, to impose the "order" of the ruling class on the rest of the people. The capitalist State safeguards the property, privileges and exploitation through which the ruling class lives. The Socialist State safeguards the Socialist system of society against its enemies.

2. What Is Class Power ?

Engels shows that the State is "the State of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which by virtue thereof becomes the dominant class politically, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class." That is

to say, the property-owning class, the class which lives on the labour of others, uses the State as a *political* weapon against the people, making it easier to use the *economic* power which it has already.

Thus from the beginning of class divisions and the establishment of a "public force," the ruling class has used *armed power* to crush revolts of the oppressed class, to kill or imprison their leaders, and to intimidate the oppressed class when it makes demands for better conditions. Even in the most "democratic" country, this armed power controlled by the ruling class remains the final weapon whereby the ruling class maintains its economic power.

With the development of the "civil service" alongside the armed forces, it, too, is controlled by the ruling class, so that it also becomes an instrument for maintaining the existing system of exploitation. For example, where the State takes over the educational system, it uses it to train the children of the ruling class as the *master* class and the children of the working-class as *servants*, trained to do the work required and with a proper respect for their "betters." The Board of Trade is primarily designed to serve the interests of the capitalist class against the workers and also against foreign rivals. The purpose of the Foreign Office is to work out a foreign policy which will further the interests of the capitalists against their rivals in other countries—or, nowadays, against the working class in other countries. The same is

true, in more or less obvious ways, of every part of the State machine—but especially of the armed forces, the police, prisons, law courts, “secret” service, the *essential* purpose of which is to maintain the existing system.

How does the ruling class keep control of the State machine? From a formal, constitutional standpoint the State machine used to be directly subordinate to the king—the embodiment of the ruling class. With the growth of parliamentary systems, in the capitalist period, the monarchy is either abolished or becomes “constitutional,” and the armed forces and civil service are “constitutionally” subordinate to the government of the day and indirectly to parliament. Nevertheless, *in practice*, the control remains in the hands of the ruling class through the class composition, selection, training and promotion of the heads of the armed forces, police, judiciary, etc., as well as of the Civil Service Departments. *Parliament can propose, but the heads of department and of the forces dispose.*

In Britain, for example, there was the so-called Curragh incident in 1914, when a group of officers mutinied against orders to stop a Tory-organised armed revolt against home rule for Ireland. The Liberal Government of the day gave way, and the Home Rule Act was not operated. In Spain in 1936, there was the Franco rebellion of the army, in support of the landowners and big capitalists, against the People's Front Government and parliamentary

majority. But this defence of ruling class interests by the State against parliament and the people does not only take place in the form of armed mutiny of the forces. It is going on all the time in more or less concealed forms, through the "high-ups" in all departments in all capitalist countries, irrespective of the parliamentary situation.

3. What is Democracy in a Capitalist Country ?

In the "bourgeois democratic State"—the capitalist State, whether republic or monarchy, in which there are democratic rights and institutions—the armed forces and bureaucratic machine, controlled by the capitalist class, exist alongside a parliament in which political parties, representing different classes or sections of classes, have a place determined by the electorate's votes. For a long period the *political composition* of Parliament corresponds with the "economically dominant" class—to begin with the landowners, at a later stage the industrial capitalists, have a substantial majority. There is therefore no conflict between parliament and the State; and the conception grows up that the State is an impartial servant of parliament, because the aims of both are identical. However, with the growth of the working class and its industrial and political organisations, it struggles for democratic rights for itself. It wins the right to organise, to hold meetings, publish papers, etc., and to contest elections with its own candidates.

When it wins a majority, parliament and State no longer represent the same class interests. We shall understand the importance of this if we look at what actually happened in Britain at the time of the Bourgeois Revolution.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON I

(a) *What arguments do non-Marxists use to try to show that the State is "impartial" and not the instrument of the ruling class?*

(b) *What examples can you give to show how the capitalist class in Britain today "uses the State as a political weapon against the people, making it easier to use the economic power which it has already"?*

(c) *Since, as has been said, "Parliament can propose, but the Heads of Departments and of the Forces dispose," why is it of such great value to the working class to be represented in Parliament?*

Lesson II

CAPITALIST DEMOCRACY

I. How the Capitalist Class Took Power

Within the feudal system, capitalist production (exploitation of wage labour, as distinct from the feudal obligations of the serf to work for his lord, or to give him a part of his produce and later money rent) gradually developed. But the State was feudal, in its final form the "absolute monarchy"; that is to say, the king, claiming to govern by divine right, himself appointed the principal officers of Church and State, levied taxes, and controlled the judges, for the purpose of maintaining the feudal exploitation of the people by the big landowners, including himself.

The rising capitalist class, with capitalist land-owning farmers and some sections of merchants, had meanwhile secured representation as the Commons in parliament, and tried to break down the feudal dues and restrictions on manufacture and trade, and to restrain the constantly increasing taxation imposed by the king; it came particularly into conflict with the

new courts (such as the Star Chamber), through which the king tried to break opposition to taxation. But the king continued to use the State machine against the Commons, and finally in 1640 the Commons, led by Cromwell, organised an armed revolt against the king's State forces.

The revolutionary army, acting in the interests of the rising capitalist class against the feudal State, was largely composed of artisans and yeoman farmers. It succeeded in defeating the armed forces of the feudal State, executed Charles I, and established a dictatorship under Oliver Cromwell. Having destroyed the feudal State, the rising capitalist class then turned against the working people who had helped it to win power, and who were now putting forward demands for democratic rights which would have threatened the property rights of the capitalists in whose interests the revolution had really been carried out. Cromwell therefore used the new State, the armed forces which he had built up to serve the capitalist class, to defeat and disarm the "Levellers"; and afterwards the capitalists made a compromise with the feudal class which they had defeated, in order to maintain their power. One result of this was the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, but on a "constitutional" basis; the power of the capitalist class over the monarchy being established in the second "revolution" of 1688. The armed forces set up by the capitalists were able to defeat all attempts to restore

the Stuart monarchy. Through their influence in parliament and the government, the capitalists were able to modify the State still further in their own interests, gradually filling the key positions with members of their own class. But because a compromise had been made with the old feudal nobility, and because there was a gradual merging of the two sections of the capitalist class, the capitalist landowners and the industrial capitalists, the change in the State was slow, with the landowning and merchant class still having considerable influence, until the Reform Act of 1832 laid the basis for more thoroughgoing control of the State by the industrial capitalists.

2. The Development of the Capitalist State

Until then, State power remained largely in the hands of a small and extremely rich class, deriving their wealth from land ownership and commerce, who were able to dominate parliament as a result of the high property qualification for the vote, as well as through bribery and corruption. Nevertheless, the revolution had broken down feudal restrictions on the capitalist mode of production, and had thus made possible the further growth of capitalism. The technical advances that took place, both in agriculture and industry, in the eighteenth century not only speeded this growth, but gave growing importance to the industrial capitalists and brought into existence the modern working class.

Although the Reform Act of 1832 shifted the balance between the landowning and the industrial capitalist class in parliament, the State remained the State of the exploiters against the exploited. Thus the Combination Acts from 1799 to 1824 prohibited trade unions; the armed forces were in constant use against strikes, against the Luddites (displaced artisans who tried to stop capitalist exploitation by wrecking machinery), against political demonstrations for the repeal of the Combination Acts and Corn Laws (the Peterloo massacre of 1819, when yeomanry charged into a demonstration at St. Peter's Fields, Manchester, killing 11 and wounding 400 with their sabres); against the agricultural workers' revolt of 1830, following which nine men were hanged and 450 transported. After the Reform Act the State machine of the industrial capitalists was used against the trade unions (the Dorchester Labourers' case, 1834), against the Chartists, 1839-48; while at the same time, the armed forces were being used abroad to force open markets for capitalism—against Indians, Chinese, etc. In spite of the gains won by the working class—the extension of the franchise, the right to organisation, etc.—the class composition and use of the repressive State machine against the working class remained in essence unchanged, as we can see from the use of the armed forces against strikers at Featherstone, Tonypandy, in the General Strike of 1926, and in many other industrial disputes, as well as the police

actions in connection with strikes, unemployed marches and working-class political demonstrations.

At the same time, the more complicated needs of a capitalist society led to a great expansion of the State. In its *repressive* forms, in the 1830s an organised police force was established in London, and gradually extended to the provinces; the Army and Navy grew in size, regular training of officers took the place of the sale of commissions; prisons were extended. The State in its *administrative* forms also grew enormously, to carry out services for the capitalist class which individual capitalists could not do for themselves. Thus alongside the older State Departments—such as the Admiralty, War Office, Treasury, Foreign Office, Home Office, Board of Trade—there developed Departments for Education, Health, Labour, Colonies (1854—previously handled by the War Office), etc. Each development gave the capitalist class a new instrument for defending or extending its privileges and organised exploitation of the people (or of colonial peoples). Simultaneously, the manning of important posts in all these departments by trusted representatives of the capitalists was more thoroughly organised, through methods of selection based on competitive examinations under the control of the Treasury. Since the growth of the “public schools” and universities secured a practical monopoly of higher education by the ruling class, it was assured the dominating positions not only in the

Civil Service, but in the judiciary, the Church, the teaching profession, etc.

The extension of the State machine was accompanied by the growth of "local" government, for a long time representing only the ruling class, and, as working-class influence grew, it was more and more firmly controlled by the central State machine.

4. The Two-Sided Nature of Capitalist Democracy

It should be noted that during last century, when British industry developed rapidly and had the monopoly of the world market, the capitalists were able to make concessions to the skilled workers, and to develop methods of "peaceful" adjustment of class issues, both economic and political. Because of the expanding prosperity for the capitalists in this period, and also because of the strength of the working-class organisations, the capitalists developed the parliamentary democratic system, gradually extending the vote to wider sections of workers. This was a positive gain for the working class, but it also gave the capitalists the means whereby it could extend its hold over the workers by peaceful, democratic means—influencing the workers by education, the Church, Press and election promises. The growth of an independent party of the working class was thus delayed, as a section of the workers found that they could secure improved conditions by supporting the Liberals, who developed a system of corrupting the

leaders by giving them unimportant government and official positions where they carried out capitalist policy. This period created among the Labour leaders and the relatively better-paid sections of the workers the illusion that the capitalist State was being transformed, with the consent of the capitalists, into something that served the interests of the whole people. The economic concessions made to sections of the workers, together with this political illusion, provided the "reformist" outlook of the Labour leaders.

In the present century, there are two features of the growth of the capitalist State machine which are of special interest. The first is the enormous expansion of the armed forces and police, as an offset to the growth of working-class organisation, as well as for the conquest and control of colonies, and for war against rival imperialists. The second is the development of the handling of relations between the capitalists and the workers by "peaceful" means—such as the Ministry of Labour's intervention in disputes, with "conciliation" and "arbitration"; the organised deception of the "cost-of-living index"; the continuous influence of the capitalist-controlled system of education on the minds of the workers; more recently, the B.B.C.

Thus in a capitalist democracy the leading positions in the State are manned by representatives of the capitalist class (and when the imperialist stage of monopoly comes, by representatives of the big mono-

poly capitalists). The State serves the property-owning class as a means of maintaining its power and privilege, its right to exploit the people, by *fraud* as long as possible, and when this fails, by *force*.

Nevertheless, the democratic institutions set up by the capitalist class in order to fight against the feudal landowning class and its monarchy, and subsequently to organise the development of capitalism, gave possibilities to the working class also, which the oppressed class did not have under previous systems. Just as the capitalist class had to fight the feudal class State for democratic rights for itself, so the working class in every country had to fight the capitalist class State to win democratic rights; this struggle is dealt with in the next Lesson. Lenin stresses that:

“The proletariat will be unable to prepare for victory over the bourgeoisie unless it wages a *many-sided, consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy.*” (*Selected Works*, vol. V, p. 268.)

That is why the working class always fights against every measure that restricts its democratic rights, even under a capitalist State. And that is why the working class fights particularly against the complete abolition of democracy in a capitalist State and the setting up of a capitalist fascist State. The capitalist class took this action in several countries where it feared that the growing strength of working-class organisation, industrial and political, was becoming dangerous to it. It was able to do this, in spite of

the strength of the working-class movement, because the movement was divided, and particularly because the Social Democrats refused united action with the Communists. This enabled the reactionary monopoly capitalists to set up an open terrorist dictatorship.

In some of the less developed countries—for example, Hungary, Greece, Poland—the capitalists used for this purpose the existing State machine, purging it of all Liberal elements and using it for the direct destruction of working-class organisations and murder or imprisonment of working-class leaders. In countries like Italy and Germany, where the working-class movement was strong and the State machine was not altogether reliable from the reactionary standpoint, special armed fascist organisations were set up by the capitalists, which at first acted independently of the State but later replaced it for the direct repression of the workers.

The fascist form of the capitalist State—the open, terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary monopoly capitalists—broke up the working-class mass organisations, and the fascist dictatorships in Italy and Germany were in the end only destroyed by external force. The working class in the capitalist democracies fights for the maintenance of capitalist democracy as against fascism, because the former gives it the possibility of organisation and struggle against capitalist rule.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 2

(a) *In what ways did the interests of the two sections of the capitalist class, the landowners and the industrial capitalists, differ in the nineteenth century? And are there different sections of the capitalist class today, with different interests?*

(b) *Give examples of the way in which the capitalist class is using the capitalist State against the workers in Europe and America today?*

(c) *What special conditions in Germany and Italy led to the setting up of fascist States in those countries?*

Lesson III

THE WORKING CLASS AND DEMOCRACY

In all countries, the building up of the working-class organisations was inseparable from the struggle for democratic rights. In Britain, at first the workers had to fight for the right to trade union organisation against Combination Acts and laws against "conspiracy"; having won the right to organise, they have since had to fight to extend the rights of trade unions to strike, to picket, to use funds in support of strikers, etc.; and to use funds for political purposes. At times the workers are defeated, as in the General Strike of 1926, following which established rights are taken away, as by the Trade Union Act of 1927.

Similarly, there has been a continuous struggle for the parliamentary vote. The Chartist Movement (1836-48) fought for manhood suffrage, equal electoral districts, annual parliaments, payment of members and the secret ballot. It was defeated, and it was not until 1867 that the town workers won the right

to vote, and in 1884 the agricultural workers (in both cases with financial qualifications which severely restricted the right). It was not until 1918 that adult suffrage—without qualifications except residence—was won for men, and votes at 30 for women. Since then adult suffrage for men and women, for local as well as parliamentary elections, has been won; but “one man, one vote” is still not established in 1948.

But though these industrial and political advances have helped the workers to win still further democratic rights, they have not established the *rule of the working class*. The workers have won the right to organise in the factories, and strengthened their position through the development of shop stewards; but the great majority of the factories remain the property of the capitalists. The workers have won considerable rights to education; but it is the capitalist State that determines how they are educated. And when they have been taught to read, the capitalist class controls the contents of most newspapers and other publications, so that capitalist ideas are constantly being fed into their minds. These ideas penetrate the working-class organisations and weaken them as weapons for the struggle for a new order of society; while in spite of parliamentary victories the State machine is still manned by representatives of the capitalist class.

It is this general character of democracy in a capitalist society that must be contrasted with a

society in which the working class is really the ruling class, and has put an end to the economic, political and social privileges of the former ruling class, thus establishing a new and higher type of democracy.

1. The Working-class State

The working class first established itself as the ruling class in the Paris Commune of 1871, which held power for three months before it was defeated. Marx drew from its experience the conclusion that, in order to establish its power, the working class must break up the old capitalist State machine and build up a new working-class State. Measures of the Commune in this direction were: abolition of the standing army, arming the people; setting up police as representatives of the Commune (as strike pickets are agents of a strike committee); magistrates and judges were elected, and could be recalled; similarly with all officials.

Drawing on this experience, the Russian workers, led by the Communist Party under Lenin, seized power in November, 1917, and adopted similar measures, breaking up the old State machine and replacing it with the Red Guards and then the Red Army, under working-class leadership; a working-class militia, responsible to the Soviets; "people's judges," elected and responsible to the Soviets. As rapidly as possible, similar changes were made in control of the factories, railways, etc., and in all govern-

ment departments, the schools and universities; the Press and broadcasting were taken out of capitalist hands and controlled by representatives of the workers. Thus the State machine, which would otherwise have obstructed and fought against the change to Socialism, was transformed into a State machine that would carry out the change and suppress opposition from the former ruling class and attempts at intervention by the capitalists of other countries. Capitalist democracy was transformed into proletarian democracy, democracy for 90 per cent of the people, exercising the "dictatorship of the proletariat" against the 10 per cent minority who had formerly controlled the economic, political and social life of the country.

The working-class State, like the capitalist or the feudal or slave State, is an instrument of the class that holds power, and serves the purpose of maintaining and developing the economic and social interests of the working class against internal and external enemies. The internal enemies of a working-class State are the remnants of former classes—landowning and capitalist. When these classes no longer exist—when Socialism is fully established—the State is no longer necessary as an instrument of the working class for their suppression. The State "withers away"; "the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things." But, of course, so long as the working-class State is surrounded by capitalist States, the State must be maintained for defence, in-

cluding defence against capitalist sabotage, spies and propaganda, as well as against direct armed attack.

The working-class State is not only different in quality from the capitalist State, in that it serves the interests of the immense majority of the people instead of a minority; it also establishes a new type of democracy, reaching into every aspect of the life of society, and drawing into *active* participation more and more of the people. Thus there is not only the vote for both sexes at 18, for elections to the governing bodies, and the right to recall representatives who fail to carry out the wishes of the electors; the governing bodies are executive as well as legislative—people elected to Soviets play a direct part in administration, as well as deciding policy. In every industrial and commercial enterprise representatives of the workers participate in administration and in determining conditions; all the workers take part in discussing the plans of production and the results achieved. Committees of tenants run blocks of flats or estates—there are no landlords. All social benefits are administered by the trade unions. The basis of this extension of democracy into every sphere of life is the social ownership of the means of production; there are no classes with conflicting interests, and therefore all participate freely in every activity of society. The experience which the people gain in this self-government in every sphere is preparing them for the higher stage of Communism, when “government” is no longer

necessary, and "democracy" no longer has any meaning. Lenin says: "In Communist society democracy will gradually change and become a habit and finally *wither away*." (*The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, p. 25.)

Thus the working-class struggle for democratic rights within a capitalist democracy has to be fought against the capitalist State; when they break the capitalist State power they set up a working-class State, they win the battle for democracy. The working-class State, acting in the interests of the immense majority of the people, suppresses the former ruling class, depriving it of its *economic* basis, and ending the division of society into classes which made the State necessary. When this process is completed, and democracy is so complete that it has become a habit, the State and all democratic forms "wither away"; the people are concerned with the administration of things, the efficient running of social life.

2. People's Democracy

Until 1945 the working class had experience only of capitalist democracy, the capitalist class ruling by democratic forms which left its real power unchanged; and on the other hand the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union, the working class ruling by new, extended democratic forms, which at the same time was a dictatorship directed against the former ruling class. (Fascism was the dictatorship

of the capitalist class, without even democratic forms).

During the war the fascist conquest of other countries was accompanied by the creation of a new, fascist State in each country, largely identical with the State of the former ruling class and using their "quislings"; but in essence the State became in each case a State of the German capitalist rulers, in the same way as a colonial State is in essence the State of the imperialist rulers. When the German fascist State was destroyed by military defeat and the revolt of the subject peoples, the question arose: What form of State is to be set up to take its place in each country?

In the countries of East and South-East Europe the answer was found in "People's Democracy". In those countries during the struggle of the people, aided by the Soviet armies, the pro-fascists—the big capitalists, big landowners, high officials, and monarchist officers—were swept away, and new forces from among the people—representatives of the workers, peasants, and progressive intellectuals—took the leadership of the nation. With the backing of the mass of the people they set up a new type of State, the *People's Democracy*, where power is in the hands of the people, where large-scale industry, transport, and banks are owned by the State, and where the working people are the leading force. The building and consolidation of this new type of State was only

possible through struggle against the reactionary representatives and agents (including the Right-Wing Social Democrats) of the former possessing classes; and this struggle has to be continued against the exploiters (for example, the rich peasants) until the complete elimination of the exploiting class.

The degree to which the old State machine was destroyed, and the extent of the building up of a new State since the war, varies in each country. But it can be said that in all these countries new States have been established, largely manned by representatives of the working people; the State machine is helping, and not hindering, the reconstruction of these countries in a Socialist direction; its repressive power is used against the exploiting class, in the interests of the working people, and to safeguard the independence of the country from foreign capitalist interference.

The essence of these People's Democracies is that the State is in the hands of the working people, and that the working people are being drawn into all forms of democratic participation in the administration and conduct of economic and social, as well as political life.

On the other hand, in some of the countries liberated from fascism, the former ruling class, with the aid of the Western imperialist powers, has succeeded in preventing any fundamental change in the State; the defeat of fascism was not followed by

the building of a new State, but in the main, in spite of some purging, the State has been restored as the State of the landowners and capitalists. They are capitalist democracies—democratic forms concealing the fact that the capitalist class controls the economic, social and political life of the country, as in Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, etc. In these countries the working class has still to break the capitalist State and set up a People's Democratic State; while the capitalist class, aided by British and American imperialism, is turning again to fascist forms of holding back the working-class advance.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 3

(a) *Can you give examples of the way in which "capitalist ideas penetrate the working-class organisations and weaken them as weapons for the struggle for a new order of society"?*

(b) *Why is there no need for more than one political party in a Socialist democracy? And why are elections of such importance in the Soviet Union?*

(c) *How was the old capitalist State machine destroyed in the New Democracies, and what new forms of State power developed in the course of the Resistance Movement against fascism?*

Lesson IV

THE FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY IN BRITAIN

In Britain in the course of the war the extension of the State machine, which had been taking place through the whole period of imperialism, was very greatly increased. Two features of this extension were: (1) the bringing into the State machine of direct representatives of the monopoly capitalists, for the administration of various controls; (2) the formation of various committees, drawing in representatives from trade unions and co-operatives, to help in production, distribution, etc.

With the ending of the war, and the return of a Labour Government in the 1945 election, some of the controls were ended; but most of those that remained were left in the hands of the representatives of big business brought in during the war. When the Bank of England was nationalised, the former directors were kept in the key positions. The Boards of all the nationalised industries are mainly composed

of former owners. While some trade unionists were included in the Boards, the workers in the industries are given no share in the management. Demobilisation of the Forces meant in practice demobilisation of the temporary, non-professional officers, and retention of all key positions by the same ruling class representatives as before. This was also true of the police, the Civil Service, including the Diplomatic Service. (The "purge" of Communists and alleged sympathisers shows the determination to make sure that the State machine is kept "loyal" to the ruling class.) The "Secret Service," for which £2½ million was voted in 1948, continues as before; no questions may be asked in Parliament about its activities.

An article by C. H. Norman in the *Railway Review* of November 5, 1948, brings out the fact that 85 per cent or more of the following groups are Conservatives: Court officials surrounding the Royal Family, Lord Lieutenants, the Judges, Chief Constables and other Higher Police Officials, Ambassadors, Permanent Officials with salaries of over £1,200 a year at the Foreign Office, Home Office, Treasury, etc. Harry Pollitt says (*Looking Ahead*, p. 90-91):

"In Britain the capitalist control of the State is as yet substantially untouched. British economy is still overwhelmingly capitalist. The leaders of the armed services and the people have not been changed. The secret police and

military intelligence work increasingly to check the development of Left and progressive forces. The heads of the Civil Service are, mostly, the heads of the Civil Service before the war. Our ambassadors are still from Eton and Oxford.”

Therefore:

“To carry through our programme means that important changes in the State machinery will be necessary. It will be necessary to develop new forms of democracy from the factory upwards, a new democratic development of local government. It will be necessary to purge from the State machine at every stage those elements who are working against the interests of the Labour movement and the people.”

The Labour Government's view of the State is the social democratic view that the State is impartial, that it is a machine that carries out the orders of Parliament and the Government, that therefore it is necessary to keep in the key positions the men with experience, “the best men for the job,” irrespective of their class origin and outlook. This view contradicts the experience of history and all working-class experience.

The Marxist view of the State—that in capitalist society it is the instrument of the capitalist class for maintaining capitalism—embodies the experience of history and more recent working-class experience. It

draws from this experience the conclusion that no fundamental changes are possible in society without equally fundamental changes in the State.

The struggle for working-class democracy, for a policy which is really in the interests of the great majority of the people, is therefore inseparable from the struggle to change the State.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 4

(a) *Why is the argument that, if it is right to remove fascists and reactionaries from the State machine, it is also permissible to remove Communists, essentially an undemocratic one?*

(b) *How is the present Labour Government using the armed forces of the State against the interest of the working class?*

(c) *On what particular issue is your Branch of the Party leading the class struggle today? And in what sense is this "inseparable from the struggle to change the State"?*