



The State and Revolution

Vladimir Lenin

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No, democracy is not identical with the subordination of the minority to the majority. Democracy is a state which recognizes the subordination of the minority to the majority, i.e., an organization for the systematic use of violence by one class against the other, by one section of the population against another.

The State and Revolution Details

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From Reader Review The State and Revolution for online ebook

Elagabaal says

this was (perhaps unfortunately) the first work of marxist theory i ever read and as such has shaped a lot of my approach to basic political questions. to be fair, lenin provides an introduction to revolutionary theory and the theory of the state that is true enough to marx and engels and is very accessibly written. it covers some very important topics for people new to radical politics- the role of the state as an organ of class rule, the role of police and jails, and perhaps most critically the need for revolutionary transformation of society, for which there is no substitute.

but this book has also caused me a fair amount of confusion, mostly because of lenin's occasionally inconsistent use of the term "socialism"- in some places this book gives the impression (at least if you're new to marxism or a sloppy reader like me) that socialism as lenin sees it is the dictatorship of the proletariat, which leads to the conclusion that the DotP itself is the 'lower stage of communism'. an unhappy conclusion to be sure.

i think it's important to both remember the context this book was written in, and to not focus overly much on lenin as an individual and how this book does or does not validate whatever feelings about him you might have (be they positive or negative).

Lynn Beyrouthy says

The February Revolution of 1917 goaded the fall of the Romanov dynasty when tsar Nicholas II abdicated, and things started to look surprisingly auspicious for Vladimir Ilich Lenin and his Bolshevik party. However, the Provisional Government of Georgi Lvov, in the midst of the colossal military turmoil of World War I, wasn't particularly sympathetic of Lenin's anti-war stance. After his arrival in Petrograd (to be renamed after him Leningrad), Lenin was falsely accused of being a German agent and after the issuance of a warrant for his arrest, he was forced to flee to Sestroretsk then to Finland. That's where he wrote his vehement communist rant "The State and Revolution".

Continuously referring to Marx and Engels and commenting on famous passages extracted from their work, Lenin sought to deliver a pure and untainted account of Marxist thought, since he was enraged at the petty-bourgeois democrats like Kautsky, Plekhanov and Bernstein and he kept reiterating the need to "purge Marxism of its distortions" (glad he didn't live to see the brutality of Stalinism)

Beyond that, he elaborated on ideas of the state, social classes, The Paris Commune of 1871, the polemic with anarchists, democracy and most importantly, the 'withering away of the state' and the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'.

My notes go much further than that but I'll limit my review to titles and generalities.

Very interesting read for anyone interested in communism, political science and wanting to explore Lenin's ideas just before the October Revolution.

He ends his book saying that it's a much more fulfilling experience to carry out and live the proletarian revolution than to write about it.

Yogy TheBear says

State and Revolution Lenin Review:

The most dangerous lies start with fragments of truth and become full-fledged deceptions.

The first thing that struck and shocked me was the initial anti state stance on a correct notion of it as an evil and a monopoly of coercion that today it is found in libertarianism. But here is where the truth stops !!

What comes next is a text that resembles the interpretation and explanation of the Christian teachings with examples and quotations from The Bible, against another rival Christian teaching... Thus Lenin quotes Marx and Engels and interprets their actions and writings to suit him in his battle with the ones that also interpret Marx.

Now I admit that I know quite a lot about Marxism but not from the man himself, Marx; the amount of writing he has done is huge ! Who is right on what Marx meant is debatable even today. But as I will expand later, the important thing here is to have a calm and academic discussion of Marx, which Lenin does not have...

Lenin and Marxism speak as if they invented a new science as fix as mathematics.. They interpret history as physical observation and create models on which they make predictions.

In Marxism-Leninism all social elements and forces are absolute, classes of people are simple entities to describe and their goals are all held in common, groups and institutions act in an absolute and individual manner.

They really believe that their political theory is a science and they use history to gather proofs... Anyone who is familiar with Karl Popper will immediately notice that this makes Marxism a pseudo-science from the start !!

Lenin thinks of society in simple and organic terms. The classes are organic elements, the exploiters are the embodiment of all the evil of society, they can only act evil; the workers are the embodiment of all that is good in humanity but is suppressed... He denotes a total inability to grasp human nature. Good and evil are present in all people, the class antagonism he speaks about is also found among the members of a class. Thus he believes that the proletarian state built by the workers will not be as evil as the capitalist state because the workers can not be evil... I call this blind faith...

Power corrupts, the proletarian state was bound to be corrupted, his plan of a new society was not based on any moral principles, actually I could even say it was based on revenge and hatred. Thus the greatest counter argument of him is the countless examples from the history of the 20th century which caused only death and misery... But yet Marxists are selective in their gathering of evidence from history...

They always believe that they can do better...

Also we see here the naïve idea that the economic life of society can be collectively organized so as to be more just and efficient than the capitalistic method of production... This view was common in his time in all socialist groups but today history and the experience of his legacy proved him wrong, and the theoretical debunking of it has been done by Mises. Maybe Russia was different, but in the rest of Europe there was already quite the social mobility already, workers everywhere were doing better.

To say that the poorer were getting more poor is stupid, sure the richer were also getting more rich but not on the back of the poor classes. What actually happened is the growth of the middle class.

Lenin's internal pillars of Marxism are his belief that his interpretation of Marx and Engels is 100% right, he never misses the occasion to point out that "out of 100 people if one truly understands what Marx meant here"... that person being him... His second belief is that Marx and Engels are always right...

Noam Chomsky in a YT video I saw explained that in the history of the development of political and economic theory, those who studied a great author pondered on his arguments, took what was right,

ignored what was wrong, Adam Smith is not worshiped today by liberals and no author is ! No liberal will dare to say that Adam was 100% right in all or any author !!

For Lenin Marx is the ultimate truth, nothing can be added, Marxism is a complete science/religion, and he his the prophet of that Truth..... Now that is not only un scientific but also irrational for a person who claims is driven by logic !!

I also realized the impact Leninism and the victory of the Bolsheviks and Leninism had on the development of the Marxist theory. Lenin has harsh words for those who interpret Marx in a different way or those who question some aspects of it... I actually liked more the quotes of the opportunist of which I will talk immediately. Lenin and his interpretation were not mainstream, but because he won power mainstream Marxism of those days became Marxism-leninism...

So about those opportunists as Lenin describes them... What Lenin imputes them is actually their questioning of Marx and some of the aspects of his theory. Marxists in Germany and not only actually started to get in power, they were confronted with reality of politics and the wishes of the masses. The mythical evil state of Lenin actually permitted them to improve the life of workers and workers had other things in mind, the question of the need of revolution was raised, is a revolution necessary anymore, can we not work with the state and through it? They became social democrats as Lenin told us ! And maybe if Lenin did not take power Marxism would have changed as all theories do and Marxism would have withered away..... !!

PS: The one star I gave it is just for the cool title !

Paul ataua says

‘The State and Revolution’ is a standout read in which Lenin, confronting a revolution that came too much before advanced capitalism had developed, found himself between a part of the left ready to hand back power to the capitalists in return for concessions, and the anarchists ready to take the fight to the next level without a clear plan. Armed with the theories of Marx and Engels and the lessons gleaned from the 1848 revolutions and the Paris Commune of 1871, Lenin fashioned a dictatorship of the proletariat that would take over the state apparatus and that state would eventually engender its own withering away and welcome the arrival of pure communism. The fact that it didn’t work is beside the point. This is not a place for communist versus anti-communist assessments. It was an important attempt to effect a social revolution on a scale never seen before or since, and all of us who dream of creating a better world should learn from it. Maybe for the program to be a success it needed the people to be ready for that change. Maybe some of the answer lies in the need to begin by working on a real social revolution before considering the political change to back it. Good for an understanding of the political positions prior to the second revolution and well worth the time spent reading it.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

Estado Y Revolución = The State and Revolution, Vladimir Lenin

The State and Revolution (1917), by Vladimir Lenin, describes the role of the State in society, the necessity of proletarian revolution, and the theoretic inadequacies of social democracy in achieving revolution to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

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Michael says

This is the famous book in which Lenin asserted (quoting Engels) that “the state will wither away” under Communism, and which is therefore sometimes oddly accused of being “utopian” and “anarchist.” It is neither of these, but it does require some work to parse out.

Historically, this essay was written at the moment when Lenin was in exile in Switzerland, after the February, 1917 revolution and before the October revolution which ended with him and his party in power. One would think that his mind would be on Russia at a time like this, on its possibilities and how it should be handled. There is little evidence of that here. What seems to have preoccupied him at this particular moment is how he could defeat Karl Kautsky, the leading Social Democrat in Germany, in a debate regarding the correct interpretation of Marxist theory. I’d be tempted to interpret that as an attempt to distract himself during a period of depression, but I suspect that it’s not that simple. I suspect that Lenin really was crazy enough to believe that clarifying a minor point of theory by carefully studying the sacred words of Holy Saints Marx and Engels actually was the best way to prepare himself for the coming revolution.

That said, his arguments are still not terribly convincing, even if we take him at his word as a revolutionary and ignore the actual facts of history. Much of his argument is based upon a highly selective reading of Marx’s discussions of the Paris Commune which ignores his (Marx’s) deep ambiguity towards the Commune and the communards’ ambiguity towards Marx. He asserts multiple times the importance of the revolution in which the proletariat “smashes the machinery of the state,” and also significance of the “opportunist” Kautsky’s willingness to simply “take it over.” However, his idea of “smashing” the state remains obscure, since he admits that the proletariat will still need its apparatus for an undetermined period, and it seems that many of its previous functionaries will remain in place, albeit at a lowered wage and with the possibility of recall by “the workers” at any time. “The workers,” of course, remains a code for the Vanguard Party which means that the dictatorship of the proletariat remains a dictatorship by an elite with the very police forces which had kept them in line previously.

Lenin’s centralism and authoritarianism remain clear from this book for readers to observe. He takes every opportunity, in fact, to discredit anarchists, utopians, “opportunist,” and “social chauvinists” (his term for Social Democrats who supported their governments in World War One). The centralism, bureaucracy, and

authoritarian imperialism of the former Soviet Union are established facts today which serve to discredit his belief in his own interpretation of theory. This book is therefore useful mostly as a warning against hubris in revolutionaries and radicals today.

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Laura ????? says

Non so se oggi sia rara, ma questa copia "printed in URSS" nel 1947 arrivò tanti anni fa direttamente da Mosca. A detta di mia madre, a cui era stato donato da chi all'epoca andava personalmente in gita in Russia al seguito del PCI, è un gran libro. Chissà se, prima o poi, avrò il coraggio di leggerlo anch'io.

Ibrahim Niftiyev says

Demokratiya azl???n çoxlu?a tabe olmas? deyil. Demokratiya hakim sinifin a?a?? sinifl?ri istismar etm?si m?qs?di il? azl???n çoxlu?a tabe oldu?unu q?bul ed?n dövl?tin yaratd??? illüziyad?r. "Dövl?t v? inqilab" ?s?ri il? Lenin sinifi c?miyy?td? ba? ver?n istismar? (proletariat v? burjuaziya aras?nda) "qanun" v? "demokratiya" ad? alt?nda nec? qanunil??diriyini göst?rir. Karl Marks v? Fredirik Engelsin ?s?rl?rin? ?saslanan Lenin, dövl?t adlanan prazit qurulu?un sinifi c?miyy?tin m?nafel?rin? nec? xidm?t etdiyini aç?q-a?kar, keçmi? t?crüb?l?r? ?saslanaraq t?hlil edir. O, eyni d?r?c?d? a?karl?qla sinifi münaqj??nin niy? gör? inqilaba s?b?b olaca??n? da izah edir.

Kitabda yaz?lanlar? cari sisteml?rin t?nqidi kimi q?bul etdikd?, biz daha da m?yus oluruq. Çünkü, h?r gün qar??la?d???m?z sisteml?rin, bütün bürokratik mexanizml?rin hakim sinifl?rin m?zum sinifl?ri ?zm?k v? istismar etm?k üçün al?t v? vasit? oldu?unu görürük. M?n? ba?qa bir ?ey d? çox maraql? g?lir. ?ndiki dövrd? praktiki olaraq dünyan?n h?r t?r?find? kapitalistik istehsal üsulunun mövcud oldu?u v? el?c? d? sinifi c?miyy?tl?rin möhk?ml?ndiyi ?r?f?d? heç kim bu sisteml?rin alternativi haqda dü?üm?y?r?k, h?yatda özünün bir f?rd kimi c?miyy?td?ki rolü v? bir insan kimi ruhi müst?vid? varl?q s?b?bl?ri v? m?qs?di haqda dü?ümür. Çox q?rib?dir ki, içind? ya?ad???m?z bu sisteml?rin alternativi haqda 19-cu v? 20-ci ?srd?n ba?qa vaxtda heç kim heç n? yazmay?b v? ya k?f etm?y? c?hd etm?yib. Y?ni, bizim bu gün bu m?s?l?l?r? bu d?r?c?dmi az ehtiyac?m?z var? Biz bu d?r?c?d?mi qar??m?za qoyulanlarla ancaq v? ancaq raz?la?mal? v? h?r ?ey? göz yummal?y?q?

Marksizm haqq?nda çox ?ey e?its?m d?, "Dövl?t v? inqilab" m?nim marksist n?z?riyy? bax?m?ndan oxudu?um ilk ciddi ?d?biyyat oldu. Kitab Marks?n v? Engelsin ?s?rl?rin? istinad ed?r?k inqilab n?z?riyy?sin? giri?i ?hat? edir. Sosializm, kommunizm kimi m?s?l?l?r? ayd?nl?q g?tirilir. Marksizm n?z?riyy?sinin burjua t?r?find?n nec? d? opportunist?sin? m?nims?nib özünküll? dirildiyi izah olunur. Plexanov, Kautski v? Sereteli kimi burjua nümay?nd?l?rinin saxtakar??? if?a olunur. Demokratika, seçenek?r v? ordu kimi m?s?l?l?rin dövl?t adlanan konsepsiyan?n al?ti oldu?u göst?rilir. Kapitalizmd?n sosializm? v? daha sonra kommunizmin birinci v? ikinci fazas?na keçid olduqca maraql? v? q?sa t?rzd? çatd?r?l?b. Lenin v? Trotstkinin (Stalinin yox. Birm?nal? olaraq!) demokratiyaya olan yana?mas? bu günün standartlar? ç?rçiv?sind? bel? kifay?t q?d?r proqressiv v? liberald?r. Lenin? stereotipl? yana?an bir çoxlar?na ciddi olaraq m?sl?h?t gör?rdim ki, bu stereotipi bir k?nara ataraq, müasir n?z?riyy?l?rd?n f?rqli olaraq dü?üm?yi öyr?d?n "Dövl?t v? inqilab" kimi kitablardan uzaq dü?m?sinl?r. Bunun qar??l???nda gördüğüm is? ?sas?n insanlar?n Lenin kimi dahini s?hv ba?a dü?m?l?ri v? ondan qorxmalar?d?r. Bu da t?bii ki, uzun ill?r Avropa burjuaziyas?n?n gördüyü t?bli?at i?l?rinin n?tic?sidir.

H?l? Erix Frommün "Marks?n insan konsepsiyas?" kitab?n? oxuyanda marksizmin nec? d? t?hrif olundu?unu v? Sovet ittifaq?n?n h?r keç?n il il? nec? daha da h?qiqi prinsipl?rd?n uzaq dü?düyübü ba?a dü?mü?düm. Burjuaziyan?n saxta, filistir, opportunist v? vulqar "ziyal?" nümay?nd?l?ri haqq?nda "Dövl?t v? inqilab" ?s?rind? bir daha oxumaq mü?yy?n q?d?r daha motivasiyaedicidir ki, h?qiqi m?nb? itib batmay?b. Birm?nal? olaraq marksizmi v? leninizmi onun ?sl m?nb?yind?n oxumaq m?sl?h?t?dir. Kimins? ??rhini v? t?hlilini oxumaq üçüncü d?r?c?d? ?h?miyy?tli bir ?eydir.

Bel? mövzulu kitablar haqda m?nim kimi yeni ba?layanlar çox ?ey yaza bilm?z. Odur ki, yuxar?da yazd?qlar?m h?l?lik b?s ed?r. Ümumiyy?t? is? dü?ünür?m ki, g?l?c?kd? "Dövl?t v? inqilab"-? bir daha oxuyum. B?lk? o vaxta siyasi iqtisad?n tarixi v? fundamental prinsipl?ri haqda daha geni? bilikl?r? sahib

olacam. Bu gün üçün is? c?miyy?t h?yat?nda gözl?rimi bir da geni? açd???na gör? Vladimir ?liç Lenin? d?rin t???kkürümü bildirir v? onun dahiliyi qar??s?nda ba? ?yir?m.

Kitab?n son cümle?l?ri bu bloq yaz?s? üçün d? maraql? yekundur: “7-ci f?sil 1905 v? 1917-ci ill?rd?ki Rus inqilablar?n?n t?crüb?si Bu f?silin s?rlövh?sind? göst?ril?n mövzu o q?d?r geni? v? böyükdür ki, bu xüsusda cildl?rl? s?r yazmaq olar v? yazmaq laz?md?r. Bu kitabçada, söz yox, dövl?t hakimiyy?ti bar?sind? inqilabda proletariat?n bilavasit? v?zif?l?rin? aid olan ?n ba?l?ca t?crüb?nin d?rsil?ri il? kifay?t?l?nm?k laz?m g?l?c?kdir”(Burada ?lyazmas? k?silir) Birinci N??r? Sözard? Bu kitabça 1917-ci ilin avqust v? sentyabr?nda yaz?lm??d?r. “1905 v? 1917-ci ill?rd?ki rus inqilablar?n?n t?crüb?si” adl? sonrak?, yedinci f?silin plan?n? t?rtib etmi?dim. Lakin s?rlövh?sind?n ba?qa bu f?sild?n bir s?tir d? yazma?a macal tapmad?m: siyasi böhran, 1917-ci il Oktyabr inqilab?n?n yax?nla?mas? “mane oldu”. Bel? bir “mane?y?” ancaq sevinm?k olar. Lakin kitabçan?n (“1905 v? 1917-ci ill?rd?ki rus inqilablar?n?n t?crüb?si”n? h?sr edilmiş?) ikinci hiss?sini olsun ki, uzun müdd?t t?xir? salmaq laz?m g?l?c?kdir; “inqilab?n t?crüb?sind?n” yazmaqdansa, bu t?crüb?ni h?yata keçirm?k daha xo? v? daha faydal?d?r. Petroqrad 30 noyabr 1917-ci il”

<http://niftiyevibrahim.blogspot.com/2012/05/1.html>

Yaser Maadat says

my name is corey irl says

Theodora says

Lenin was the one to put the gulag system in place, not Stalin.

Abeer Abdullah says

Extremely thorough and well written, deals with the question of the state after the revolution, makes distinctions between communists, social democrats and anarchists. Argues that anarchists and communists have the common goal of the abolition of the state, it is simply the methods that they disagree on. Wonderful

read, I learned a lot!

Operaista says

If one wants to engage with Lenin, it's important to engage with him at his best. Yes, some of his flaws still shine through (mainly that, due to the class nature of the inner core of the Bolshevik party (a class nature encouraged by the Russian material conditions), Bolshevism was always given to bureaucratisation), but Lenin at his best - and what "could have been", had it not been for the isolation of the revolution and the emergence of the counterrevolution as the degeneration of the Bolsheviks - is also contained in *State and Revolution*. *State and Revolution* is also invaluable for debunking the claims of many modern-day Leninists while also debunking knee-jerk anti-Leninism (unless one is to believe that Lenin wrote all of *State and Revolution* with his fingers crossed behind his back).

However, the most important and positive aspect of this work is Lenin's return to Marx. Lenin aptly demonstrates that Marx and Engels contradicted where Kautsky and others directed the Second International, and that the proletariat was never meant to "seize the state", but rather to smash it. The most negative aspects are in where even in other portions of the pamphlet, there is an overly bureaucratic concern with the development of production. This likely arises both from the ground from which the intellectuals of the Bolshevik party were primarily recruited (the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia was primarily bourgeois, one of many significant differences from today), as well as Lenin's break from Kautsky being incomplete.

In any case, *State and Revolution* is worth an open-minded read, regardless of one's opinion on the Russian Revolution. Lenin's good points are where he has managed to completely break with Kautsky and the Social Democracy of the Second International, and returns to Marx (in fact, this is where those of us who might be labelled "ultra-left" and reject both Trotskyism and Maoism can be seen to owe a debt to Lenin: he was part of the first wave of the return to Marx that those who ended up breaking with the Third International, or, later, Trotskyism, to the left later took up); his bad points are where he has failed to break with Kautsky. His points that are mainly of historical interest (as much as they are fetishized by both modern-day Leninists and anti-Leninists) are where, and he did this very often, he was developing strategies for the particular conditions of early 20th century Russia.

The task presenting us is to reject both fetishized Leninism and fetishized anti-Leninism, but, rather, to learn the lessons of Lenin as we do from other past revolutionaries. Let us bury that which is specific to the past, after learning both from past successes and failures; and let us develop a strategy based around the conditions that confront us now, in the 21st century, rather than that of Russia approximately a century ago.

Stuart says

If you happen to get the version which has a forward by Richard Pipes, I strongly suggest reading the text of Vladimir Lenin first, maybe Google or Wikipedia some of the historical references, and draw your own conclusion. Richard Pipes is your classical establishment propaganda clerk who's job is to 'help' you see the text the way the State wants you to, that is, defanged of its revolutionary message.

Pipes slides in his prejudice hidden by historical facts, intent on having you view this remarkable man dismissively as a rebel. Lenin clearly shows that in order to bring about change we need a violent revolution of the working people (proletariat) against the slave owners (bourgeois)

Lenin, who draws from Karl Marx and Fredric Engels shows the 'State' for what it is. A parasitic institution created by an oppressing class against its enemy -- the 99% -- You and I, the working class.

He explains why it is inevitable that this class conflict will lead to revolution. And looking at current events as well as historical ones, the facts are undeniable. He also shows the many ways the State tries to disable this prophetic voice, not unlike the forward by richard pipes talked about previously.

Karl Marx was every bit an objective scientist, but truth is not wanted by those who lie!

Viva la revolution!

Jan-Maat says

There's an episode of The Simpsons in which an enraged gigantic Lenin smashes out of his tomb and starts stomping on people in Red Square shouting "Crush Capitalism".

As far as I can recall this is a surprisingly concise and accurate synopsis of "State and Revolution" (so long as one substitutes the term bourgeoisie for capitalism).

Presumably in the political context of 1917 this pamphlet urging readers to crush the bourgeoisie was an attempt to create clear blue water, or choppy red water, between the Bolsheviks and the better known Socialist Revolutionaries. Given that the major problem that the Bolsheviks faced after their seizure of power was that the state had pretty much withered away and that they would have to spend the civil war years trying to rebuild government structures I doubt if this particular work is significant in Lenin's work as a whole.

Of historical interest.

Pablo says

Un clásico, no todo lo dicho por Lenin es útil ahora, pero hay temas esenciales y trascendentales, que pueden ser aplicados aún hoy.

Johnnie says

Essential reading for anyone interested in proletarian revolution and its relation to the state. Very well written, inspiring, and certainly has the fire of immediacy stewing in it. You can tell it was written with great energy, probably quickly. The only issue is that sometimes it's repetitive and sometimes Lenin goes into some very historically-rooted discussions that don't have as much relevance as it did when he wrote the book. For instance, he spends a fair amount of time taking Kautsky to task for his philosophical distortion of Marxism. This is interesting for the purposes of clarification for current readers of what Marxism is (though some will certainly disagree with Lenin's supposed Marxist purity). But in terms of his critique's applicability to today's politics, it's interesting but not as immediately relevant.

His chapter on the withering away of the state (Chapter V) is exceptional. It is essential, because rather than just tread theoretical water without giving concrete ideas about the transition from capitalism to communism, he does offer some actual ideas about how this transition would happen and under what conditions. Again, this is somewhat rooted in early 20th century Eastern Europe/Asian politics, but it is definitely worth considering today.

Most Americans have a very slanted, antagonistic view of Lenin--because that is what we are taught to think. And while it's perfectly reasonable to criticize the Russian Revolution and its effects, one should do so with a clear and factually accurate view of those events and of the people who led that revolution: Lenin and Trotsky (NOT Stalin). Lenin's view of democracy is actually extremely progressive and liberal, even by today's standards. The State and Revolution is worth reading if you care about the current state of affairs and want a historical background to increase your understanding of the thread of political oppression and workers' rebellion that extends from the late 19th century to the present day. 4/5 stars.

Eric says

Being a dirty red, I found it amazing (and surprising) that I had never sat down with this piece. I had read sections in Marxism classes years ago, but it was refreshing to get back into it. Excellent. A must.

JP says

The opening of this book is perhaps the most enlightening thing I've ever read on Marxism (I guess technically it's Marxist-Leninism since here we are reading Lenin). The initial reflection on what the function and the history of the State is in relation to Bourgeois democracy and premodern slave societies is brilliant.

I remember reading the Communist Manifesto and being so confused. Everyone had said that Communism was violent, but I had been willing to defend it tooth and nail as peaceful. That didn't really work out when Marx started talking about "dictatorships of the proletariat." But Lenin spells out what Engels also explained – that all government is a dictatorship, and that "democratic republics" are bought and paid for dictatorships as well. These governments are "dictatorships of capital". Lenin explores the relationship between capital and political office and goes in depth explaining how, exactly, capital rules over the proletariat. He also unpacks some of the tactics of the capitalists, like how states are seen as existing "because of class conflict" in order to mitigate this conflict, when in fact the conflicts are not mitigated, but in fact exacerbated by the state. Any bourgeois democracy sets in place "impartial" rules which, in practice, only benefit one class – the bourgeoisie – and heavily constrict and permit the oppression of the other class – the proletariat. Any benefit afforded to the proletariat is not only constantly on the verge of being removed, but also only the absolute minimum necessary to avoid violent revolution from below. An excellent introduction to class society and the state. Should be required reading for EVERY political science student.

The next 2 chapters are fine. I wasn't sure that we needed to hear a lot about the revolutions of 1848, but Marx's class analysis of the Paris Commune was great. I had heard of it before, but him laying out the details of the class composition therein was super helpful in understanding the Marxist conception of proletarian government. Neither of these chapters, in my opinion, hold a candle to Engels' opinions in the next chapter – his supplementary explanations regarding the Paris Commune and his address to the anarchists' and social

democrats' ideological faults was a wild and brilliant exposition. More potential for required reading in comparative political thought. One of the most interesting things for me is how much effort Vladimir spends unpacking the differences between Engels and Marx vs. the anarchists like Proudhon. It's an almost off-hand assumption that Proudhon aligns with Marx, but only in the sense that they both dislike bourgeois rule. Further explanation of the nature of the state in revolution and how anarchists fall short in necessary action is extremely well-developed. Still on board.

Okay, disappointed with the ending. The chapters of this book I highlighted above should be required reading for EVERY political science major. The chapters I didn't should probably just be overlooked. It's not every day that I find a book which should be picked apart and should have significant chunks discarded, but this is one of them.

That said, the good parts are EPIC and I highly recommend.
