The Pan-African movement when it comes will not, however, be merely a narrow racial propaganda. Already the more far-seeing Negroes sense the coming unities: a unity of the working classes everywhere, a unity of the colored races, a new unity of men. The proposed economic solution of the Negro problem in Africa and America has turned the thoughts of Negroes toward a realization of the fact that the modern white laborer of Europe and America has the key to the serfdom of black folk, in his support of militarism and colonial expansion. He is beginning to say to these workingmen that, so long as black laborers are slaves, white laborers cannot be free. Already there are signs in South Africa and the United States of the beginning of understanding between the two classes.

In a conscious sense of unity among colored races there is to-day only a growing interest. There is slowly arising not only a curiously strong brotherhood of Negro blood throughout the world, but the common cause of the darker races against the intolerable assumptions and insults of Europeans has already found expression. Most men in this world are colored. A belief in humanity means a belief in colored men. The future world will, in all reasonable probability, be what colored men make it. In order for this colored world to come into its heritage, must the earth again be drenched in the blood of fighting, snarling human beasts, or will Reason and Good Will prevail? That such may be true, the character of the Negro race is the best and greatest hope; for in its normal condition it is at once the strongest and gentlest of the races of men: "Semper novi quid ex Africa!" [There is always something new coming out of Africa!]

Questions

1. What are the "Negro problems" that Du Bois identifies? What is their connection to slavery and colonialism?
2. What solutions to the Negro problems have been suggested by white thinkers, governments, and business?
3. What solutions does Du Bois see in Pan-Africanism? Why does he think these solutions offer more hope of success?

V. I. Lenin, The Transition from Capitalism to Communism (1917)

One of the most momentous events of the twentieth century was the 1917 October Revolution that led to the founding of the Soviet Union. A leading architect of the revolution was Vladimir Illich Lenin (real name Ulyanov, 1870–1924). Lenin was not only a political leader, he was also the author of many works that had a decisive role in shaping the Soviet Union's political regime. The execution of Lenin's brother in 1887 for his part in a failed attempt on the life of the Russian tsar, Alexander III, pushed Lenin into revolutionary politics. For many years he lived in exile, organizing the Bolshevik wing of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party, which evolved into the Communist Party. When a revolution overthrew the tsarist government and installed a provisional government in February 1917, Lenin returned to Russia and took part in the October Revolution that in turn overthrew the provisional government. As chair of the Council of People's Commissars, he led the newly formed Soviet Union through a civil war that lasted until 1920. In his writings Lenin argued that the Russian working class could not bring about a revolution by itself. Revolution was only possible if it was led by a party of professional, full-time revolutionaries. Once in power, this party would establish a "dictatorship of the proletariat," suppress the revolution's enemies, and lead the masses into socialism. Lenin wrote *The State and Revolution* when he was hiding from arrest by the provisional government in 1917. In it, he sets forth many of his ideas, including "The Transition from Capitalism to Communism," excerpted here.

Marx [states]: "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*." Marx bases this conclusion on an analysis of the role played by the proletariat in modern capitalist society, on the data

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CITATION: *The Lenin Anthology*, edited by Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1975), pp. 371–75.

concerning the development of this society, and on the irreconcilability of the antagonistic interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

Previously the question was put as follows: to achieve its emancipation, the proletariat must overthrow the bourgeoisie, win political power and establish its revolutionary dictatorship.

Now the question is put somewhat differently: the transition from capitalist society—which is developing towards communism—to communist society is impossible without a "political transition period," and the state in this period can only be the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

What, then, is the relation of this dictatorship to democracy?

* * *

In capitalist society, providing it develops under the most favourable conditions, we have a more or less complete democracy in the democratic republic. But this democracy is always hemmed in 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. 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. If we look more closely into the machinery of capitalist democracy, we see everywhere, in the "petty"—supposedly petty—details of the suffrage (residential qualification, exclusion of women, etc.), in the technique of the representative institutions, in the actual obstacles to the right of assembly (public buildings are not for "paupers"!), in the purely capitalist organisation of the daily press, etc., etc.—we see restriction after restriction upon democracy. These restrictions, exceptions,

exclusions, obstacles for the poor seem slight, especially in the eyes of one who has never known want himself and has never been in close contact with the oppressed classes in their mass life (and nine out of ten, if not ninety-nine out of a hundred, bourgeois publicists and politicians come under this category); but in their sum total these restrictions exclude and squeeze out the poor from politics, from active participation in democracy.

Marx grasped this *essence* of capitalist democracy splendidly when, in analysing 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!

But from this capitalist democracy—that is inevitably narrow and stealthily pushes aside the poor, and is therefore hypocritical and false through and through—forward development does not proceed simply, directly and smoothly, towards "greater and greater democracy," as the liberal professors and petty-bourgeois opportunists would have us believe. No, forward development, i.e., development towards communism, proceeds through the dictatorship of the proletariat, and cannot do otherwise, for the *resistance* of the capitalist exploiters cannot be *broken* by anyone else or in any other way.

And the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., the organisation of the vanguard of the oppressed as the ruling class for the purpose of suppressing the oppressors, cannot result merely in an expansion of democracy. *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. We must suppress them in order to free humanity from wage slavery, their resistance must be crushed by force; it is clear that there is no freedom and no democracy where there is suppression and where there is violence.

* * *

Democracy for the vast majority of the people, and suppression by force, i.e., exclusion from democracy, of the exploiters and

oppressors of the people—this is the change democracy undergoes during the *transition* from capitalism to communism.

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 realised, a democracy without any exceptions whatever. And only then will democracy begin to *wither away*, owing to the simple fact that, freed from capitalist slavery, from the untold horrors, savagery, absurdities and infamies of capitalist exploitation, people will gradually *become accustomed* to observing the elementary rules of social intercourse that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all copy-book maxims. They will become accustomed to observing them without force, without coercion, without subordination, *without the special apparatus* for coercion called the state.

The expression "the state *withers away*" is very well chosen, for it indicates both the gradual and the spontaneous nature of the process. Only habit can, and undoubtedly will, have such an effect; for we see around us on millions of occasions how readily people become accustomed to observing the necessary rules of social intercourse when there is no exploitation, when there is nothing that arouses indignation, evokes protest and revolts, and creates the need for *suppression*.

And so in capitalist society we have a democracy that is curtailed, wretched, false, a democracy only for the rich, for the minority. The dictatorship of the proletariat, the period of transition to communism, will for the first time create democracy for the people, for the majority, along with the necessary suppression of the exploiters, of the minority. Communism alone is capable of providing really complete democracy, and the more complete it is, the sooner it will become unnecessary and wither away of its own accord.

In other words, under capitalism we have the state in the proper sense of the word, that is, a special machine for the suppression of one class by another, and, what is more, of the majority by the

minority. Naturally, to be successful, such an undertaking as the systematic suppression of the exploited majority by the exploiting minority calls for the utmost ferocity and savagery in the matter of suppressing, it calls for seas of blood, through which mankind is actually wading its way in slavery, serfdom and wage labour.

Furthermore, during the *transition* from capitalism to communism suppression is *still* necessary, but it is now the suppression of the exploiting minority by the exploited majority. A special apparatus, a special machine for suppression, the "state," is *still* necessary, but this is now a transitional state. It is no longer a state in the proper sense of the word; for the suppression of the minority of exploiters by the majority of the wage slaves of *yesterday* is comparatively so easy, simple and natural a task that it will entail far less bloodshed than the suppression of the risings of slaves, serfs or wage-labourers, and it will cost mankind far less. And it is compatible with the extension of democracy to such an overwhelming majority of the population that the need for a *special machine* of suppression will begin to disappear. Naturally, the exploiters are unable to suppress the people without a highly complex machine for performing this task, but *the people* can suppress the exploiters even with a very simple "machine," almost without a "machine," without a special apparatus, by the simple *organisation of the armed people* (such as the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, we would remark, running ahead).

Lastly, only communism makes the state absolutely unnecessary, for there is *nobody* to be suppressed—"nobody" in the sense of a *class*, of a systematic struggle against a definite section of the population. We are not utopians, and do not in the least deny the possibility and inevitability of excesses on the part of *individual persons*, or the need to stop *such* excesses. In the first place, however, no special machine, no special apparatus of suppression, is needed for this; this will be done by the armed people themselves, as simply and as readily as any crowd of civilised people, even in modern society, interferes to put a stop to a scuffle or to prevent a woman from being assaulted. And, secondly, we know that the fundamental social cause of excesses, which consist in the violation of the rules of social intercourse, is the exploitation of the people, their want

and their poverty. With the removal of this chief cause, excesses will inevitably begin to "*wither away.*" We do not know how quickly and in what succession, but we do know they will wither away. With their withering away the state will also *wither away.*

Questions

1. Why, in a capitalist society, no matter how democratic, is democracy "only for the propertied classes; only for the rich"?
2. What is the purpose of the dictatorship of the proletariat? Why is it needed during the period of transition from capitalism to communism?
3. Why will the state "wither away" under communism? In the context of 1917, does the idea that the state eventually will wither away seem plausible?

Antoine Bervin, Bénito Sylvain: Apostle for the Advance of the Black Race (1969)

Bénito Sylvain (1868–1915) was a lawyer, journalist, diplomat, and advocate for Africans, both in Africa and of African descent around the world. Born in Haiti, Sylvain was educated in France and earned a law degree there in 1894. While still a student in Paris, Sylvain founded a newspaper, *La Fraternité, organe des intérêts d'Haïti et de la race noire* (*Fraternity, advancing the interests of Haiti and the Black race*). When Sylvain learned of Ethiopian Emperor Menelik's victory over Italian forces at the Battle of Adwa in 1896, he traveled to Ethiopia as a representative of Haiti to pay court to the victor. Sylvain made three subsequent trips. He represented both Haiti and Ethiopia at the first pan-African meeting in 1900 and made sure to be in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, in 1904 to mark the hundredth anniversary of Haitian independence. His journals—which Antoine Bervin relied upon in 1969 in his account of Sylvain—are a unique source. Bervin did not distinguish his own words from Sylvain's in what was a celebratory account of Sylvain, so these passages must be read with care. However, they provide an account of the one African leader who successfully fought off European invaders, Emperor Menelik, through the eyes of a leading pan-African intellectual. They provide a subaltern, non-European perspective on the so-called Scramble for Africa.

Emperor Menelik

Descended from Kings and Queens

At once imposing and friendly, Emperor Menelik is a large man, well above average. His black face, lightly pockmarked [from smallpox], is framed by a rather sparse beard. The degree of his racial purity is difficult to determine. His type is somewhere between a pure black and a mulatto, but it's impossible for me to represent his extraordinary power, agility, and vitality, which even photographs fail to represent. [. . .]

Born in 1842, the Emperor is roughly fifty-eight years old, a good age for a ruler. He wakes up at five o'clock in the morning in the gardens of the royal Palace, where the most common European fruits grow, or else he visits his workshops, where innovations in applied science abound. Three years ago, a special workshop to mint currency was created at the Palace, under the direction of a German engineer. Needless to say, His Majesty watches over its precious work with particular care.

A fairly legendary figure, Menelik has nothing vulgar about him. [French writer] Jules Claretie writes that he was a kind of prophet and mystic and yet thoroughly modern at the same time. He stands amidst our dimwitted intellectuals and spineless politicians as an imposing incarnation of patriotism and resistance to foreign threats.

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Citation: Antoine Bervin, *Benito Sylvain: Apôtre du relèvement social des noirs* (Port-Au-Prince, Haiti: Imp. La Phalange, 1969), 48–49, 54–56, 77–78. Translated by C. Rosenberg.