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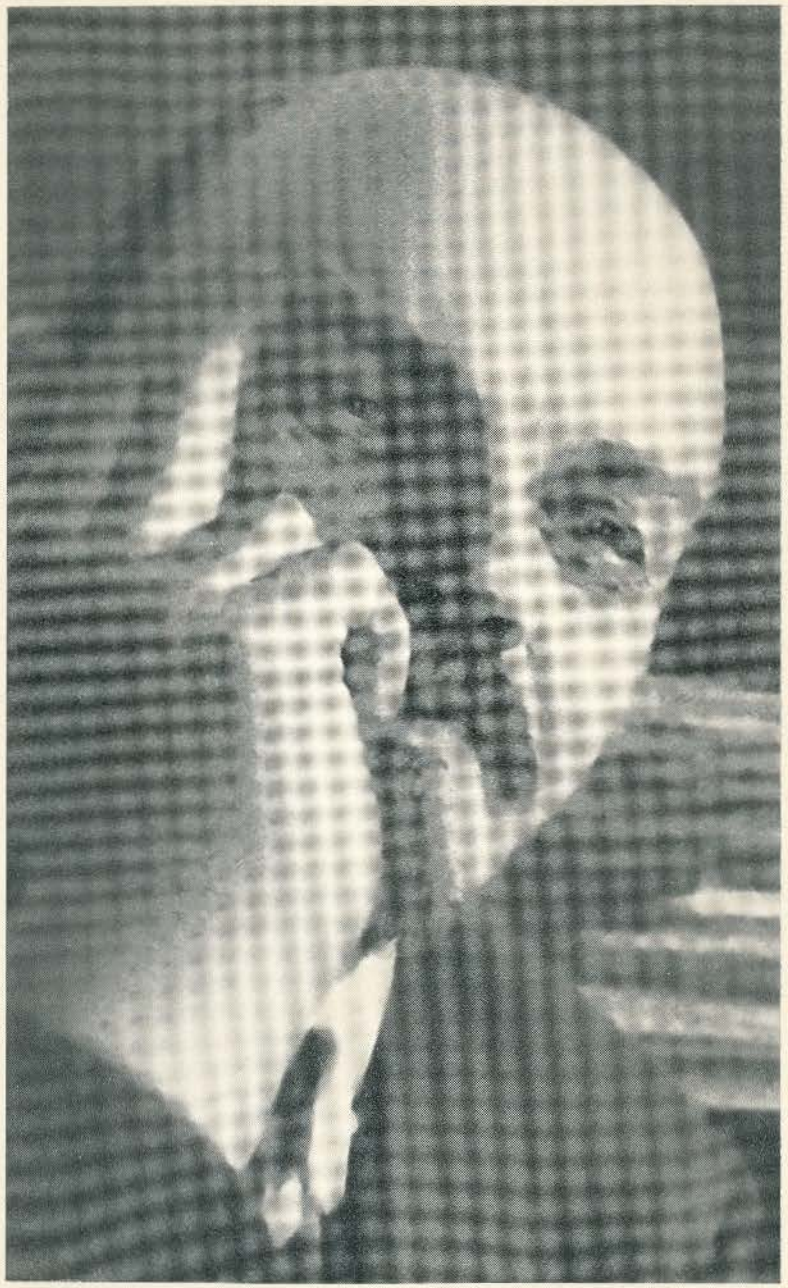

Reminiscences of Foreign Contemporaries

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THEY KNEW LENIN

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О ЛЕНИНЕ

ИЗ ВОСПОМИНАНИЙ
ЗАРУБЕЖНЫХ СОВРЕМЕННИКОВ

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Contents

My Recollections of Lenin*

by Clara Zetkin

In these dismal hours of sorrow, when each one of us is stricken with deepest grief, when we all become conscious of the fact that one irreplaceable has departed from our midst, the clear living memory of him who is gone rises before us revealing, as if in a flash of lightning, the great man embodied in the great leader.** Lenin's personality bears the impress of harmonious fusion of greatness as a leader and greatness as a man. Thanks to this peculiar feature the image of Lenin—to use the words in which Marx assayed the glorious deeds of the fighters of the Commune—is forever "enshrined in the great heart of the working class". For the labouring masses—all those who have fallen victim to wealth, all those who have no knowledge of the conventional lies and the hypocrisy of the bourgeois world—with delicate instinct discern the difference between what is true and what is false, between modest greatness and bumptious swagger, between love for them expressed in action and a hunt for popularity reflecting mere vanity.

I consider it my duty to make public every scrap of information contained in my treasure store of personal recollections of our unforgettable leader and friend. I owe it to Vladimir Ilyich and I owe it to those to whom he devoted his whole activity—the proletarians and working people in general, those who are exploited, or drudge in involuntary servitude in any part of the world, those to whom he directed his love and upon whom he proudly looked as revolutionary fighters and builders of a higher social order.

It was early in the autumn of 1920 that I met Lenin for the first time after the outbreak of the Russian revolution that shook the entire world. It happened right after my arrival in Moscow, during a Party meeting held, if my memory serves me right, in the Sverdlov Hall of the Kremlin. Lenin looked unchanged; he had hardly aged, as far as I was able to tell. I could swear he wore the same modest, carefully

* Written in January 1924.—*Ed.*
** V. I. Lenin died at 6:50 p.m., January 21, 1924.—*Ed.*

brushed jacket I had seen him in when we met for the very first time, in 1907, at the World Congress of the Second International in Stuttgart.* Rosa Luxemburg,** who had the sharp eye of the artist that detects every distinctive feature, pointed out Lenin to me with the words: "Take a good look at that man. He's Lenin. Note his cranium: how stubborn, strong-willed it is."

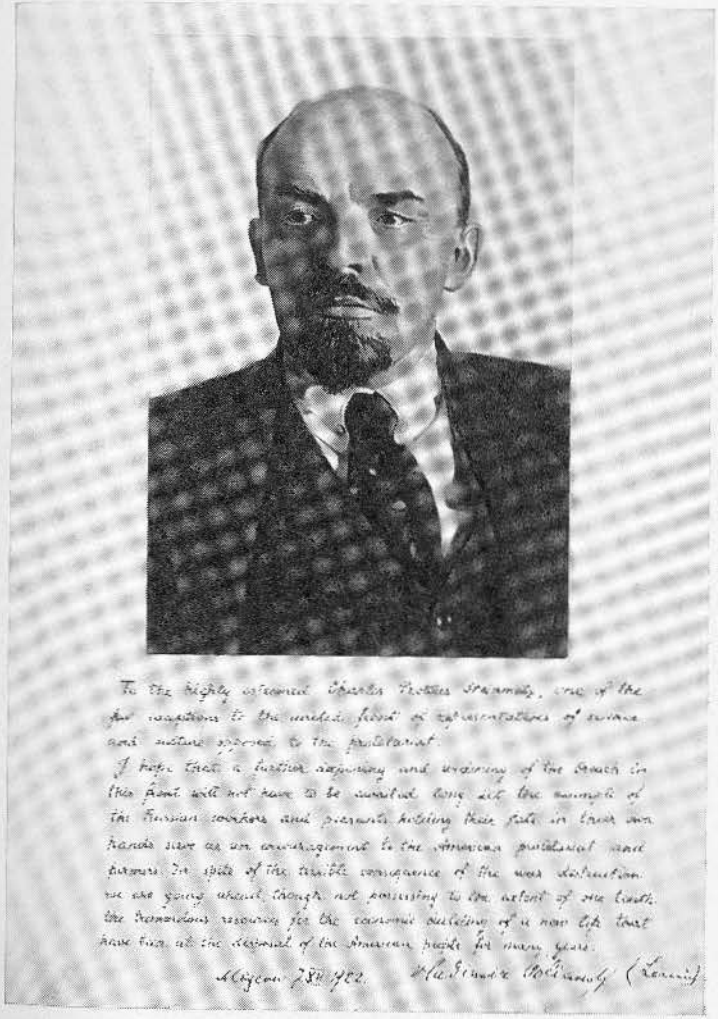
In speech and behaviour Lenin had not changed. At times the debates were very lively, even passionate. As he used to do before, at Second International congresses, so now Lenin paid close attention to the course of the discussion, displayed great self-possession, and evinced a calmness that betrayed his inner concentration, energy and resilience. This was shown by his interjections, remarks and regular speeches when he took the floor. It seemed that nothing worthwhile noticing escaped his keen glance and lucid mind. I was struck at that meeting, as I had usually been before and was ever after, by these most characteristic features of Lenin—his simplicity and cordiality, his naturalness in all his dealings with comrades. I say "naturalness" because it was my definite impression that that man could not behave otherwise. His attitude towards comrades was the natural expression of his whole inner being.

Lenin was the unchallenged leader of a party which deliberately entered the battle for power, explained the goal and pointed the way to Russia's proletariat and peasantry. Invested with their confidence the Party administers the country and exercises the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin was the leader of the great country that became the first proletarian state in the world. His thoughts and desires dwell in the minds of millions of people also beyond the frontiers of Soviet Russia. His opinion on any issue is decisive throughout our land; his name is the symbol of hope and emancipation wherever oppression and enslavement exist.

"Comrade Lenin leads us to communism. In spite of all

* Seventh Congress of the Second International (August 18-24, 1907).—*Ed.*

** Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919)—outstanding leader of the Polish and German working-class movement, one of the leaders of the Left wing of the Second International and the German Communist Party. Arrested and brutally murdered (January 15, 1919).—*Ed.*



Lenin

hardships we shall hold out", declared the Russian workers. And imbued with the vision of the ideal kingdom, mankind's highest society, they rushed to the front hungry and freezing or harnessed themselves to the titanic task of restoring the economic life of the country in the face of incredible odds.

"We have no reason to be afraid the landlords may return and take the land away from us. Ilyich and the Bolsheviks together with the Red Army men will come to our rescue." Thus figured the peasants, whose land hunger had been satisfied.

"Long Live Lenin!" was a frequent inscription on church walls in Italy, whose proletarians enthusiastically hailed the Russian revolution as their own emancipator. The name of Lenin became the rallying cry, both in America, Japan, and India, of all those who challenged the rule of the vested interests.

How simple and modest was Lenin's manner of speaking! Yet he had already accomplished a gigantic historical task and upon his shoulders rested the colossal weight of unlimited confidence, of the gravest responsibility, and of unceasing work. He completely merged in the mass of the comrades, was of the same stuff as they, was just one of the many. Unlike so-called "leading personages" he never wanted to exert pressure, and never did so by a single gesture or facial expression. Such ways were contrary to his nature and he really was a striking personality.

Messengers would constantly deliver communications from various establishments, both civil and military, and he would at once send off his reply in a few lines quickly jotted down. Lenin had a smile and a friendly nod for everyone. This was invariably answered by a joyful lighting-up of the face. During sessions he would from time to time converse with responsible officials on urgent problems, making sure not to distract others. When an intermission was announced Lenin had to withstand a veritable onslaught. Clusters of people surrounded him on all sides—men and women, from Petrograd, Moscow and diverse other centres of the movement. He was beset by a particularly great number of the youth. Each one of them wanted him to endorse his pet scheme. And thus petitions, enquiries and proposals just showered down upon him.

Lenin heard out and answered everyone with a patience that won him the hearts of all. He listened to every plaint with sympathetic understanding and was always ready to help, whether it was a matter of Party work or a tale of personal woe. It gladdened one's soul to watch how he dealt with the youth: an unalloyed comradely attitude, free from the pedantry, preceptorial tone of voice and presumptuousness of manner paraded by those of middle age who believe that their years, without more, confer upon them incomparable superiority and virtue.

Lenin always conducted himself as an equal among equals. There was not a trace of the potentate in him. The authority he enjoyed in the Party was due to his prestige as an ideal leader and comrade, to whose superiority one bends one's knee fully aware that he will always understand and wants to be understood in turn. It grieved me to compare the genial atmosphere surrounding Lenin with the stiff pomposity of the "Fathers of the Party" of German Social-Democracy. The lack of good taste displayed by the Social-Democrat Ebert as "Herr President of the German Republic" in his attempt to ape the bourgeoisie in all its manners and customs seemed the height of absurdity to me. Ebert lost all sense of human dignity. Of course these gentry were never so "reckless and desperate" as to "strive", like Lenin, "to make a revolution". And with them to defend the bourgeoisie the latter can snore still more tranquilly than it did even in the days of the thirty-five monarchs that reigned at the time of Heinrich Heine—can snore until finally here too revolution leaps from the historically prepared, historically necessary stream of events and thunders at this society: "Beware!"

*

My first visit to Lenin's family strengthened the impression I gained of him at the Party Conference and which had become firmer after several conversations with him. Lenin lived in the Kremlin. Before you could get to him several guards had to check you—a precaution explained by the incessant counter-revolutionary terrorist attempts then being made on the lives of the leaders of the revolution. Lenin on occasion held receptions in the magnificently appointed state apartments. His private apartment where

he lived with his family was very simple and unpretentious. I have often been in workers' quarters furnished better than the rooms occupied by "Moscow's all-powerful dictator".

Lenin's wife and sister* were just having supper, to join which I was at once most cordially invited. It was the modest evening meal of the average Soviet office worker at that time, consisting of tea, black bread, butter and cheese. His sister then set out in quest of something "sweet", i.e., dessert, "in honour of the guest". Fortunately a small jar containing some jelly was located. It is a well-known fact that the peasants kept "their Ilyich" abundantly supplied with white flour, lard, eggs, fruit, etc., but everybody also knows that almost none of all those good things remained in Lenin's larder. Everything was sent to the hospitals and children's homes, as Lenin's family strictly adhered to the principle of living as frugally as the mass of the working population.

I had not seen Comrade Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, since March 1915, when the Berne International Women's Socialist Conference** was held. Her attractive face with its soft kind eyes bore unmistakable traces of the treacherous disease that was sapping her strength. Except for that she was the same as I had known her—the embodiment of frankness, simplicity and a rather Puritanic modesty. Her hair, combed smoothly back and gathered up behind in a simple knot, as well as her plain dress, gave her the appearance of the tired-out wife of a worker forever worrying whether she would manage to get everything done. Comrade Krupskaya, the "first lady of the land", according to bourgeois conception and terminology, is indisputably the first in devotion to the cause of oppressed and suffering humanity. The most sincere community of ideas on the aim and purpose of life is what united her and Lenin. She was Lenin's right hand, his chief and best secretary, his most convinced ideological associate, the most experienced interpreter of his views, indefatigable alike in enlisting friends and adherents wisely and tactfully, and in propagating his ideas among the workers. In addition she had her own special

* N. K. Krupskaya (1869-1939)—V. I. Lenin's wife and comrade in arms, and M. I. Ulyanova (1878-1937)—Lenin's younger sister and secretary of *Pravda*'s editorial board.—*Ed.*

** The organisers of this conference included C. Zetkin, N. K. Krupskaya and I. F. Armand.—*Ed.*

Nadezhda Krupskaya and Clara Zetkin

sphere of activity to which she was devoted body and soul—public education and training.

It would be not only ridiculous but an aspersion to suppose that Comrade Krupskaya played the role of "Lenin's wife" in the Kremlin. She worked together with her husband and shared his worries, took care of him as she had been doing all her life with him, as she had done when the conditions of the underground and severe persecution separated them. With the solicitude only a mother could show she turned Lenin's abode—with the domestic help of his affectionate sister—into a "home, sweet home". Of course, not in the hypocritical sense of the German philistine but in the light of the spiritual atmosphere that filled it and reflected the relations which united the people that lived and worked here. One received the impression that in their relations truth, sincerity, mutual understanding and affection prevailed. Although till then I had been little acquainted personally with Comrade Krupskaya I immediately felt at home in her society and friendly care. When Lenin arrived and somewhat later a huge cat made her appearance, cheerily welcomed by every member of the family—she nimbly jumped on the shoulders of the "dreadful terrorist leader" and then curled up conveniently on his knees—I thought I was back home or at Rosa Luxemburg's with her Mimi, a cat that became a memento to all her friends.

Lenin found us three women discussing art, education and upbringing. I happened at that moment to be voicing enthusiastically my astonishment at the unique and titanic cultural work of the Bolsheviks, at the unfolding in the country of creative forces striving to blaze new trails for art and education. I did not hide my impression that much of what I observed was still conjectural, mere groping in the dark, just experimental, and that along with zealous searches for new content, new forms and new ways in the sphere of culture one encounters at times an unnatural desire to follow the fashion and blindly imitate Western models. Lenin at once plunged with keen interest into the conversation.

"The awakening of new forces and the harnessing of them to the task of creating a new art and culture in Soviet Russia are a good thing, a very good thing. The hurricane speed of their development is understandable and useful. We must make good the loss incurred by centuries of neglect and

make good is what we want to do. Chaotic fermentation, feverish hunt for new slogans, slogans acclaimed today with shouts of 'hosanna' in relation to certain trends in art and fields of thought, and rejected tomorrow with cries of 'crucify him'—all this is inevitable.

"Revolution unleashes all forces fettered hitherto and drives them from their deep recesses of life to the surface. Take for example the influence exerted by fashion and the caprices of the tsarist court as well as by the tastes and whims of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie on the development of our painting, sculpture and architecture.

"In society based on private property the artist produces for the market, needs customers. Our revolution freed artists from the yoke of these extremely prosaic conditions. It turned the state into their defender and client providing them with orders. Every artist, and everyone who considers himself such, has the right to create freely, to follow his ideal regardless of everything.

"But, then, we are Communists, and ought not to stand idly by and give chaos free rein to develop. We should steer this process according to a worked-out plan and must shape its results. We are still far, very far from this. It seems to me that we too have our Doctors Karlstadt.* We are too great 'iconoclasts in painting'. The beautiful must be preserved, taken as an example, as the point of departure even if it is 'old'. Why turn our backs on what is truly beautiful, abandon it as the point of departure for further development solely because it is 'old'? Why worship the new as a god compelling submission merely because it is 'new'? Nonsense! Bosh and nonsense! Here much is pure hypocrisy and of course unconscious deference to the art fashions ruling the West. We are good revolutionaries but somehow we feel obliged to prove that we are also 'up to the mark in modern culture'. I however make bold to declare myself a 'barbarian'. It is beyond me to consider the products of expressionism, futurism, cubism and other 'isms' the highest manifestation of artistic genius. I do not understand them. I experience no joy from them."

I could no longer restrain myself and admitted that my perception likewise was too dull to understand why an in-

* Karlstadt—noted figure in the Reformation.—*Ed.*

spired face should be artistically expressed by triangles instead of a nose and why the striving for revolutionary activity should transmute the human body, in which the organs are linked up and form one complicated whole, into an amorphous soft sack hoisted on two stilts and provided with two five-pronged forks.

Lenin burst into a hearty laugh.

"Yes, dear Clara, it can't be helped. We are both old fogies. For us it is enough that we remain young and are among the foremost at least in matters concerning the revolution. But we won't be able to keep pace with the new art; we'll just have to come trailing behind.

"But," Lenin continued, "our opinion on art is not the important thing. Nor is it of much consequence what art means to a few hundred or even thousand out of a population counted by the millions. Art belongs to the people. Its roots should be deeply implanted in the very thick of the labouring masses. It should be understood and loved by these masses. It must unite and elevate their feelings, thoughts and will. It must stir to activity and develop the art instincts within them. Should we serve exquisite sweet cake to a small minority while the worker and peasant masses are in need of black bread? It goes without saying that the following is to be understood not only literally but also figuratively: we must always have before our eyes the workers and the peasants. It is for their sake that we must learn to manage, to reckon. This applies also to the sphere of art and culture.

"For art to get closer to the people and the people to art we must start by raising general educational and cultural standards. How are things with us in this regard? You grow enthusiastic over the immense cultural progress we have achieved since our advent to power. We undoubtedly can say without boasting that in this respect we have done quite a lot. We have not only 'chopped off heads', as charged by the Mensheviks of all countries and by Kautsky* of yours, but have also enlightened many heads. 'Many' however only

* K. Kautsky—one of the leaders of German Social-Democracy and the Second International. At first a Marxist and later a renegade from Marxism and ideologist of Centrism, the most dangerous variety of opportunism.—*Ed.*

in comparison with the past, in comparison with the sins of the classes and cliques then at the helm. Immeasurably great is the thirst we have instilled in the workers and peasants for education and culture in general. This applies not only to Petrograd and Moscow, and other industrial centres, but far beyond their confines until the very villages have been reached. At the same time we are a poverty-stricken people, completely beggared. We of course wage a real and stubborn war against illiteracy. We establish libraries and reading-rooms, in the towns and villages, big and small. We organise all kinds of training courses. We present good shows and concerts, send 'mobile exhibitions' and 'educational trains' all over the land. But I repeat: what does this amount to for a multimillioned population who lack the most elementary knowledge, the most primitive culture? Whereas today ten thousand and tomorrow another ten thousand are enraptured in Moscow for instance by the splendid performances of our theatres, millions of people are striving to learn how to spell their names and count, are trying to attain enough culture to know that the earth is round, not flat, and that the world is not governed by witches and sorcerers and a 'heavenly father' but by natural laws."

"Comrade Lenin," I remarked, "don't be so aggrieved by illiteracy. In some respects it has made the revolution easier for you. It has prevented the brains of the workers and peasants from being stuffed with bourgeois notions and thus from going to seed. Your agitation and propaganda are sowing virgin soil. It is easier to sow and reap where you do not first have to clear away a whole primeval forest."

"Yes, that's true," Lenin rejoined. "However only within certain limits or, to be more exact, for a certain period of our struggle. We could stand illiteracy during the fight for power, while it was necessary to destroy the old state machinery. But are we destroying merely for the sake of destroying? We are destroying for the purpose of creating something better. Illiteracy goes badly, is absolutely incompatible with the job of restoration. After all the latter, according to Marx, must be the task of the workers and, I add, of the peasants themselves if they want to attain freedom. Our Soviet system facilitates this task. Thanks to it thousands of ordinary working people are today studying in various Soviets and Soviet bodies how to expedite restora-

tion. They are men and women 'in the prime of life', as they are wont to say in your country. Most of them grew up under the old regime and hence received no education, acquired no culture; but now they crave for knowledge. We are fully determined to recruit ever new contingents of men and women for Soviet work and give them a certain degree of practical and theoretical education. Nevertheless, we are unable to meet in full our country's demand for personnel capable of creative leadership. We are compelled to engage bureaucrats of the old type, as a result of which bureaucracy has cropped up here. I absolutely hate it, but of course I have no particular bureaucrat in view. He might be a clever man. What I hate is the system. It has a paralysing and corrupting effect from top to bottom. Widely disseminated education and training of the people is a decisive factor for overcoming and eradicating bureaucracy.

"What are our prospects for the future? We have built splendid institutions and adopted really fine measures to enable the proletarian and peasant youth to study, learn and assimilate culture. But here too we are confronted with the same vexatious question: what does all this amount to when you consider the size of our population? What is worse, we are far from having an adequate number of kindergartens, children's homes and elementary schools. Millions of children grow into their teens without an upbringing, without education. They remain as ignorant and uncultured as their fathers and grandfathers were. How much talent perishes on that account, how much yearning for light is crushed underfoot! This is a terrible crime, when considered in terms of the happiness of the rising generation. It amounts to robbing the Soviet state, which is to be transformed into communist society, of its wealth. This is fraught with great danger."

Lenin's voice, usually so calm, quavered with indignation.

"How this question must cut him to the quick," I thought, "if it makes him deliver an agitational speech to the three of us." Someone, I do not remember exactly who, began to speak about a number of particularly obnoxious occurrences in the spheres of art and culture, attributing them to the "conditions of the times". Lenin retorted:

"I know all about that. Many are sincerely convinced that the dangers and difficulties of the present period can

be coped with by dispensing *panem et circenses* [bread and circuses, spectacles]. Bread—as a matter of course. As for spectacles—let them be dispensed! I don't object. But let it not be forgotten that spectacles are not really great art. I would sooner call them more or less attractive entertainment. Nor should we be oblivious of the fact that our workers and peasants bear no resemblance to the Roman lumpenproletariat. They are not maintained at state expense but on the contrary they themselves maintain the state by their labour. They 'made' the revolution and upheld its cause, shedding torrents of their blood and bearing untold sacrifice. Indeed, our workers and peasants deserve something better than spectacles. They are entitled to real great art. That is why we put foremost public education and training on the biggest scale. It creates a basis for culture, provided of course that the grain problem has been solved. On this basis a really new, great communist art should arise which will create a form in correspondence with its content. Noble tasks of vast importance are waiting to be solved by our intellectuals along this line. By learning to understand these tasks and accomplishing them they would pay the debt they owe to the proletarian revolution, which to them too opened wide portals that led from the vile conditions of life, described in such masterly fashion in the *Communist Manifesto*, to the grand open spaces."

That night—the hour was already late—we had broached other themes as well, but the impression these discussions left was but faint in comparison with that produced by Lenin's remarks on art, culture, public education and upbringing.

"How ardently and sincerely he loves the working folks," it flashed through my mind as I returned home with swimming head that wintry night. "Yet there are people who consider him a cold, reasoning machine, take him for a dry formula-fanatic who knows people only as 'historical categories' and impassively plays with them as with billiard balls."

The remarks dropped by Lenin filled me with such deep emotion that I jotted them down at once in general outline, just as I used to do during my first sojourn on the sacred soil of revolutionary Soviet Russia, when day after day I entered into my diary every detail I thought worthwhile.

Some other statements Lenin made at that time, during a talk with me, have remained deeply embedded in my soul.

I, like many other arrivals from Western countries in those days, had to pay for changing my way of life and got sick. Lenin came over to see me. Like the most tender of mothers he solicitously enquired whether I was receiving proper medical attention and food, was anxious to know what I needed, and so forth. Behind him I saw the kind face of Comrade Krupskaya. Lenin doubted whether everything was really as fine as I thought. He was particularly put out because I lived on the fourth floor of a house which had a lift that did not work.

"Precisely like the love of revolution displayed by the followers of Kautsky and their effort to achieve it," Lenin remarked sarcastically.

Our conversation soon took a political turn.

The Red Army's withdrawal from Poland chilled like a wet blanket the revolutionary hopes we had cherished when the Soviet troops by a bold and lightning-like thrust had reached Warsaw. This untoward event frustrated our dreams.

I described to Lenin the impression produced both on the revolutionary vanguard of the German proletariat, on the Scheidemanns and Dittmanns, and on the petty and big bourgeoisie by the Red Army men with Soviet stars on their peaked hats, their military uniforms worn to tatters, and frequently in civilian clothes, shod with bast shoes or torn boots, and mounted on their spry little horses, as they came into sight at the very borders of Germany. "Will they manage to hold Poland, will they cross the German border, and what will happen then?" Such were the questions that then perplexed the minds of men in Germany. Beer-saloon strategists already prepared to win renown in finding answers for them. And the discovery was made that in all classes, in all social strata, there was much more chauvinist hatred for whiteguard imperialist Poland than for the "hereditary foe", the French.

However, even stronger and more insurmountable than the chauvinist hatred for the Poles and the reverent awe in which they stood of the sanctity of the Versailles Treaty was their fear of the spectre of revolution. Both loud-mouthed superpatriots and gently babbling pacifists sought

escape from this menace. The big and petty bourgeoisie together with their fellow-travellers, the reformist elements stemming from the proletariat, thus viewed the further development of events in Poland with one eye laughing and the other crying.

Lenin listened attentively to my detailed account of the behaviour of the Communist Party as well as of the reformist party and the trade-union leaders.

He sat there silent for a few minutes, absorbed in thought.

"Yes," he said finally, "what happened in Poland was perhaps bound to happen. You of course know all the circumstances which brought it about that our intrepid victorious vanguard could not receive any reinforcement from the infantry nor any weapons or even stale bread in sufficient quantity, and therefore had to requisition grain and other prime necessities from the Polish peasants and petty bourgeoisie. This made the latter look upon the Red Army men as enemies and not as liberating brothers. Needless to say their feelings, thoughts and actions, far from being socialist or revolutionary, were nationalist, chauvinist, imperialist. The peasants and workers, gulled by the followers of Pilsudski* and Daszyński, defended their class enemies, allowed our gallant Red Army men to starve to death, enticed them into ambuscades and killed them.

"Our Budyonny** must now be considered probably the most brilliant cavalry officer in the world. You know, of course, that he comes from the peasant stock. Like the soldiers of the French revolutionary army who carried their marshal's batons in their knapsacks, he carried his baton in his saddle bag. He has a remarkable strategic instinct. He is brave to the point of folly, to the point of recklessness. He shares with his cavalrymen all the bitterest deprivations and greatest hazards. For him his men are willing to let themselves be hacked to pieces. He alone is worth whole squadrons. However, all these superior traits possessed by Budyonny and other revolutionary military leaders were unable

* J. Pilsudski—head of the Polish state and reactionary dictator (1918-22). One of the organisers of bourgeois Poland's war against Soviet Russia.—*Ed.*

** S. M. Budyonny (b. 1883)—Soviet military leader and statesman. Commanded First Mounted Army (1919-20). Marshal of the Soviet Union.—*Ed.*

to counter-balance our military and technical shortcomings.

"Do you happen to know that the conclusion of peace with Poland* encountered great resistance here at first, just as had been the case with the Brest-Litovsk Treaty?** I had to wage a most desperate struggle, as I stood for accepting the terms of peace, which undoubtedly favoured the Poles and were very harsh for us. Almost all our experts claimed that if the state of affairs in Poland, particularly her straitened financial circumstances, were taken into consideration, peace terms much more in our favour could be obtained, especially if we could still carry on hostilities for a while. In that event even complete victory would not be beyond the range of possibility. If the war were to continue the national contradictions in Eastern Galicia and other parts of Poland would considerably weaken the military strength of imperialist official Poland. In spite of the French subsidies and credits, the constantly growing military expenditures and the impoverished Polish treasury would ultimately stir the peasants and workers to action. Other facts were pointed to as additional proof that if the war were continued our chances would steadily improve."

After a brief pause Lenin resumed:

"I myself think our position did not at all call for peace at any price. We could have held out for the winter. But I figured that from the political point of view it would be wiser to meet the enemy half-way. The temporary sacrifices demanded by an onerous peace seemed cheaper to me than a continuation of the war. In the long run our relations with Poland have only benefited by this. We are using the peace with Poland to tackle Wrangel with might and main, and deal him such a crushing blow that he will have to leave us in peace forever after. Soviet Russia stands only to gain if she shows by her conduct that she is waging war solely in self-defence and in defence of the revolution, that she is the only big country in the world that stands for peace, that it is not in her nature to want to seize anybody's territory, subjugate any nation or in general embark on any

* Peace treaty with Poland concluded in Riga, March 18, 1921.—*Ed.*

** Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty between Soviet Russia and Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria, signed on March 3, 1918.—*Ed.*

imperialist adventure. But the cardinal point was this: could we, without the most imperative necessity, have consigned the Russian people to the horrors and sufferings of yet another winter campaign? Could we have sent once more to the front our heroic Red Army men, our workers and peasants, who had already suffered so many privations? After many years of imperialist and then of civil war should we start a new winter campaign, in which millions would starve, freeze, perish in silent despair. Provisions and clothes were at a low ebb. The workers were groaning and the peasants grumbling, constantly having to give without ever any return.... No, I could not stand the bare idea of the horror in store for our people from another winter campaign. We simply had to make peace."

As Lenin spoke his face seemed to shrivel up before my very eyes. It was furrowed by innumerable big and small wrinkles, each one the result of great worry or gnawing pain.... Soon he left.

He managed however to tell me incidentally that ten thousand leather suits had been ordered for the Red Army men assigned to take Perekop from the sea. But before these suits were ready we had cause to rejoice over the news that Soviet Russia's fearless defenders, led by the gallant commander Frunze,* had taken the isthmus by storm. This was a military exploit without precedent, the glory of which was shared by men and leaders alike.

It meant one worry less for Lenin—no prospective winter campaign on the Southern Front either.

From My Memorandum Book**

Comrade Lenin repeatedly discussed with me the problem of women's rights. He obviously attributed great importance to the women's movement because it was to him

* M. V. Frunze (1885-1925)—soldier and prominent leader of the Communist Party. During the Civil War commanded troops of Eastern, Turkestan and Southern fronts. Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs (1925).—*Ed.*

** Reminiscences. Written in 1925.—*Ed.*

so essential a part of the mass movement in general that under certain conditions it might become its decisive sector. He took it for granted that for a Communist full social equality of women was fundamental, absolutely beyond dispute.

We had our first lengthy talk on this subject in the autumn of 1920, in Lenin's big study in the Kremlin.* Lenin sat at his desk, which was covered with books and papers in evidence of his voracious appetite for study and for work, but without the disorder associated with genius.

"We certainly must set up a powerful international women's movement on a clear and definite theoretical basis," he began our talk after greeting me. "There can be no good practice without Marxist theory; that's clear. We Communists need utmost clarity of principle in this question too. We must draw a sharp line between us and all other parties. True enough, our Second International Congress unfortunately did not succeed in discussing the status of women. It posed the question but did not have time to take a definite stand. The thing got stuck in the committee stage. The committee is to work out a resolution, theses and a concrete line but has made little progress so far. You should help it."**

I had already heard from others what Lenin was now telling me and I expressed my amazement. I was full of enthusiasm about everything Russian women had done during the revolution and what they were doing now in its defence and further development. As for the status and activity of women in the Bolshevik Party, I thought that in this respect it was nothing short of exemplary. It alone supplies the international communist women's movement with valuable trained and tested forces, at the same time serving as a great historical model.

"That is true, quite true," Lenin remarked with a faint smile. "In Petrograd, here in Moscow, and in cities and industrial centres situated far from them, proletarian womanhood showed up splendidly during the revolution. We would not have won without them. Or would scarcely have won.

* This talk took place between September 22 and 28, 1920.—*Ed.*

** The agenda of the Third Congress of the Comintern included the question "On the Women's Movement", the Congress adopting the theses on "The Methods and Forms of Work Among Women".—*Ed.*

That is my opinion. What courage they displayed and how courageous they are also today! Imagine the suffering and privation they are enduring. But they are holding out because they want to defend the Soviets, because they want freedom and communism. Yes, our working women are magnificent, they are class-conscious fighters. They are worthy of our admiration and love. In general it must be acknowledged that even the ladies from the Constitutional-Democrats [party of the big bourgeoisie] in Petrograd displayed greater courage during the fighting against us than the military cadets.

"It's true that we have reliable, intelligent and tireless women in our Party. They are able to hold responsible posts in Soviets, Executive Committees, People's Commissariats, and public offices. Many of them work day and night either in the Party or among the worker and peasant masses or in the Red Army. That is of great value to us. This is important for women all over the world, as it is evidence of the capacity of women, of the great value of the work they do for society. The first proletarian dictatorship is really paving the way to complete social equality of women. It uproots more prejudice than piles of feminist literature. However, in spite of all this we do not yet have a communist international women's movement and we must have one at any price. We must proceed at once to set up such a movement. Without such a movement the work of our International and of its parties is incomplete and never will be complete. And our revolutionary work must be fulfilled in its entirety. Tell me, please, how is communist work getting on abroad?"

I told him all the information I could gather, with connections between the parties affiliated to the Comintern as poor and irregular as they were at the time. Lenin listened attentively, slightly bent forward, with no signs of boredom, impatience or fatigue, keenly following even details of secondary interest. I never knew anyone who was a better listener than he, who could follow the main trend and establish causal relationships faster than he. That was evident from the short and always very precise questions he asked from time to time about what I told him, and from his way of returning again and again to particulars of my narrative. Lenin then made some brief notes.

I naturally spoke in greatest detail about the state of affairs in Germany. I told him that Rosa* attached great importance to drawing the widest masses of women into the revolutionary struggle. When the Communist Party was founded Rosa insisted that a newspaper dealing with the women's movement should be published. A day and a half before he was murdered Léon Jogiches** discussed with me the Party's plan of work. It was to be our last meeting. He gave me various tasks to perform, among them a plan for carrying on organisational work among the working women. At its first underground conference the Party took up this question. The trained and tested women agitators and leaders that had become prominent before and during the war had almost all remained in the Social-Democratic parties of both complexions and kept the agitated masses of working women under their sway. However, among the women too a small nucleus of energetic, self-sacrificing comrades had already been formed, who, I stated, were taking part in all the work and in the struggle of our Party. On the other hand, the Party itself also already organised planned activity among the working women. Of course all this was merely a start, but a good start.

"Not bad, not at all bad," Lenin said. "The energy, self-sacrifice and inspiration so frequently seen among communist women, their courage and good sense during the illegal and semi-legal periods, augur well for the development of our work. The winning of the masses and the organisation of demonstrations are valuable factors for making the Party and its might grow. But how about getting a clear understanding of the fundamentals of this question and teaching them to the masses—how are you getting along in this respect? After all, that is the thing that counts most in work among the masses. I cannot remember at the moment who said: 'It takes inspiration to do great deeds.' We and the working people of the whole world still have to do really great deeds. Well then, what inspires your comrades, the proletarian women of Germany? What about their proletarian class-consciousness? Are their interests, their activity concentrated on the political demands of the moment? On what are they focussing their thoughts?

"I heard strange things on this topic from Russian and German comrades. I must tell you about this. I was informed that in Hamburg a talented communist woman is getting out a newspaper for prostitutes and is trying to organise them for the revolutionary struggle. Now Rosa, a true Communist, acted and felt like a human being when she wrote a certain article in defence of a prostitute who had landed in jail for violating a police regulation connected with her sorry profession. They deserve to be pitied, these double victims of bourgeois society. Victims, firstly, of its accursed system of property and, secondly, of its accursed moral hypocrisy. That is clear. Only a coarse-grained, short-sighted person could forget this. However, to understand this is one thing. But it is quite another thing—how shall I put it? —to organise the prostitutes as a special revolutionary shock detachment and publish a trade-union paper for them. Are there no industrial working women left in Germany who need organising, who ought to have their newspaper, who should be enlisted in your struggle? Here we have morbid deviation. This strongly reminds me of a literary vogue that made a sweet madonna out of every prostitute. True enough, the root of the matter was sound there too: social sympathy, indignation against the moral hypocrisy of the honourable bourgeoisie. But the healthy principle was subjected to bourgeois corrosion and became degenerate. In general prostitution even in our country will still require the adoption of many measures difficult to carry out. Return the prostitute to productive work; find her a place in the social economy! That's what it all comes down to. But with the state of our economy as it is and all other present conditions figured in, it is a difficult and complicated matter. Here you have a piece of the woman problem that confronts us, after the conquest of political power by the proletariat, in all its magnitude demanding solution. It will still create much trouble, even for us in Soviet Russia.

"But let us return to your special case in Germany. The Party ought under no circumstances to look calmly upon such improper acts of its members. It causes confusion and

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* Rosa Luxemburg.—*Ed.*

** Léon Jogiches (Jan Tyszka) (1867-1919)—prominent leader of the Polish and German working-class movement. Secretary of the Central Committee of the German Communist Party. Arrested in March 1919 and then killed in Berlin prison.—*Ed.*

dissipates our forces. And what have you yourself been doing to stop this?"

But before I could answer Lenin continued:

"The enumeration of your sins, Clara, is not yet complete. I have furthermore been told that at evenings arranged for reading and discussion with working women, sex and marriage problems are the main topics taken up. These subjects receive most attention in your political instruction and educational work. I could not believe my ears when I heard that. The first state of proletarian dictatorship fights the counter-revolutionaries of the entire world. The situation in Germany demands the greatest unity of all proletarian revolutionary forces to be able to withstand the constantly increasing pressure of the counter-revolution. And at such a time active communist women ponder over sex problems and the forms of marriage past, present and future! They consider it their foremost duty to enlighten working women on questions in this sphere. It is said that a pamphlet written by a Vienna communist authoress on the sex question enjoys the greatest popularity. What rot that booklet is! Whatever is right in it the workers read long ago in Bebel.* Only not in the tedious, cut-and-dried form found in the pamphlet in question but in the form of gripping agitation full of attacks on bourgeois society. The mention in the pamphlet of Freud's hypothesis is designed to give it a scientific veneer, but the thing is nothing but a miserable botch. Freud's theory has now become some sort of fad. I have no confidence in sex theories expounded in various articles, scientific papers, pamphlets, and the like—briefly, in that specific literature which has sprung up so luxuriantly on the dung heap of bourgeois society. I do not trust those who are constantly and persistently absorbed in problems of sex, like an Indian fakir in the contemplation of his navel. It seems to me that this superabundance of sex theories, which for the most part are mere hypotheses, and frequently arbitrary ones at that, is a result of personal wants. It springs from the desire to justify one's own abnormal or excessive sex life before bourgeois morality and to plead for tolerance towards oneself. This veiled respect for bourgeois morality is as repugnant to me as is the delving with

* A. Bebel's book *Die Frau und der Sozialismus.—Ed.*

relish into questions of sex. No matter how rebellious and revolutionary this avocation may be made to appear, it in the long run is thoroughly bourgeois anyhow. It is an avocation particularly favoured by intellectuals and social strata akin to them. There is no room for it in the Party, among the class-conscious fighting proletariat."

I remarked that where private property and the bourgeois social order prevailed problems of sex and marriage greatly harassed the lives of women of all social classes and strata. For women the war and its consequences had brought to an unusually acute stage the conflicts and sufferings that had formerly existed precisely in the sphere of sex relations. Problems formerly concealed from women were now laid bare. To this had been added the atmosphere of incipient revolution. The world of old emotions and thoughts was cracking up. Erstwhile social connections were weakening and breaking. Embryos of new, still unformed ideological premises for relations between man and man were coming into existence. Interest in these problems was explained by the need to size up the situation, by the need of a new orientation. Here one could also sense a reaction against the distortions and the deceits of bourgeois society. Modification of the form of marriage and of the family in the course of history, in their dependence on economics, was a convenient way of eradicating from the mind of the working woman her preconceived notion that bourgeois society was eternal. The historico-critical attitude toward the bourgeois system must now be superseded by an irrevocable dismemberment of it, by an exposure of its essence and of the consequences it called forth, including the branding of false sex morality. All roads led to Rome. Every Marxist analysis of an important part of the ideological superstructure of society, of an outstanding social phenomenon, must lead to an analysis of the bourgeois system as a whole and of its basis—private property in the means of production; and every such analysis should lead to the conclusion that "Carthage must be destroyed". Lenin nodded with a smile.

"Yes, that's how it is! You defend your comrades and your Party like a lawyer. What you say is of course true. But that can at best serve as an excuse but not as a justification of the mistake committed in Germany. A mistake is a

mistake. Can you assure me in all sincerity that during reading and discussion time questions of sex and marriage are discussed from the point of view of consistent, vital historical materialism? After all, this presupposes deep, many-sided knowledge, exact Marxist mastery of a vast amount of material. What forces do you have today for that job? If you had such forces it could not have happened that a pamphlet like the one we spoke about should be used for instruction in evening circles for reading and discussion. This pamphlet is being recommended and disseminated instead of being criticised. Where in the long run will this unsatisfactory, un-Marxist discussion of the problem lead to? To the point where sex and marriage problems will no longer be taken to be only parts of the main social problem. On the contrary, the great social problem will itself begin to be considered a part, an appendage to the sex problem. The main thing recedes into the background as being secondary. That not only prevents clarity in this question. It befogs thought in general, obscures the class-consciousness of the working women.

"One more observation that may not be superfluous. Solomon the Wise told us there is a time for everything. Tell me, please, is this the time to keep working women busy for whole months at a stretch with such things as how to love or be loved, how to woo and be wooed? And of course how it was done in the past, how it is done at present, how it will be done in the future, and among the various peoples. And that is proudly styled historical materialism. Nowadays all thoughts of working women should be riveted on the proletarian revolution, which will lay the foundation, among other things, of a real change in the conditions of marriage and sex relations. But at the present time we must give first attention to other problems than the form of marriage prevalent among the Australian Negroes and marriage within the family in primitive times. As hitherto, history has placed on the order of the day for the German proletarian the problem of Soviets, of the Versailles Treaty and its influence on the life of the masses of women; the problem of unemployment, of falling wages, of taxes and many other things. To be brief, I remain of the opinion that this sort of political and social education of working women is wrong, absolutely wrong. How could you keep quiet about it? You

should have used the weight of your authority against this sort of thing."

I explained to my heatedly arguing friend that I had never failed to criticise on every proper occasion, to voice my objections to the leading women comrades and to come out against such doings in various places. But, as he very well knew, no prophet is honoured in his own country or in his own house. By my criticism I had drawn upon myself the suspicion that "in my mind survivals of Social-Democratic attitudes and old-fashioned philistinism were still strongly entrenched". However in the end this criticism had its effect. Sex and marriage no longer loom largest in circles or at discussion evenings.

Lenin resumed the thread of his thoughts.

"Yes, yes, I know that," he said, "I too am badly suspected of philistinism on that account. But I don't get excited over that. Yellow-beaked fledglings who have just about been hatched from their bourgeois-tainted eggs are all so terribly clever. We have to reconcile ourselves to this without mending our ways. The youth movement is also sick from the modern treatment of the sex problem and the excessive interest in it."

Lenin emphasised the word "modern" with an ironical, deprecating gesture.

"I was also told that sex problems are a favourite subject in your youth organisations too, and that there are hardly enough lecturers on this subject. This is an outrage particularly damaging, particularly dangerous to the youth movement. It can easily lead to sexual excesses, to overstimulation of sex life and to squandering the health and strength of the youth. You must combat such occurrences too. There is no lack of points of contact between the youth movement and the women's movement. Our communist women must everywhere carry on planned work together with the youth. This elevates and transposes them from the world of individual motherhood to the world of social motherhood. Assistance must be given to every awakening of social life and activity of women to enable them to outgrow the narrowness of their philistine, individualistic psychology centred on home and family. But this is incidental.

"In our country too a considerable part of the youth is zealously engaged in 'revising bourgeois conceptions and

morals' in the sex question. I must add, a considerable part of our best boys and girls, of our really most promising youth. Things are precisely as you have indicated just now. In the atmosphere created by the aftermath of war and incipient revolution old ideological values tumble, losing their power of restraint. New values crystallise slowly, by struggle. Views on relations between man and man, and relations between man and woman, are becoming revolutionised; feelings and thoughts are also becoming revolutionised. New delimitations are being set up between the rights of the individual and the rights of the collective body, and hence also the duties of the individual. This is the slow and often very painful process of passing away and coming into being. All this applies also to the field of sex relations, marriage, family. The decay, putrescence, filth of bourgeois marriage with its difficult dissolution, its liberty for the husband and bondage for the wife, and its detestably false sex morality and relations fill the best representatives of humanity with the utmost loathing.

"The laws on marriage and the family that exist in the bourgeois state enhance the evil and sharpen the conflicts. This is the yoke of 'sacred private property'. It sanctifies all this venality, baseness, muck. All the rest is brought to completion by the conventional deception of 'respectable' bourgeois society. People revolt against the prevailing abominations and perversions. And in this epoch, when mighty states are crumbling to dust, when old relations of domination are being torn asunder, when a whole social world is beginning to perish, the sensations of individual man undergo quick modification. The stimulating thirst for variety of enjoyment readily acquires irresistible force. Marriage forms and sexual union in the bourgeois sense no longer satisfy. In the sphere of marriage and sexual relations a revolution is approaching in keeping with the proletarian revolution. Naturally the exceedingly tangled interlacement of questions thus brought to the fore deeply engrosses both women and the youth. Both the former and the latter suffer greatly from the messy state of sex relations. The youth is up in arms against this with the impetuosity characteristic of it. That is understandable. Nothing could be more false than to begin to preach to the youth monastic asceticism and the sanctity of filthy bourgeois morals. However one

would hardly say it was a good thing that in these years sex problems, violently pushed into the limelight by natural causes, were becoming the central feature of youth psychology. The consequences are sometimes nothing short of fatal.

"Youth's changed attitude to questions of sexual life is of course based, 'as a matter of principle', on theory. Many call their position 'revolutionary' and 'communist'. They sincerely believe that this is so. I, an old man, am not impressed by this. Although I am anything but a morose ascetic, yet quite frequently this so-called 'new sex life' of the youth—and often enough of grown-ups too—seems to me purely bourgeois, seems to me to be just a variety of the good old bourgeois brothel. All this has not the faintest resemblance to free love, as we Communists understand it. You of course have heard about the famous theory that in communist society satisfying one's sexual desire and craving for love is as simple and trivial as drinking a glass of water. Our youth has gone mad, absolutely mad, over this 'glass-of-water theory'. It has proved fatal to many a boy and girl. Its devotees assert that it is a Marxist theory. Thanks for such Marxism, which deduces all phenomena and all changes in the ideological superstructure of society directly, straight and unfailingly from this one and only source—the economic basis. This is not at all such a simple matter. A certain Frederick Engels long ago established this truth, which concerns historical materialism.

"I do not consider the famous 'glass-of-water theory' as Marxist at all and besides think it is anti-social. What manifests itself in sex life is not only the contribution made by nature but also an admixture derived from culture, be it on a high level or low. Engels pointed out in his *Origin of the Family** how significant it was that simple sexual inclination developed into individual sex love and became refined. Relations between the sexes are not simply a game between social economics and a physical need. To strive to reduce changes in these relations, taken in isolation from their general connection with the whole of ideology, directly to the economic basis of society would not be Marxism but

* F. Engels' book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.—Ed.*

rationalism. Of course thirst must be quenched. But will a normal person under normal conditions lie down in the gutter and drink from a puddle? Or even from a glass the edge of which has been touched by dozens of lips? But the social aspect is the most important. Drinking water is really an individual matter. But in love-making two take part and a third, a new life, comes into being. Herein lies a social interest; a duty to the collective body arises.

"As a Communist I do not like the 'glass-of-water' theory in the least despite its beautiful label: 'emancipated love'. Moreover, it is neither new nor communistic. Perhaps you will recall that this theory was disseminated in fiction about the middle of the past century as the 'emancipation of the heart'. In bourgeois practice it was turned into the emancipation of the body. It was preached with much more talent than now. How things are with the practice of it I am unable to judge.

"Not that I want my criticism to breed asceticism. That never occurred to me. Communism ought to bring with it not asceticism but joy of life and good cheer called forth, among other things, by a life replete with love. However, in my opinion the plethora of sex life observable today brings neither joy of life nor cheerfulness, but on the contrary diminishes them. In revolutionary times this is bad, very bad, indeed.

"The youth is particularly in need of joy of life and cheerfulness. Healthy sports: gymnastics, swimming, excursions, physical exercise of every description; also a diversity of intellectual pursuits: teaching, criticism, research; and all of this in combination, as far as possible. That will mean more to the youth than eternal lectures and discussions on sex problems and so-called 'utilisation of life'. *Mens sana in corpore sano.* Neither monk nor Don Juan nor yet a German philistine to act the part of a mean. After all, you know young Comrade XYZ. A handsome, highly gifted youth. Yet I am afraid that in spite of all he will never amount to anything. He has one love affair after another. No good will come of this, either for the political struggle or for the revolution. Nor will I vouch for the reliability or staunchness in the struggle of women whose personal romance is intertwined with politics, or for men who run after every petticoat, and allow themselves to be

mixed up with every slip of a girl. No, no; that does not go well together with revolution."

Lenin jumped up, striking the table with his hand, and walked a few steps up and down the room.

"The revolution demands of the masses and the individual concentration, the straining of every nerve. It does not tolerate orgiastic states like those habitual with the decadent heroes and heroines of D'Annunzio.* Laxity in sexual matters is bourgeois; it is a sign of degeneration. The proletariat is an ascending class. It requires no intoxicant to stunt or excite it. It has no need of intoxication either by sexual looseness or by means of alcohol. It must not and does not want to forget the vileness, filth, and barbarity of capitalism. It derives its strongest stimulants to struggle from the position of its class, from the communist ideal. What it needs is clarity, clarity, and once more—clarity. Therefore, I repeat: there must be no weakness, no waste or destruction of energy. Self-possession, self-discipline are not slavery; they are necessary also in love. But excuse me, Clara, I have strayed far from the point at which our conversation started. Why didn't you call me to order? Alarm set me talking. I am very anxious about the future of our youth. It is part and parcel of the revolution. And if harmful phenomena of bourgeois society begin to spread to the world of revolution, like the widely ramified roots of certain weeds, it is best to combat this in time. The questions touched upon are also part of the women's problem."

Lenin spoke with great vivacity and conviction. I felt that every word came from his innermost soul. This was confirmed by the expression of his face. Energetic gestures at times punctuated his thoughts. I was astonished at the way he paid so much attention to isolated happenings and analysed them right along with highly important political problems. And not only happenings in Soviet Russia but also in capitalist countries. Like the splendid Marxist that he was, he apprehended the individual phenomenon wherever and in whatever form it manifested itself, in its connection with the large, the whole, evaluating its significance

* D'Annunzio Gabriele (1863-1938)—pen name of Italian writer G. Rapagnetta who became advocate of imperialism and fascism after the First World War.—*Ed.*

for that whole. His will, his whole life had only one purpose, unshakable like a rock—acceleration of the revolution, the cause of the masses. He estimated everything in terms of the impact of this acceleration on the conscious fighting forces, both national and international, of the revolution, inasmuch as his mind, while taking into account the historically evolved specific features of each separate country at each separate stage of its development, always visioned a single, indivisible world-wide proletarian revolution.

"How I regret, Comrade Lenin," I exclaimed, "that your words have not been heard by hundreds and thousands of people. Me you do not have to convince; you know that. But how important it is that friend and enemy alike should hear your opinion!"

Lenin laughed good-naturedly.

"Some day perhaps I shall speak or write on the questions we have gone over. But later, not now. Now all our time and strength must be concentrated on something else. There are more important and more difficult jobs to do. The struggle to retain and strengthen Soviet power is not yet over by far. We must try to stomach the outcome of the Polish War as best we can. Wrangel is still holding on in the South. True, I am firmly convinced that we shall cope with him. This will make the British and the French imperialists and their diminutive vassals hesitate. The most difficult part of our task is still ahead—restoration. While this process is going on problems concerning sex relations, marriage and the family will gain importance. Meanwhile you must fight when and where there is need. You should not allow these questions to be handled in any other but the Marxist way or to serve as the basis for disorganising deviations and distortions. Now at last I have reached the point of discussing your work."

Lenin consulted his watch.

"The time at my disposal," he said, "has already half expired. I chatted too long. You are to write the leading theses on communist work among women. I know your principled approach and practical experience. Therefore our talk about this work will be brief. So you better get busy on the job. What do you think the theses should look like?"

I gave him a succinct account of my ideas. Lenin nodded

a few times approvingly without interrupting. When I was through I looked at him questioningly.

"Right," he remarked. . . . "It would also be a good thing if you were to address a meeting of responsible women Party workers on the subject and afterwards to discuss it. Too bad Comrade Inessa* is not here. She is sick and has left for the Caucasus. After the discussion write the theses. A committee will look them over and the Executive Committee will make the final decision. I shall take up only some of the many points, on which I fully share your views. They seem to me important also for our current agitational and propaganda work since we want to prepare successful demonstrations and victorious battles.

"The theses must strongly emphasise that the true emancipation of women can be achieved only through communism. You must thoroughly analyse the question of the insoluble connection between the status of women as human beings and members of society, and the private ownership of the instruments of production. This will provide a reliable line of demarcation separating us from the bourgeois movement for the 'emancipation of women'. We thereby also lay the groundwork for examining the women's question as part of the social, the working-class question and thus will make it possible to knit it firmly together with the proletarian class struggle and the revolution. The women's communist movement itself must be a mass movement, a part of the general mass movement; and not only part of the movement of the proletarians but of all the exploited and oppressed, of all victims of capitalism. Herein lies the significance of the women's movement for the class struggle of the proletariat and its historic creative task: the creation of communist society. We have every right to be proud that the flower of revolutionary womanhood is to be found in our Party, in the Comintern. But this is not yet decisive. We must enlist the vast millions of working women of town and country in our struggle, and particularly in the communist recon-

* Inessa Armand (Y.F.) (1875-1920)—professional revolutionary, leader of the international working-class and communist movement. During the First World War participated in preparing international women's and youth conferences. Active participant in the October Socialist Revolution in Russia.—*Ed.*

struction of society. There can be no real mass movement without the women.

"From our ideological conceptions organisational measures are derived. No separate organisations for communist women! Communists are equal members of the Party, whether they are men or women, and they have the same rights and duties. There can be no difference of opinion here. However we must not shut our eyes to facts. The Party must have its organs: working groups, commissions, committees, sections or whatever else they will be called. Their special tasks will be: to rouse the masses of the women, bring them into contact with the Party and keep them under its influence. This of course requires that we should carry on systematic work among these masses. We must teach the women who have been shaken out of their passivity, recruit them and arm them for the proletarian class struggle under the leadership of the Communist Party. I have in view not only proletarian women who work in mills or cook the family meal. I also have in mind the peasant women and the women of the various sections of the lower middle class. All of them are also victims of capitalism and have been such even more ever since the war. The lack of interest in politics and the otherwise anti-social and backward psychology of all these masses of women, the narrow scope of their activities and the whole pattern of their lives are pertinent facts for you. It would be senseless not to use them, absolutely senseless. We must have our own bodies for work among them, and special methods of agitation, as well as various forms of organisation. This is not bourgeois 'feminism'; it is practical revolutionary expediency."

I told Lenin that his arguments strongly supported my position. Many comrades, very good ones too, strenuously fought the idea that the Party should set up special bodies for planned work among women at large. They called this a return to Social-Democratic traditions, to the notorious "emancipation of women" movement. They claimed that once Communist Parties fully recognise in principle the equality of women they should carry on work among the working people without introducing any divisions. The approach to men and to women should be alike. Any attempt to take into consideration the circumstances noted by Lenin in regard to agitation and organisation ought to be branded

as opportunism, as treachery and a renunciation of principles by the advocates of the contrary view.

"This is nothing new; moreover, it is wholly inconclusive," Lenin objected. "Do not let anybody mislead you. Why are there nowhere as many women in the Party as men, not even in Soviet Russia? Why are so few working women organised in trade unions? These facts are apt to make you stop and think. The denial that there is any need for special bodies for our work among the masses of women is a manifestation of the exceedingly principled and highly radical position taken by our 'dear friends' of the Communist Labour Party. They opine that only one form of organisation should exist: a workers' union. I know about that. Principles are invoked by many revolutionary-minded but confused heads 'whenever a shortage of understanding occurs', i.e., whenever reason refuses to perceive sober facts that ought to be heeded. How do such guardians of the 'purity of principles' cope with the necessities imposed upon us by history in our revolutionary policy? All these arguments are blown to smithereens by inexorable necessity: we cannot make the dictatorship of the proletariat a reality without the millions of women, we cannot without them engage in communist construction. We must find a way to them and must do much studying and probing in order to find that way.

"It is therefore absolutely right that we should be putting forward demands for the benefit of women. This is not a minimum programme, not a programme of reforms in the Social-Democratic spirit, in the spirit of the Second International. This is not an admission that we believe in the eternity or even the prolonged existence of the bourgeoisie and its state. Nor is it an attempt to tranquillise the masses of women with reforms and divert them from the path of revolutionary struggle. There is nothing in common here with reformist bamboozling. Our demands are merely the practical outcome of the dire need and shameful humiliation which the weak and unenfranchised woman must bear under the bourgeois system.

"We thus testify to the fact that we know these needs, feel the oppression of the women, feel the privileged position of the men and hate—yes, hate and want to obliterate everything that oppresses and harasses the working woman,

the wife of the working man, the peasant woman, the wife of the little man and even in many respects the woman from the wealthy classes. The rights and social measures we demand of bourgeois society for women are proof that we understand the needs of women and will pay attention to them under the proletarian dictatorship. Not of course by adopting soporific measures of tutelage but like revolutionaries, by calling upon the women to take a hand themselves as equals in the rebuilding of the economy and the ideological superstructure."

I assured Lenin that I was of the same opinion but that this point of view would undoubtedly encounter opposition. Uncertain, timid minds would reject it as "dangerous opportunism". Nor could it be denied that our present demands for women might be incorrectly understood and interpreted.

"Well, what of it?" Lenin exclaimed, somewhat irritated. "We take this risk in everything we say and do. If we are going to let such fear keep us from doing what is advisable and necessary we may simply become metamorphosed into Indian stylites. Don't stir, only do not stir, or we shall come tumbling down from the high style of our principles! In our case not only what we demand matters but also the way we do it. I believe I made this sufficiently plain. Naturally we must not in our propaganda make a fetish out of our demands for women. No, we must fight, now for these and now for those demands, depending on the existing conditions, always linking them up of course with the general interests of the proletariat.

"Naturally every tussle sets us at loggerheads with the respectable bourgeois clique and its no less respectable reformist lackeys. This compels the latter either to fight hand in hand with us, under our leadership, which they do not want, or to drop their mask. Thus the struggle brings us into bold relief, makes clear our communist face. It evokes confidence in us among the masses of women, who feel they are exploited, enslaved, crushed underfoot by the domination of the men, by the power enjoyed by their employers and bourgeois society as a whole. Betrayed and abandoned by all, the working women begin to realise that they must fight together with us. Must we on top of this also assure each other that the struggle for women's rights must be linked up with our principal aim: the conquest of power

and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat? This at present is and will continue to be our alpha and omega. That is clear, absolutely clear. But the broad masses of working women will not feel an irresistible desire to share with us the struggle for state power if we constantly harp on this one demand, even if we blare it forth on the trumpets of Jericho. No, absolutely no! We must politically combine our appeal in the minds of the female masses at large with the sufferings, needs and wishes of the working women. They all ought to know that to them the proletarian dictatorship means complete equality of rights with men both under the law and in practice, in the family, state and society, and that it also spells the annihilation of the power of the bourgeoisie."

"Soviet Russia is proof of this," I exclaimed, "it will serve us as a great example!"

Lenin went on:

"Soviet Russia is bringing our demands for women to the fore in a new light. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat they are no longer an object of struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie, but serve as bricks for the building of communist society. This shows to the women on the other side of the border the decisive importance of the conquest of power by the proletariat. The difference between their status here and there must be exactly specified so that you may have the women in their mass with you in the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat. The mobilisation of the female masses, carried out with a clear understanding of principles and on a firm organisational basis, is a question of the life and victory of the Communist Party. But let us not deceive ourselves. Our national sections still do not have a correct understanding of this question. They remain passive and adopt a waiting attitude with regard to the task of creating a mass movement of the working women under communist leadership. They do not understand that developing such a mass movement and leading it constitutes a most important part of all Party activity, even half of the general Party work. Their occasional recognition of the need and value of a powerful communist women's movement with a clear aim is but a platonic acknowledgement and not a steady Party assignment or duty.

"They look upon agitational work and propaganda among

the masses of women and upon the task of awakening and revolutionising them as upon something of secondary importance, as a matter that concerns women Communists alone. The latter are rebuked because the matter does not move ahead faster and more energetically. This is wrong, wrong from the bottom up! Present-day separatism and equality of women is *à la rebours*, as the French say, i.e., equality of women inside out. What is at the bottom of the incorrect position of our national sections? (I am not speaking of Soviet Russia.) In the final analysis nothing other than underestimation of women and their work. That's just what it is. Unfortunately it may still be asserted of many of our comrades: 'Scratch a Communist and you will find a philistine.' Of course you have to scratch a sensitive spot —his psychological reaction to women. Could there be any more palpable proof than the common sight of a man calmly watching a woman wear herself out with trivial, monotonous work that exhausts her and consumes her time and strength, such as housework; watching her horizon shrinking at this work, her mind growing dull, her heartbeat faint, her will weak? I am not referring of course to bourgeois ladies who dump all housework, including the care of children, on hired help. What I say applies to the vast majority of women, including the wives of workers, even if these wives spend the whole day at the factory and themselves earn money.

"Very few husbands, even in proletarian circles, think of how greatly they could lighten the burdens and worries of their wives or relieve them entirely if they would lend a hand in this 'women's work'. But no, that would be against the 'rights and dignity of the husband'. He demands that he have rest and comfort. The domestic life of women is a daily sacrifice of self in a thousand insignificant trifles. The ancient rights of her husband, her lord and master, continue to assert themselves in concealed form. His slave objectively takes revenge on him, also in concealed form: woman's backwardness, her lack of understanding of her husband's revolutionary ideals is a drag on his good spirits and determination to fight. They are the tiny worms which imperceptibly, slowly but surely gnaw and undermine. I know the life of the workers, and not only from books. Our communist work among the masses of women and our political work in general includes considerable work in the up-

bringing of men. We must expunge, uproot the old slave-owner's point of view. Both in the Party and among the masses. That is one of our political tasks just as much as is the urgently necessary formation of a staff composed of comrades—men and women—who have received a thorough theoretical and practical training for carrying out and moving along the Party work among the labouring masses of women."

To my question about present-day conditions in Soviet Russia Lenin gave the following answer:

"The government of the proletarian dictatorship, of course in conjunction with the Communist Party and the trade unions, bends every effort to overcome the backward views of men and women and thus deprive the old, non-communist psychology of its very foundation. Is there any need to mention that here men and women have been made absolutely equal before the law? A sincere desire to give effect to this equality may be noted in all spheres. We are enlisting women into the work of Soviet economy, administration, legislation and government. We are opening to them all courses and educational institutions to improve their professional and social training. We are setting up public kitchens and dining-rooms, laundries and repair shops, crèches, kindergartens, children's homes and training institutions of every kind. In brief, we are seriously carrying out the requirement of our programme to shift the functions of management and upbringing in the individual household to society. In this way woman is being freed from her old domestic slavery and her dependence on her husband. She is offered every opportunity to engage in social activity in accordance with her capabilities and inclinations. Children are offered surroundings more favourable for their development than would await them at home. We have the most progressive female labour legislation in the world. It is put into effect by authorised representatives of organised labour. We set up maternity homes, mother-and-child homes, organise consultation rooms for mothers, courses on nursing children and care of young children, exhibitions on care for mother and child, and the like. We are making every effort to provide for needy and unemployed women.

"We know quite well that all this is still little in comparison with the needs of the masses of working women,

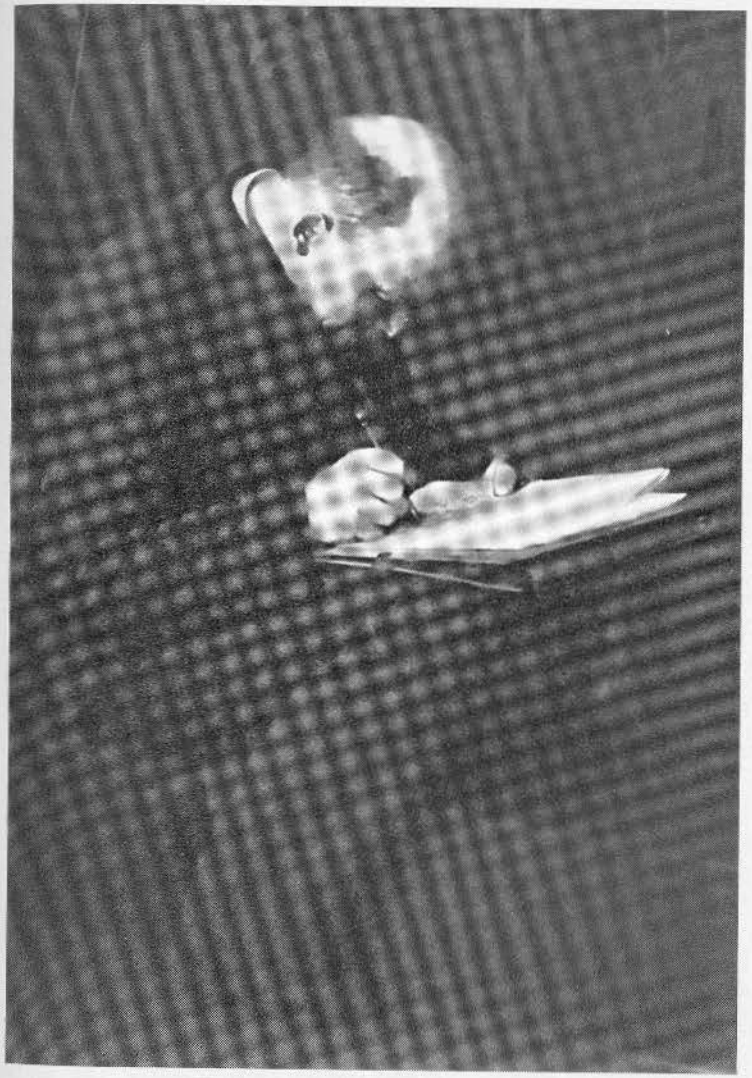
that it is still absolutely insufficient for their real emancipation. And yet it is an immense stride forward when we consider what there was in tsarist, capitalist Russia. It is also much as compared with the little that is being done where capitalism still holds undivided sway. This is a good beginning. The course taken is true and we shall elaborate it consistently, with all the energy at our command. You abroad may rest assured of that. With every day's existence of the Soviet state it becomes clearer that we cannot get ahead without the millions of women. Just imagine what this means in a country where a good 80 per cent of the population are peasants. Small peasant economy implies individual housekeeping and chaining women to it. You will have it much better and easier by far in this respect than we are having it, provided of course that your proletarian masses become conscious of their objective historical maturity for the seizure of power, for the revolution. We shall not give way to despair. Our forces grow as our difficulties increase. Practical necessity will impel us to find new ways of emancipating the masses of women. In union with the Soviet state comradely solidarity will accomplish wonders. Of course comradely solidarity in the communist, not bourgeois, sense in which it is preached by the reformists, whose revolutionary enthusiasm has evaporated like the smell of cheap vinegar. Personal initiative, which grows into collective activity and fuses with it, should go hand in glove with comradely solidarity. Under the proletarian dictatorship the emancipation of women, by making communism a reality, will take place also in the countryside. In this respect I expect much from the electrification of our industry and agriculture. That's a grand scheme. The difficulties in its way are great, monstrously great. To overcome them the powerful forces latent in the masses must be unbound and trained. Millions of women must take part in this."

During the last ten minutes there had twice been a knock but Lenin had continued to speak. Now he opened the door and shouted:

"I'm coming right now!"

Turning in my direction he added, smilingly:

"You know, Clara, I am going to take advantage of the fact that I was conversing with a woman and will give renowned female loquacity as the excuse for my lateness.



Lenin at the Third Comintern Congress. Moscow, June-July 1921

Although this time, as a matter of fact, it was the man and not the woman who did most of the talking. In general I must attest that you are really a conscientious listener. Perhaps it was just this that made me talk so much."

With this jocular remark Lenin helped me to put my coat on.

"You should dress more warmly," he suggested solicitously. "Moscow is not Stuttgart. You need somebody to look after you. Don't catch cold. Good-bye."

A firm handshake and he was gone.

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My next talk with Lenin on the women's movement took place about a fortnight later. Lenin came to see me. As almost always, his visit was unexpected, impromptu, and occurred during an intermission in the gigantic work that the leader of the victorious revolution was carrying on. Lenin looked very tired and worried. Wrangel had not yet been decisively defeated and the question of the food supply for the big cities faced the Soviet Government like an inexorable sphinx.

Lenin asked how the theses were coming along. I told him that a big commission had been in session at which all prominent communist women then in Moscow were present and spoke. The theses were ready and were now to be submitted to a small committee. Lenin pointed out that we should strive to have the Third World Congress examine the problem with due thoroughness.* This fact alone would overcome the prejudices of many comrades. Anyhow it was the communist women who ought to push this thing in the first place, and they ought to make a good job of it.

"Don't twitter, like a bunch of chatterboxes, but speak loud like fighters for a cause, and speak clearly and forcefully," Lenin said with animation. "A congress is not a parlour where women display their charm, as we read in novels.

* The Third Congress of the Comintern heard Clara Zetkin's report on the women's revolutionary movement and adopted the following resolutions: 1) On Strengthening the International Relations Among Women Communists and on the Work of the International Secretariat of the Comintern Among Women, and 2) On the Forms and Methods of Communist Work Among Women.—*Ed.*

A congress is an arena in which we fight for the knowledge we need for revolutionary action. Show that you can fight. In the first place, of course, against our enemies, but also within the Party, should the need arise. After all, the broad masses of women are at stake. Our Russian party will back every proposal and measure that will help to win over these masses. If the women are not with us the counter-revolutionaries may succeed in setting them against us. We must always bear this in mind."

"The mass of the women must become ours though they were riveted to heaven by chains," I said, carrying on Lenin's thought. "Here, in the hub of the revolution with its seething, throbbing life, I have evolved a plan for a grand international mass demonstration of the working women. I was particularly inspired to do this by your big non-partisan women's conferences and congresses. We should have tried to transform them from national into international ones. It is undoubtedly a fact that the world war and its aftermath have deeply shaken the vast bulk of the women of the various classes and sections of society. They have begun to ferment, they have been set in motion. Their distressing worries about securing a livelihood and a content for their life confront them with problems the existence of which most of them hardly suspected and only a small minority fully appreciated. Bourgeois society is unable to provide a satisfactory solution for them. Only communism can do that. We must compel the broad masses of women in the capitalist countries to realise this and for that purpose must call a non-partisan international women's congress."

Lenin did not reply at once. Wearing an introspective look and tightly compressing his lips with a slight protrusion of the lower he sat there for a while wrapt in deep thought.

"Yes, we must do that," was his reply. "The plan is fine. But a fine plan, and even an excellent one, is worth nothing unless it is well executed. Have you thought about its execution? What is your idea on that score?"

I explained to Lenin in detail what I considered ought to be done. My idea was first to form a committee of communist women from various countries in close and constant contact with our national sections to prepare for, hold and make use of the congress. Whether this committee was to

work officially and openly from the very start had to be weighed from the point of view of expediency. At any rate the first task of the committee members would be to make contact in each country with the women leaders of the organised female workers, with those of the proletarian political women's movement, with the bourgeois women's organisations of every trend and description, and finally with outstanding female physicians, teachers, writers, etc., and to form a national non-partisan preparatory committee. From among the members of these national committees an international committee was to be formed to arrange the convocation of the international congress and fix the agenda and the time and place of opening the congress.

In my opinion the congress ought to take up in the first place women's right to engage in trades and professions. In the meantime such questions as unemployment, equal pay for equal work, a legal 8-hour day, labour protection for women, organisation of trade unions, social care of mother and child, social measures to improve the position of housekeepers and mothers, etc., would also have to be taken up. Moreover, the agenda should include: the status of women in laws on marriage and domestic relations, in public law and laws on political rights. After substantiating my above proposals I explained that in my opinion the national committees in the individual countries would have to make thorough preparations for the congress by arranging a campaign to be conducted at meetings and in the press. This campaign was to be particularly important. It was to rouse the broad masses of women, provide impetus for a serious study of the problems submitted to them, draw their attention to the congress and thereby to communism and the parties of the Communist International. The campaign would have to be waged in such a way as to reach the working women of all social strata. It would have to ensure the attendance and participation at the congress of representatives of all organisations concerned and also of women delegates from open women's meetings. The congress was to be a "popular representative body" in an entirely different sense from a bourgeois parliament.

It goes without saying that the communist women must be not only the motive force but also the leading force in the preparatory work, which should be energetically supported by our sections. The same applies of course also to the activities of the International Committee, to the work of the congress itself and to the extensive use to be made of it. On all questions concerning the congress agenda communist theses should be submitted with corresponding resolutions carefully couched from the aspect of principle and skilfully substantiated with a scientific array of the relative social facts. These theses must be first discussed and approved by the Executive Committee of the Comintern. The communist decisions and slogans should form the focal point around which the work of the congress and public attention should centre. After the congress they must be disseminated among the masses of the women with the aid of agitation and propaganda so that these slogans may in the future serve as patterns for holding women's international mass demonstrations. Needless to say, all this requires as an essential condition that the communist women should come out in all the committees and at the congress itself as a firm, homogeneous whole, that they should act in unison, with joint forces, lucid in their principles and unshaken in their faith in planned action. No action previously not agreed upon may be taken.

In the course of my explanation Lenin nodded several times in approval and interposed some brief remarks.

"It seems to me, Clara," he said, "that you have thought this matter over very well from the political aspect and in the main also from the organisational angle. I fully agree that in the present situation such a congress could accomplish much. It offers the possibility of our winning the broad masses of women, particularly those in the various trades and professions, such as industrial workers and housemaids, as well as teachers and others engaged in professions. This would be very, very fine. Just think of the situation. At a moment of big economic clashes or political strikes, what an influx of forces the class-conscious indignation of the masses of womankind would bring to the revolutionary proletariat! Provided of course that we are able to win them over and keep them on our side. Our gains would be great, nothing short of immense. But what would you say in answer to the following few questions? The state authorities will probably very severely frown down upon the idea of calling this congress and will try to prevent it. However

they are not likely to throttle it outright. At any rate that will not frighten you. But are you not afraid that you communist women will be overwhelmed in the committees and at the congress itself by the numerical superiority of the representatives of the bourgeoisie and of reformism and by their undoubtedly greater adroitness? And then are you really convinced that our communist comrades are, in the first place, schooled in Marxism, that a shock group can be picked from them that will come out of the fray with honour?"

I told Lenin in reply that the authorities were not likely to use the mailed fist on the congress. Ridicule and boorish attacks against it would only agitate in favour of it. The greater number and deftness of the non-communist elements we Communists could more than match with the scientific superiority of historical materialism in respect to the scope of social problems studied and illuminated by it, and the perseverance with which we present our demand that they be solved. Last but not least, we could offset all their arguments by referring to the victory of the proletarian revolution in Russia and its work in the sphere of the emancipation of women. The weak, inadequate training of some of our comrades could be made up by planned preparation and joint work. In this respect I expect the very best from the Russian communist women. They must form the iron core of our phalanx. With them I would calmly hazard much more than clashes at a congress. Besides even if we lose out on a count of votes the very fact that we did fight will put communism in the forefront and will be of signal propagandist importance and at the same time will establish new points of support enabling us to continue our work.

Lenin laughed out loud.

"You are as enthusiastic as ever about the Russian women revolutionaries. Yes indeed, old love is not forgotten. I think you are right. Even defeat after a stubbornly fought struggle would be a gain, would be preparing for future conquests among the masses of working women. In general it is an undertaking worth the risk. It cannot possibly prove a total failure. But of course I hope for victory and wish you success from the bottom of my heart. It would considerably enhance our strength, would widen and fortify our front of struggle, it would vivify our ranks, set them in motion and

activise them. That is always useful. Moreover, the congress would increase the unrest, uncertainty, contradictions and conflicts in the camp of the bourgeoisie and its reformist friends. One can just imagine who is going to sit down to deliberate with the 'hyenas of the revolution', if things go well under their leadership: here will be found both honest, tame female Social-Democrats under the supreme guidance of Scheidemann, Dittmann and Legien, pious Christian women blessed by the pope or following the teaching of Luther, real daughters of privy counsellors and newly-baked councillors of state, fashionable lady-like English women pacifists, and flaming French suffragettes. What a picture of chaos, of the decay of the bourgeois world, the congress is bound to present! What a portrayal of its utterly hopeless condition! The congress would intensify the disintegration and thereby would weaken the counter-revolution. Every enfeeblement of the forces of the enemy is tantamount to a strengthening of our might. I am for the congress. And so, get started. I wish you success in the struggle."

We then spoke about the situation in Germany, particularly the impending "Unity Congress" of the old Spartacans* with the Left wing of the Independents**. Thereupon Lenin hastily left, exchanging friendly greetings with several comrades who were working in the room through which he had to pass.

Glad and full of hope I sat down to the preparatory work. However, the congress idea came to nothing on account of the opposition to it on the part of the German and Bulgarian communist women who at that time directed the biggest communist women's movements outside that of Soviet Russia. They were flatly against calling the congress.

When I informed Lenin of this he answered:

"It is a pity, a great pity! These comrades missed a splendid opportunity to open up to the broad masses of women new and better perspectives and thereby to enlist them in

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* Members of the 'Spartacus League formed in January 1916 under the leadership of K. Liebknecht, R. Luxemburg, F. Mehring, C. Zetkin, etc.—*Ed.*

** German Independent Social-Democratic Party—a Centrist party organised in April 1917. In 1922 the Independents joined the German Social-Democratic Party.—*Ed.*

the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. Who can tell whether such a favourable moment will soon recur? You must strike while the iron is hot. But the task remains. You must continue your search for a way to the masses of women whom capitalism has plunged into dire need. You must look for it no matter what the price. You must not shirk this imperative task. Without the organised activity of the masses under communist leadership there can be no victory over capitalism and no building of communism. Hence the subterranean, hitherto concealed section of the masses of women must finally also get into motion."

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Gone is the first year spent by the revolutionary proletariat without Lenin. That year has shown the enduring nature of his cause, has shown the great genius of the leader. Salvoes of guns announce the mournful hour when Lenin one year ago for ever closed his far-seeing, penetrative eyes. I see an endless procession of sad men and women—working people. They are going to Lenin's resting-place. Their mourning is my mourning, the mourning of the millions. Recrudescent pain irresistibly awakens recollections of him. It brings back the realities of his day, before which the difficulties of the present fade into insignificance. I hear again every word Lenin uttered in conversation with me, see every change in the expression of his face. And I must write, must.... Banners are lowered at Lenin's tomb, banners steeped in the blood of the fighters for the revolution. Laurel wreaths are deposited. Not one of them could be left out. And I add to them these modest lines.

Unforgettable Meetings

by Marcel Cachin

I am one of the few French statesmen who has had the good fortune of seeing Lenin and associating with him. It was in 1920 when, under Lenin's leadership, the peoples now united in the Soviet Union were nearing the decisive victory. Lenin was then already 50 years old.

Lenin was the first to lead mankind through such an important stage of historical development. Today no one, even among the enemies of Leninism, disputes the fact that this great statesman was an outstanding personality. All serious historians hold that the events guided by Lenin since 1917, the moment of the fall of tsarism, were of tremendous historical importance.

It is well known that Lenin was not only a man of action, a man of unequalled energy, but that he also possessed great erudition. It should be remembered that Lenin acknowledged the tremendous contribution made to human progress by the 18th century French Encyclopædists. He expressed boundless admiration for the people and ideas of the 1789-94 French Revolution and was an ardent admirer of the Montagnards and Jacobins of 1793.

Lenin considered the Paris Commune one of the most important events in human history and extolled the heroism of the Paris workers of 1871 in words that have become immortal....

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Lenin knew France very well, having lived there for several years during his long emigration. In Paris he occupied a very modest two-room flat at 4 Rue Marie-Rose. At that time I myself knew a few Bolshevik émigrés who, like Lenin, lived very poorly in the 14th District of Paris.

I often saw Lenin at the Stuttgart Congress of the Second International in 1907. He was the author of a number of amendments to resolutions, all of which were remarkable for their consistent struggle against imperialist war.*

* See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, pp. 75-81.—*Ed.*

I saw him very closely many years later, in the summer of 1920 during my visit to Moscow where I had been delegated by the unanimous decision of the Strasbourg Socialist Congress.

We had come to Moscow to discuss the possible entry of the French Socialist Party into the Third International and were given every opportunity, while there, to meet and talk with leaders of the Bolshevik Party.

On June 19 the leaders of the Communist International headed by Lenin met with us for an exchange of opinions. Lenin took the floor. He spoke perfect French.

To begin with, he thanked the Socialist Party and its two representatives for their appeal to the Third, Communist International and attached great importance to their visit. He said, with a smile, that he "had expected us" because he very highly esteemed the remarkable revolutionary valour of our country's proletariat.

He pointed out that in France there was no question of immediate revolution and that there was no point in discussing it. The main thing was to lose no time in creating the prerequisites for an effective struggle against the imperialist regime.

He stressed that the French party needed a Marxist newspaper to educate the working class and lead it to emancipation. As for the proletarian party, it needed strict discipline, primarily for those who had the honour of holding important posts. It was necessary to forge a solid, Marxist-educated and disciplined class party.

Modern wars result in serious shocks which intensify the class struggle and hasten the revolution. It is futile to wonder how soon the revolution will come.

Lenin commented on our complaint that we did not have enough members for really effective action. We do not have enough people either, he said, but we are forging ahead and people always seem to appear from somewhere. It is

important to have infinite faith that the forces of the proletariat are inexhaustible. You, people of France, must understand that in our struggle we are inspired by your past revolutions. In your country, too, capitalism will yield to socialism which has already penetrated into every pore of capitalism. Spread propaganda among all people subjugated by French imperialism; everywhere people must be masters of their own destiny.

"You say: 'This will be hard.' It was hard for us too, but we have fought and won."

This interesting and friendly conversation lasted five hours.

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Before going back to France we asked Lenin to see us again so that we might take our leave and discuss our impressions with him. We saw Lenin on July 28 and talked to him for an hour and a half in his small, simple and modestly furnished Kremlin study.

He questioned us in detail about the situation in France with which he was, incidentally, very familiar anyway and repeatedly stressed his admiration for our country's glorious past and the bravery of the French proletariat. He defined Communists as Jacobins linked with the proletariat. He was therefore convinced that in France the ideas of the Third International would appeal to the people since they reflected the purest revolutionary traditions of our country.

While we were in Moscow, the Red Army was routing the White Polish bands which had invaded the Ukraine. The French and British imperialists had equipped for Poland a crack division under the command of the French General Weygand. The division was well supplied with up-to-date and very destructive weapons. But the Dunkerque dockers refused to load the cannons and machine-guns for this division, and Lenin asked us to give his fervent thanks for it to the working people of France.

In conclusion Lenin said that the attempts of imperialist Europe, which had stubbornly attacked the Soviet Republic for two and a half years, had failed. Now that the imperialists were defeated in Poland, Soviet Russia gained a respite which it would use to restore the country and make it invincible.

Lenin asked us to tell him what had most impressed us during our long sojourn in Russia. We told him that our impressions were unforgettable, that despite the enormous hardships inflicted by the war we had observed general enthusiasm, a faith in the future and courage that are true signs of victory.

Our answer pleased Lenin. He hoped that France would soon build a strong Communist Party whose progress and successes he would watch with the closest attention. At the very end of our talk he expressed regret that he could not have talked to us sooner and for a longer time.

The following day we left for Paris where we arrived on August 11 after travelling through Estonia, Finland, Sweden and Germany.

Upon our return we decided to waste no time in reporting to the French workers on our trip. The secretariat of the Party organised a meeting in the Paris Circus, the city's largest building at that time. More than 40,000 working people attended the meeting and it was all we could do to make our way to the rostrum. Never before had Paris seen such a fervent, thrilling and stirring popular manifestation. For several hours the people of Paris demonstrated their fraternal solidarity with the Soviet revolution, the most encouraging reports on which we brought them after our talks with Lenin.

Meetings with the Great Lenin

by Karl Steinhardt (Gruber)

I saw and heard Lenin for the first time in the middle of February 1910. It was in London* where I had been invited in the beginning of 1909 by the secretariat of the London Educational Society of German Workers (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels had in their time taken part in the activities of this Society) to edit the newspaper *Londoner Volkszeitung*, the organ of this Society, which had then resumed its publication. In those days I was still a convinced adherent of "Marxism" of the Otto Bauer trend. Socialists of all countries were particularly concerned with the impending Copenhagen Congress of the Second International** and in particular, with the question of the attitude to war and militarism. It was for this reason that the secretariat of our club decided to invite representatives of a number of European socialist parties in order that they might exchange opinions on this vitally important question. The round table discussion was attended by Ledebour, Hervé, MacDonald, Hyndman, George Bernard Shaw, Chicherin and Steinhardt. Our Russian comrades promised that Lenin would come to London for one day. Lenin really did come, although somewhat late. He apologised for being late in virtue of fog over the English Channel.

In the discussion each of the participants expressed his opinion on the impending war. It was clear to everybody that war was imminent, but there was no unity on the stand that should be taken by the proletariat of the belligerent countries if war did break out. The representatives of the Socialists of Western countries linked the interests of the proletariat of those countries with the interests of "their" bourgeoisie.

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* The indicated time of Lenin's sojourn in London could not be ascertained by documents.—*Ed.*

** World Socialist Congress of the Second International in Copenhagen (August 28-September 3, 1910).—*Ed.*

"If Germany wins, it will be the death of the Port of London," said MacDonald.

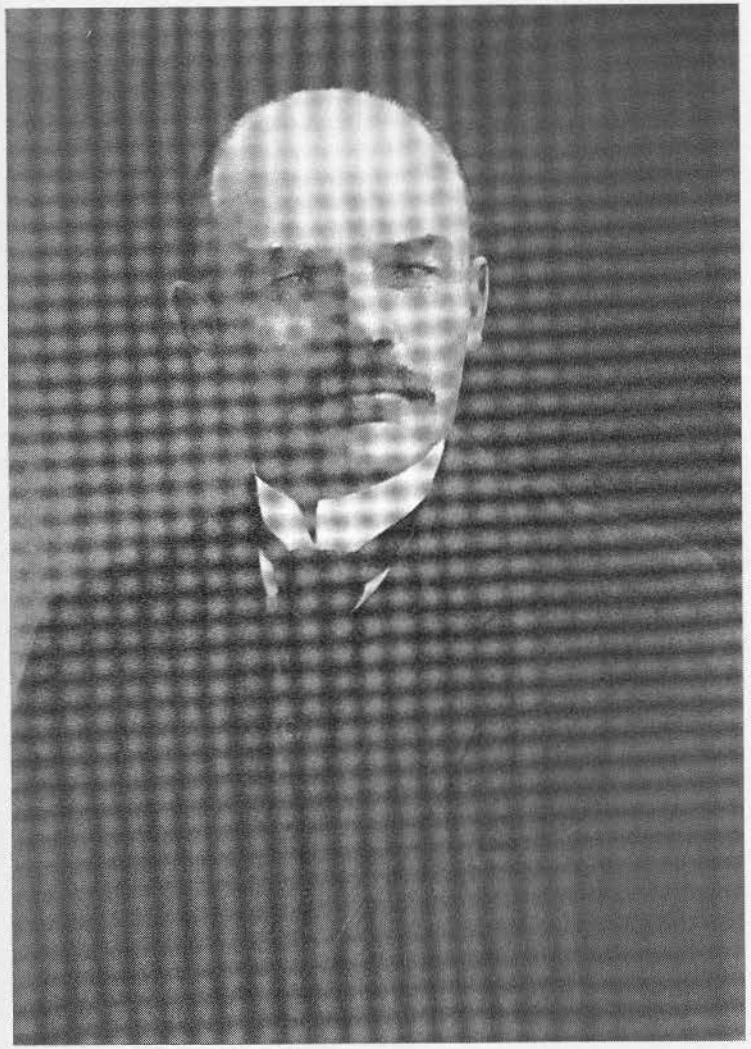
"If England wins, it will mean death to the docks of Hamburg," retorted Ledebour.

"We shall raise both hands in voting against the war, but we need Alsace-Lorraine," stated Hervé.

I voiced my apprehensions lest Russia win, in which case, I thought, pan-Slavism would triumph.

Lenin was the last to speak. During the preceding discussions he quickly jotted something down in a small pad and, resting his head on a hand, sometimes smiling and sometimes screwing up his eyes, carefully listened to the discussion. In his speech he dwelt primarily on the fundamental aspect of the question, namely, the character of the impending war. In his few but expressive words he showed the tendency of capitalism of the leading Western countries to spread its power all over the world, then pointed out the difference between the highly developed and underdeveloped countries and elaborated on the most important feature of imperialism which strove to plunge all nations into the abyss of war and thus redivide the world. Regardless of the victory or defeat of any country the proletariat would be defeated anyway, if it yielded to chauvinist slogans. There are two types of war. One is in the interests of capitalists, and the proletariat must resist it with all its might. But there is also a just war, a war in which the people, the oppressed classes, try to throw off the yoke which crushes them. This revolutionary war must at all costs be supported by the world proletariat. After these general statements Lenin turned to the statements of the different speakers and clearly showed how erroneous they were.

Lenin's irrefutable statements convinced me that the views to which I adhered under the influence of Otto Bauer were nothing but pseudo-Marxism. It was not easy for me to renounce what I had long considered to be the only correct point of view. Once more I started studying the works of Marx and Engels, this time in closer connection with the principles of the Party of Bolsheviks, the Party of Lenin. Lenin's dialectic disarmed me and my comrades, and we were unable to oppose anything to it save our own political shortsightedness. Lenin discerned the meaning of the so-called "Austrian Marxism", which represented the "flower"



Lenin. Paris, 1910

of the Second International, as a theory about words and not deeds. He exposed the indecisiveness and contradictions of the Second International. History confirmed Lenin's wisdom, including his evaluation of Otto Bauer's "Marxism".

When I returned to Vienna in 1913 (I had been deported from Germany) I already regarded the political behaviour of the leaders of Social-Democracy and the trade unions critically. The greater the threat of war became, the more my distrust in the sincerity of the declarations of the Social-Democratic leaders, concerning their readiness to do their international duty, increased. My distrust was also confirmed by the treachery of Austrian Social-Democracy in August 1914. By publishing the articles "The Great Day of the German People" and "On, to Paris!" Austrian Social-Democracy and its press took the stand of unrestrained chauvinism. It was from this disease that the Second International died an ignominious death. It was necessary to wage a resolute and fundamental struggle against the disgraceful treachery of the leaders of the Second International, against the disorganisation they had brought into the ranks of the world proletariat.

Having by that time become a confirmed Marxist I tried, all alone at first, and then together with my comrades, to make a breach in the Austrian united front of nationalism, chauvinism and vulgar narrow-mindedness. We derived our strength from the Marxist-Leninist teaching.

Four years of war were four years of struggle against war, of struggle for Austria's revolutionary withdrawal from the war. It was a bitter struggle within the Party, in trade unions and in factories. Slowly, often against their own will the workers rid themselves of the opportunist ideology and illusions in which they were steeped. Only gradually did the iron hoop of political depression binding the workers slacken.

In 1916, after I had been expelled from the Social-Democratic Party, I managed, as the organiser of a Left radical group, to contact Lenin who was in Zurich. We ardently supported the position of Lenin who headed the Zimmerwald Lefts. Our aim was Austria's withdrawal from the war. We were striving to organise a Communist International.

During the war several different political groups were

View of the building in Rue Marie-Rose (Paris) where Lenin lived in 1909-12 (now it houses the Lenin Museum)

founded in Austria; these groups united under the general slogan of "Down with the War!" They included "Left Socialists", "militant Socialists", syndicalists, anarchists, etc. Their political position was vague and uncertain. Some of them had been expelled from the Social-Democratic Party, others had left the party of their own free will since they had found it impossible to wage a genuine political struggle. Many, especially the youth, were generally unorganised politically. It was natural that our revolutionary group should assume leadership in the struggle against the imperialist war and for the organisation of the Third International.

On January 16, 1918 a strike broke out in Austria and rallied the working class for a powerful struggle. Workers' Soviets were organised after the Russian model. Under the slogans "We Want to Do as the Russians!" and "All Power to Workers' Soviets!" the working masses flooded the streets.

For three days the strikers were masters of the streets. Then the Social-Democratic and trade-union leaders set to work. By deceitful promises they persuaded the workers to discontinue the strike, and the war that had already been lost was continued.

But the ice was broken. Despite the wave of repressions, arrests and sending people off to the front, despite the police surveillance and prohibition of all political meetings, the anti-war movement grew and gathered strength. Lenin's appeal for peace evoked a mighty response among the Austrian working masses.

From January to October 1918 the revolutionary movement in Austria was headed by the most consistent Marxist groups. At a meeting held on November 3, 1918 the leaders of all these groups decided to unite into a single Marxist revolutionary party which, at my suggestion, was given the name of the Austrian Communist Party. An Executive Committee was elected and charged with preparing a Party congress.

The First Congress of the Austrian Communist Party opened on February 9, 1919. The congress adopted a provisional programme and elected me Chairman of the Party. I received an invitation from Lenin to send a delegate to the International Communist Conference in Moscow. I suggested that this invitation be accepted in order that our delegate might submit a proposal to consider this conference the Constituent Congress of the Communist International. Our congress accepted my suggestion and sent me to Moscow.

For us Austrian Communists the organisation of the Third International, after the disgraceful crash of the Second International, was a very urgent problem. As soon as news of the Great October Socialist Revolution led by Lenin reached us, the idea of organising a new, Communist International began to play the most important part in our work. In connection with the illegal celebration of May Day in 1918 we had prepared the first issue of the communist newspaper *Wegruf*. I wrote an editorial for it under the title of "The Third (Communist) International", in which, in view of the total incapacity of the pseudo-Marxist Second International, I advocated the organisation of a new, truly Marxist International.

I informed Lenin of the decision of our Party Congress and of my being delegated to Moscow. Since the opening of the conference was scheduled for March 2, 1919 I thought I had enough time to get from Vienna to Moscow. But at that time the road to Moscow was arduous and full of unexpected obstacles. I had to ride on footboards, roofs, buffers, and even tenders and locomotive platforms. Although the latter was dirty, it was at least warm despite the 20-27° frosts. I considered a cattle car a luxury since I knew that I would have to make a considerable part of the 17-day trip on foot. At that time the front-line was somewhere in the vicinity of Kiev and only military trains were allowed to run there. I pretended I was a prisoner of war on my way home and was continuously in danger of being apprehended and shot by the Whites. Moreover, I did not know a single word of Russian. Many a time I barely escaped being caught by the Whites.

Once I thought my last hour had come. I was arrested and taken to headquarters (as I found out later, it was divisional headquarters). These could be only Whites, I thought, because the last village I had left that evening had been full of them. I was led into a dimly lit room and was questioned by the chief. I tried, as best I could, to keep my tattered military uniform from being thoroughly searched since my mandate was hidden in its lining. Already considering

myself lost I suddenly saw in the dim light of the kerosene lamp a small red star on the chief's cap lying on the table. Imagine the surprise of the Red commanders when I quite frankly told them that I was on my way to Moscow to the conference called by Lenin. To prove what I was saying, I produced my "mandate"—a small piece of cloth with the text written in indelible pencil.

Now my journey was easier. In the morning the divisional commander took me to the station of Fastov and put me in a locomotive going to Kiev where I was handed over to some comrades from the Party committee, who placed me in a regular passenger train on the way to Moscow. I was given a bag of food because in Moscow, as the Kiev comrades said, food was scarce. They asked me to convey their most cordial greetings to Lenin.

Thus, this time without any adventures, I arrived in Moscow, on March 3, 1919, the day after the opening of the conference which was destined to become the First (Constituent) Congress of the Communist International.* From the railway terminal I went to the Metropole Hotel and from there directly to the Kremlin. I got into the Kremlin all right, but was prevented by the guards from gaining entrance to the conference hall. The guards did not particularly trust a mandate written on a piece of cloth. Finally, with the aid of one of the delegates, I managed to get a pass from Lenin valid for that day.

Clutching my heavy bag of food, I naturally attracted general attention as I entered the small conference hall. Lenin rose smiling broadly, came forward, embraced me and kissed me on the cheek.

"Comrade Gruber," he said, "we shall give you the floor right away."

I tried to object, saying that I could not possibly address the meeting the way I looked, but Lenin retorted:

"Why, that is precisely the best part of it."

Lenin announced that he was giving the floor for a report on the Austrian working-class movement to the newly arrived Austrian delegate whom everybody already considered dead. I was received with applause. When I had finished, Lenin firmly clasped my hand and said:

"Excellent, thank you, Comrade Gruber."

"My name is Steinhardt," I corrected him.

"To us you are Comrade Gruber," answered Lenin.

After the meeting Lenin himself gave instructions concerning my accommodations and then personally checked on how his instructions had been carried out.

Soon I was told that Lenin wanted to see me in the evening and asked me to drop in at his study. That evening we sat at his desk and discussed the work of the conference. Lenin acquainted me with the results of the first sessions. The Russian delegation had made a proposal to establish a Communist International and he, Lenin, had supported the proposal. But Hugo Eberlein, the German delegate, opposed the immediate establishment of the Comintern on the grounds that he was not empowered for it by his party. As a result, the Russian delegation temporarily had to withdraw its proposal. Now that I had arrived, said Lenin, the situation had changed since I was empowered to vote for an immediate organisation of the Comintern. Lenin therefore recommended the following procedure for the morning session on March 4. He, Lenin, would report that the Austrian delegate had been unable, for reasons beyond his control, to attend the first sessions of the conference and, hence, to support the proposal to establish a Communist International immediately. In view of this the Austrian delegate, together with other delegates, was requesting the conference to include on the agenda the question of establishing the Comintern. This request had to be signed by four delegates. If the conference agreed to consider it, I would be given the floor to substantiate my request. He, Lenin, was sure that the Austrian proposal to organise the Comintern would be supported by all delegates.

And that was exactly what happened. On March 4, 1919, Lenin opened the session and, after several delegates had spoken, I was given the floor to request that the conference be empowered to act as the Constituent Congress of the Communist International. This proposal was received with loud applause. Then the meeting voted, and the proposal was adopted unanimously. The results of the vote inspired all the delegates; they all rose and sang the *Internationale*.

* First Congress of the Communist International (March 2-6, 1919). The delegates had met in preliminary conference on March 1, the eve of the congress.—*Ed.*

Beaming with joy Lenin clasped my hands and smilingly repeated over and over again:

"You did it wonderfully, splendidly!"

Lenin's theses and report on bourgeois democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat were heard out at the same session; these theses and report have since gone down in the history of the international communist movement as its most important programme document.

To prepare a number of questions and resolutions, it was necessary to organise several commissions, but this gave rise to difficulties of a personal character. Not all countries were able to send their representatives to the congress because the Civil War and foreign intervention prevented them from coming to Moscow. I was lucky, but the delegates from a number of other countries, who had agreed to take part in the congress, could not come. For this reason the same delegates had to work on several commissions. I was assigned to a commission on political and organisational problems, and to the editorial board of the journal *The Communist International*, the organ of the Executive Committee of the Comintern.

On March 4, 1919 I had to work together with Eberlein on the final text of the Manifesto of the congress. Eberlein and I not only had to translate it into German, but also had to edit it. Lenin came in the evening and worked on the Manifesto together with us from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. He was tireless and finished working only after we had read every paragraph, every sentence, and polished up not only the content, but also the style of the Manifesto.* Time and again we argued about different wordings, and Lenin won every time. Then he would smile his winning smile and merrily wink his left eye at us. Seeing that Eberlein and I were already pretty tired he would stop working every now and then and would crack jokes. Lenin was fond of joking and could laugh very heartily. The only other person I knew to be as cheerful was Frederick Engels.

When we finished our work at 6 o'clock in the morning of March 5, 1919, Lenin said to us:

"Follow my own tried and tested method. Don't go to bed, but take a good, hot bath and then a cold shower, have a good breakfast and take a walk before the session."

We did just that and found that Lenin had given us very good advice.

The work of the congress was essentially nearing its end. Its secretariat was charged with supervising the activities of the Comintern until the next congress which was already planned for the following year. During the congress the delegates addressed numerous meetings of Moscow's working people. I, personally, was invited to speak to a very large meeting at the Bolshoi Theatre, which was also addressed by Lenin.* After the end of the congress we, the foreign delegates, all went home. Not all of us managed to get home safely, however. I tried to fly to Budapest where a revolution had just broken out, but my plane was shot down by Rumanian troops. I was arrested and sentenced to death on a charge of espionage; I was sent to a death camp from where I managed to escape eleven months later.

I revisited Soviet Russia in July 1920. I came for the Second Congress of the Comintern and was warmly received by my old friends who had again given me up for dead. The opening of the congress took place in Petrograd—the city of Great October—at the Taurida Palace, the seat of the Petrograd Soviet.** The conference hall was filled long before the opening of the congress and a lot of people were standing even along the aisles and in front of the stage. I myself sat in the Presidium next to Gorky. Suddenly Gorky exclaimed:

"There comes Lenin!"

We saw Lenin working his way to the rostrum, his progress impeded by greetings from all sides. Finally he freed himself and rapidly approached the stage. When the people saw Lenin's smile, their faces brightened. Loud cheers rang out and an air of festivity reigned in the hall. It was hot. Lenin wiped the sweat off his brow, clasped my hand and said:

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* The text of the Manifesto to the Workers of the World of the First Congress of the Comintern.—*Ed.*

* Meeting of government, Party and trade-union organisations (March 6, 1919) occasioned by the foundation of the Communist International.—*Ed.*

** Second Congress of the Communist International (July 19-August 7, 1920). The congress was opened in Petrograd, but continued its work in Moscow.—*Ed.*

"It is not so easy to enter the Petrograd Soviet."

The session was opened. Lenin reported on the international situation and the main tasks facing the Communist International.* One gathered the impression that he was merely talking these things over with comrades. At the end of the report he was given a great ovation, but, owing to his natural modesty, he tried to find an inconspicuous place behind the rostrum. As a matter of fact, he did not like ovations.

I also recall the Third Congress of the Comintern in 1921.** I was sitting at the side on a small dais to which led three steps. Suddenly there was a commotion in the hall. I looked around and saw Lenin ready to sit down on one of the steps. I rose and offered him my seat, but pressing on my shoulder he forced me to resume my seat and whispered:

"Sit still."

Lenin sat down on one of the steps by my side and started making rapid notes in his pad. All of a sudden he asked me:

"What did the speaker just say?"

I repeated what the speaker had just said, but personally found nothing out of the ordinary in those words.

After a number of speakers had taken the floor it was announced that Lenin would speak. The hall waited with bated breath. Lenin spoke and I noticed that he criticised precisely the words of the speaker he had asked me to repeat and I had thought of little significance. Such was Lenin's perspicacity.

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In conclusion I should like to say a few words about Lenin the man.

"In his simplicity the greatest man," I wrote in the album which was presented to V. I. Lenin on his 50th birthday by the delegates to the Second Congress of the Comintern.* I shall never forget his hearty laugh, his love of joking, his natural cheerfulness. Lenin was amazing for his incredible capacity for work. I never saw him tired.

I often noticed Lenin's exceptional solicitude for the comrades. I recall his tremendous anxiety over John Reed who had contracted typhus and his unflagging efforts to save his life.

After the end of the congress, when I was ready to leave for home via Hungary where a Soviet Republic had recently been proclaimed,** Lenin gave me several letters to Béla Kun. In addition, he gave me a paper and said:

"Use this if you encounter any difficulties when you get back home."

Saying good-bye to me he put his hands on my shoulders and added:

"Be careful, Comrade Gruber, we will need you yet."

But Lenin could also be severe when it came to erroneous political decisions. The following event occurred during the Third Congress of the Comintern. Strikes broke out in some parts of Northern France, and the police used arms to break them. In retaliation the French delegates proposed to declare a general strike all over France. When Lenin found out about this unreasonable intention he severely criticised them for their demands which at that time were completely inappropriate for the actual political situation in France.

My meetings with this great leader of the proletariat will forever be engraved upon my memory, and now, although I am already a very old man, I still remember them as the most vivid events in my life.

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* Second Congress of the Communist International, July 19, 1920 (see V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, Moscow, 1966, pp. 213-34).—*Ed.*

** Third Congress of the Communist International in Moscow (June 22-July 12, 1921). All the work of preparing and conducting the congress was done under Lenin's supervision. The delegates elected Lenin Honorary Chairman of the congress.—*Ed.*

* The album with the comments of the delegates to the Second Congress of the Comintern on V. I. Lenin is in the archives of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism (see the journal *Historical Archive*, No. 2, Moscow, 1957).—*Ed.*

** The Hungarian Soviet Republic was proclaimed on March 21, 1919.—*Ed.*

At the Zimmerwald Conference

by Vasil Kolarov

I made Lenin's acquaintance at the Zimmerwald Conference in September 1915.*

The Party of Bulgarian Tesnyaki, of which I was a member, was a Left Marxist party which had waged a struggle against war as far back as the 1912-13 Balkan Wars. When the world imperialist war (1914) broke out our Party took an internationalist stand and, even if not very definitely and not so resolutely, went against the current.

Convinced that the Second International was completely bankrupt the Party of Tesnyaki took the lead in convoking the Second Balkan Socialist Conference in the summer of 1915 and tried to establish contact with revolutionary groups and elements of Western Europe in order to rally the forces of the internationalists.

The Tesnyaki Party was therefore overjoyed to receive a letter from Comrade Lenin, addressed to Comrade Blagoyev, leader of the Bulgarian Tesnyaki, and asking the Party to send a delegate to the First International Socialist Conference in Berne (Switzerland). The Central Committee delegated me.

Delegates from different countries assembled in the People's House in Berne. We boarded buses and went to a little village consisting of a few farms and a hotel for tourists. That village was the famous Zimmerwald. We were all accommodated at that little hotel as tourists so that nobody might surmise our real aims.

On the way to Zimmerwald there were no Russian delegates in our buses. Nor was Lenin in any of the buses. Only when we reached Zimmerwald did we espy Lenin on one of the paths. He looked like a Swiss mountaineer with a rucksack on his back. I was introduced to him as a delegate of the Bulgarian Tesnyaki.

* The International Socialist Conference in Zimmerwald (Switzerland) was held September 5-8, 1915.—*Ed.*

I think I was the first to make a report during the general discussion of the only question on the conference's agenda.

I gave an account of Plekhanov* and Parvus' attempts to win us over to their side, i.e., the side of social-patriots, and told the conference how our Party exposed them. I recounted the struggle of our Party against the war and the experience of our Party's work during the Balkan War. Incidentally, I gave a rather detailed account of the soldiers' mutinies during the Balkan War. I noticed, as I spoke, that Lenin was listening with great interest.

Subsequently, when Lenin's archive was published, I found a reference to the "Bulgarian's report"** in Lenin's notes on the Zimmerwald Conference. He called me thus because I was the only delegate from Bulgaria. Lenin intended to write an article, and the soldiers' mutinies during the Balkan War were to be dealt with in the second part of the article.

The extent to which this part of my report interested Lenin can be seen from the fact that he sent me a note asking me if any work could be done in the army, in the trenches.

The Zimmerwald Conference lasted, as is well known, four days. When it ended Lenin left with his rucksack on his back and stick in hand.

We returned to Berne by a different road and from there each went back to his country with the resolutions of the First International Conference. I managed to smuggle across several borders the most important Leninist documents which determined the subsequent development of our Party towards Bolshevism under Lenin's influence.

After Zimmerwald I saw Lenin in February 1916 at the meeting of the International Socialist Committee in which

* G. V. Plekhanov (1856-1918)—outstanding leader of the Russian and international working-class movement, first propagandist of Marxism in Russia, staunch advocate of the materialist world outlook. Soon after the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party joined the Mensheviks. Lived abroad. After the bourgeois-democratic revolution (February 1917) returned to Russia. Disapproved of the October Socialist Revolution.—*Ed.*

** The notes to which the author is referring were published in Vol. 54 of the 5th Russ. ed. of V. I. Lenin's *Collected Works*, pp. 462-63.—*Ed.*

I participated as a delegate from our Party.* Lenin fervently defended his point of view against the Mensheviks. At that meeting Martov** tried to depict the Russian Mensheviks as internationalists. Lenin rose and, leaning over the table in his characteristic manner, waved his hands and, deeply incensed, shouted at Martov: "In the international arena you speak as an internationalist, but your comrades in Russia are the dyed-in-the-wool social-patriots. You are pursuing a double policy. You are only trying to deceive the workers!"

These words showed Lenin for what he was; they showed the passionate, revolutionary temperament of an irreconcilable fighter for the cause of communism, the greatest and most beloved leader of all the oppressed people of the world.

V. I. Lenin at the Third Congress of the Communist International

Despite the fact that the great leader of the world revolution was completely absorbed in state affairs, he kept a careful watch over all that was happening in the International. One day he found time to peep in the conference hall of the Executive Committee. With his usual perspicacity he brought clarity into the discussion and thwarted the intentions of the "Leftists". This happened on June 17, 1921. It was Béla Kun*** who was speaking at the time. Of

* Enlarged session of the International Committee (February 5-9, 1916) elected at the Zimmerwald International Conference.—*Ed.*

** L. Martov (Y. Tsederbaum)—one of the leaders of the Mensheviks. After the October Revolution opposed Soviet power. Emigrated to Germany (1920) and in Berlin published the counter-revolutionary Menshevik *Socialist Herald*.—*Ed.*

*** Béla Kun (1886-1939)—prominent leader of the Hungarian and international working-class movement. One of the founders and leaders of the Hungarian Communist Party. Actually headed the Hungarian Soviet Government (1919), officially People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs and member of the Board of the People's Commissariat of War. After 1921 held important Party and government posts in Soviet Russia.—*Ed.*

course, it was not a pure accident that brought Lenin there that day. Kun was the most outspoken advocate of the "theory of attack", and Lenin had decided to hear him out.

Kun made short work of the French Communist Party. It turned out that Kun's "revolutionary fury" had been aroused by an article in *L'Humanité* entitled "Equanimity and Discipline".* The article had been occasioned by the sending of troops to occupy Rhineland. In this article the French Communist Party protested against the sending of troops and in view of the seriousness of the moment recommended "equanimity and discipline", but Kun considered such behaviour "opportunistic" and demanded "revolutionary action" from the French Communist Party.

It was just at that moment that Lenin entered the hall and heard Kun demand that the French should "act in a revolutionary manner" at all costs. He heard Kun mock at the "equanimity and discipline" which the organ of the French Communist Party called for.

The delegates present in the hall greeted Lenin's unexpected appearance with a storm of applause. Most of the delegates saw him for the first time. The hall came to life, faces brightened up, and the delegates stepped aside to let Lenin pass.

Lenin's appearance obviously disconcerted Kun, who lost his self-confidence, became confused and soon finished his speech. The floor was immediately given to Lenin.

Lenin made a short, but clearly polemic speech which, in a comradely fashion, disposed of the "Lefts" in general, and Béla Kun in particular.

"I came here," Lenin began his speech, "to speak against Kun's views because I know very well that as soon as Kun opens his mouth he will infallibly defend the 'Leftists'. Kun thinks that communism is a defence of the 'Leftists', that there are only opportunist mistakes. No, there are also 'Leftist' mistakes. If the Communist International follows the advice of Kun and his friends on the French question, the communist movement in France may be crushed for many years to come. The French Party should be criticised, but the criticism must be aimed at definite wrong, opportunist actions; one must not attack the Party indiscriminately, must

* "Sang-froid et discipline", *L'Humanité*, May 5, 1921.—*Ed.*

not split it and must not propose other, 'Leftist' follies to counteract the opportunist actions.

"Observing the splendid work of the Communist Party and seeing the nuclei and factions it has set up in trade unions and other organisations I say: 'The revolution is bound to succeed in France, if the "Leftists" do not commit any follies.' And when such people as Kun say that 'equanimity and discipline' are not needed, it is a folly on the part of the 'Leftists'.

"Maybe the behaviour of the French Communist Party during the occupation of Rhineland is not altogether communist; that I can believe. But to reproach the Party because it called for 'equanimity and discipline' and did not urge the soldiers to 'revolutionary action', to reproach it because it did not sabotage the occupation of Luxembourg, etc., is a folly that may today ruin the communist movement in France.

"When the masses come closer and closer to us, it is necessary first and foremost to win over the trade unions. Splendid preparatory work is being done in most of the trade unions. If we win over the trade unions, it will be our greatest victory. And only after that shall we be able to begin the revolution not with the aid of an army of 19-year-olds and other similar follies in which Béla Kun is a specialist, but by a struggle against opportunism and the stupid mistakes of the 'Leftists'."

Lenin's brilliant and impassioned speech was heard out with bated breath by everybody in the crowded hall and was received with a storm of applause and cries of "Long live Lenin, the leader of the world revolution!"

Lenin's speech clarified the situation for the delegates. It made them feel that it was the great leader of the world revolution who had spoken, that he was fully confident of victory and that he held the helm of the Communist International firmly in his hands. The "Leftist" theses were retracted, were replaced by others elaborated in a true Leninist spirit, and were proposed to the congress as a draft resolution.

The Third Congress of the Communist International opened at the Bolshoi Theatre at 7 o'clock in the evening, June 22, 1921.

Lenin's first appearance in the hall of the Kremlin Palace, where the congress was later held, was an unforgettable event. I was sitting in the Presidium and was thus able to observe the impression he produced on the delegates who had arrived from all corners of the earth not only to take part in the work of the congress, but also to see with their own eyes the wonderful country where, in a bitter and fearless struggle, the proletarian revolution had vanquished the united forces of internal counter-revolution and imperialist intervention and now, although isolated from the capitalist world and under uncommonly difficult conditions, was taking the first steps in building a socialist society. They had come to see the great revolutionary leaders, to see and hear Lenin himself, the man who embodied the genius, power and sublimity of the Russian proletariat and the world revolution.

Lenin entered the conference hall through the main door and, as though wishing to remain unobserved, looking directly ahead walked with small and rapid steps towards the Presidium. But how could he have remained unobserved!? The delegates, who impatiently awaited his arrival at the congress, jumped excitedly to their feet. Many of them even stood on their chairs. A storm of applause and enthusiastic cheers broke out and long raged in the hall, the cheers gradually changing to a not very harmonious, but powerful and majestic multilingual singing of the *Internationale*.

With a smile Lenin greeted the comrades in the Presidium and shook hands with the Italian Socialists Lazzari*, Maffi** and others who had come to exonerate themselves and demand that their party should be left in the Comintern. He listened to the discussion of the Italian question very carefully. During the intermission he sat down on one of the steps

* C. Lazzari—prominent leader of the Italian working-class movement. One of the founders of the Italian Socialist Party. Participated in the work of the Second and Third Congresses of the Comintern. Broke with the reformists organisationally, but did not completely dissociate himself from them. Arrested in 1926 and died soon after release. —*Ed.*

** F. Maffi—prominent leader of the Italian working-class movement. Delegate to the Third Congress of the Comintern. Member of the Italian Communist Party (1922) and member of its Central Committee (1924). —*Ed.*

behind the rostrum and leaning over a sheet of paper concentrated on preparing his speech. One of the ever-present photographers espied him in his retreat and preserved him in a remarkable picture for future generations.

Most of the Comintern sections formed under conditions of mass post-war discontent of workers and in the struggle against the treacherous social-patriots had an oversimplified idea of the revolutionary process. Communists went into battle without serious preparation and not always conforming to the concrete conditions of the struggle; they often yielded to provocations of the bourgeoisie and the manoeuvres of the Social-Democratic leaders. This situation had to be changed because it threatened grave defeats.

And Lenin confidently took the helm.

In his report on July 5, 1921, he said to the Communist Parties which were impatiently awaiting action that "actually, however, events did not proceed along as straight a line as we had expected. *We must now thoroughly prepare for revolution and make a deep study of its concrete development in the advanced capitalist countries*".*

Lenin emphasised mainly and above all the necessity for *preparatory work by the Communist Parties and relied on the wisdom of the Communists.* "If the delegates ask me what the prospects of the revolution are, what should I answer them?" he asked the members of the Congress Presidium. And, screwing up his eyes, answered his own question: "I shall tell them that, if the Communists behave wisely, the prospects are good, but if they commit follies the prospects are bad."

During the subsequent years the course of events fully confirmed Lenin's forecast. The inadequate preparation of the Communist Parties was the reason for the most serious reverses.

What did Lenin regard as the main condition for the victory of the revolution?

The main thing was *to win over the majority of the proletariat.* By focussing the attention of the Communist Parties on the efforts of winning over the majority of the working class and all the working people, and by emphasising the

* V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, pp. 480-81. Emphasis by Vasil Kolarov.—*Ed.*

need for communist work in the trade unions and the necessity for doubling the efforts aimed at diverting the workers from the influence of Social-Democracy, which had become a bulwark of the international bourgeoisie, Lenin put an end to all the "Leftist follies" of the Kunites, Hempelites and others. Moreover, he subjected the "Leftist" amendments of the German, Austrian and Italian delegations to the Russian draft theses on tactics to acid criticism.

These amendments were the last organised attempt of the "Leftists" to push through their point of view.

Lastly, in response to the "Leftist" attempts to turn the Comintern back to the task of dealing with the Centrists, Lenin clearly and precisely outlined the stages of development of the Comintern and laid particular stress upon the struggle against the "Leftist" danger which was seriously hindering the Communist Parties from carrying out their *new* tasks.

Lenin's speeches cleared away the fog of meaningless words uttered by the "Leftists", dispelled all the delegates' doubts and vacillations and rallied the whole congress around Lenin and his line. The strategy of the "Leftists" was defeated. Lenin's main line—*a struggle of the Communists for the masses and for winning over the majority of the working class and the other working people as the primary and principal condition for the victory of the revolution*—runs through all the unanimously adopted theses on tactics and organisation, as well as the other decisions of the congress.

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Working together with Lenin in the commission considering the theses on tactics I came to see how seriously and with what profound knowledge of the concrete situation Lenin considered these tactical problems. He recognised no dogmas and was hostile to empty phrases. He listened to every substantiated opinion and accepted every reasonable suggestion. He also agreed with one of my suggestions concerning the revolutionary character of the Communist Party.

The theses on the *organisation* of Communist Parties were flawless and envisaged the establishment of model Communist Parties. I have no objections to them, said Lenin, but the trouble is that they are inapplicable to the Com-

munist Parties in capitalist countries where a far simpler and more practical organisation is required. He was against impractical schemes in questions of organisation and insisted on proceeding entirely on the basis of the real needs of the Party, always taking into account what it could actually carry into effect.

The theses were revised in accordance with Lenin's instructions.

All the decisions of the congress were adopted unanimously, and the congress finished its work with great enthusiasm. The debates had centred on tactical problems, and that was reasonable enough since the congress was convoked during a transitional period when the tempo of the world revolution had slowed down and the difficulties in its way increased. The conditions in capitalist countries made it incumbent upon the Communist Parties to act with greater circumspection and to prepare very seriously for future class battles. The main slogan put forth at the Third Congress was: "Into the Masses! Win Over the Masses!"

Lenin and We*

by Willi Münzenberg

The first victorious proletarian revolution and the plan for organising the world's first socialist economy have indelibly inscribed Lenin's name in the annals of world history. There is no other name so popular anywhere else in the world; Lenin lives on in the hearts of millions of workers and oppressed people of all countries.

The Swiss youth had little knowledge of the history of the Russian working-class movement and the struggle between the factions of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. Before the war we had only heard Lenin's name mentioned in connection with the International Congresses in Copenhagen and Basle. The first time we had a chance to acquaint ourselves rather more closely with Lenin's views and his political programme was in the autumn of 1915 when a German translation of his book appeared in Zurich.** It was the first book that elucidated clearly and sharply, from a truly Marxist point of view, the essence of the world war and made it obvious to all workers that a crisis was imminent in the socialist working-class movement. Lenin's book was a revelation to us; it showed us the inadequacy and errors of the pacifist and social-religious ideology which, as we had theretofore thought, was a fit weapon in the struggle against war.

After reading Lenin's book we understood that the only way to fight war was by an irreconcilable class struggle and revolution.

Of course, we did not at once all change from idealist socialist dreamers to theoretically seasoned Bolshevik revolutionaries. But we learned and our attention, thanks to Lenin, was directed towards the real task at hand; we began to regard our former articles and speeches critically. How-

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* Excerpts from the book *With Liebknecht and Lenin*, Moscow and Leningrad, 1930.—*Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin's pamphlet *Socialism and War* published in German and other languages (September 1915). Distributed among the delegates to the Zimmerwald Conference.—*Ed.*

ever, it still took us quite a few months to understand and correctly master the programme proposed by Lenin.

At the Berne Conference of the Socialist Youth International (1915)* we were still afraid of the Bolshevik resolution calling "Against any imperialist war, for revolutionary propaganda in the army and for arming the workers". Politically we approved these demands, but for tactical reasons we did not support this resolution. At a time when all the world was armed to the teeth we thought it insane to demand still more arms. It seemed to us that our demand for "disarmament" could more easily arouse the soldiers and masses of people who had tired of the war.

Lenin correctly understood that our stand was a result of inadequate theoretical preparation and absence of political experience. He therefore did not recall the representatives of the Party from the Berne Conference, but promised the newly organised Youth International full support of the Bolshevik Party and tried by long discussions and personal talks to help us rid ourselves of our political errors and delusions.

Under the influence of Lenin's ideas we broke with all pacifist and Centrist groups in the winter of 1914-15 and together with the Left elements in the Party tried to launch mass action and organise work among the masses.

The break of the youth with the Centrists, which intensified after the Berne Conference, could not fail to be noticed. The more strongly we were becoming linked with Lenin, the more insistently our Centrist leaders "warned" us against this "sectarian and doctrinaire" "who was hopelessly possessed by his Asiatic ideas". Every time we met the Centrist leaders they said: "Any influence of Lenin on the youth movement will contribute to its break-up and destruction."

But nothing could prevent our ultimate political rapprochement with Lenin's group. At last, after many years of quests, we had found the people who could show us the correct way to fruitful revolutionary work.

* The International Socialist Youth Conference on the attitude to war was held in Berne, April 4-6, 1915. A representative of the Bolsheviks proposed a resolution prepared on Lenin's instructions. The resolution called on the youth to struggle against chauvinism and imperialism.—*Ed.*

Long before the war, as well as in the course of it, we were always unwaveringly against it. In the beginning of the war we were indignant with the Social-Democratic leaders for their treachery. We were young revolutionaries with but a single aim—to make a revolution and change the world. The trouble was that in our ardent striving to achieve this we sometimes used the wrong means and went astray. It was only after we had got to know Lenin personally in the spring and summer of 1915 that we realised that here was the truly great leader who could put us on the path to useful revolutionary activity.

In our talks with Lenin we gained an insight into the concept of "war". We came to understand the essence of imperialist war and learned to analyse and evaluate it not by casual external signs, but by its fundamental content. In Swiss Social-Democracy the Party's attitude to the defence of the homeland had for many years been a moot question. But the social-patriots, Centrists and Leftists considered this question from the narrow Social-Democratic point of view and philosophised about the difference between offensive and defensive war. We, on the other hand, learned to distinguish the social and political content of the concept of "war".

After a number of discussions conducted with us by Lenin we, who had formerly fervently advocated "complete disarmament," came to understand that our German friends in the Youth International were mistaken when advancing their theory that "during the imperialist period there can be only imperialist wars". Lenin proved to us that at the present time there could also be revolutionary wars for national liberation and that the attitude of the international proletariat to them must differ from that to imperialist wars. Since the question of war was now raised from a consistent Marxist standpoint we quickly found answers to the questions of whether war credits should be voted for or against and whether defence of the homeland should be recognised or denied in a capitalist state.

Of no lesser importance to us were the Marxist methods of anti-war propaganda worked out by Lenin: not "disarmament", but armament of the proletariat and disarmament of the bourgeoisie; not individual refusal to serve in the army in general, but revolutionary agitation in the army,

establishment of Red soldiers' groups and soldiers' Soviets; organisation of big strikes and mass revolutionary action and their implementation even to the point of an armed uprising.

Thanks to Lenin, we learned to study the history of the socialist working-class movement and its International from a revolutionary Marxist point of view and to make revolutionary demands on the Socialist International and the Youth International. Unlike Kautsky with his notorious thesis that the "Socialist International is a peacetime and not a wartime instrument", Lenin taught us that it is precisely at the time of war between capitalist countries that international action by the revolutionary working masses is necessary so that the difficulties of the bourgeoisie brought about by war may be utilised for its final overthrow.

Lenin explained to us the structure of Kautsky's falsified superficial "Marxism" and his theoretical school of thought which was based entirely on historical development of economic conditions and barely recognised the importance of subjective factors in the struggle for socialism. Contrariwise, Lenin emphasised the role of the individual and the masses in the historical process and brought to the foreground the Marxist theory that within the framework of any given economic conditions the people made their own history. This emphasis on the importance of the individual, group and party in the social struggle produced the strongest impression on us and encouraged us to devote all our energy to achieving the maximum results.

The greatest contribution to the rapid revolutionary development of the Socialist Youth International after the Berne Conference was made by Lenin himself. Without the personal and comradely help which he gave us most tactfully the International Youth Bureau in Zurich would have been of little use to the youth movement during 1914-18.

In the beginning of our joint work with Lenin he often criticised us not only in personal conversation, but also in his articles published in the Russian press. However, he always had but one wish—to help us realise where we were wrong. His criticism was never offensive and we never felt slighted; even when criticising us most severely he always

found something worthy of praise in our work. His encouragement always had a favourable effect on us and encouraged us to work with even greater zeal. I remember a talk with Lenin about one of the demands in our anti-militarist programme, which had been the cause of a violent discussion with Robert Grimm. Lenin said to me:

"Grimm is nominally right and yet I shall help you. Despite his greater knowledge Grimm is, by nature, an opportunist and politician, while you, although theoretically immature, are basically healthy fighters and revolutionaries."

That was the way we were treated by the "old man", as we then called him. Lenin classically described in a letter the method of treating young people; he said: "All we have to do is to recruit young people more widely and boldly, more boldly and widely, and again more widely and again more boldly, *without fearing them.*"*

Such was Lenin's approach to us, that attracted us and thousands of other young people. The young people's communist movement would now have many more friends if these words were more firmly borne in mind.

From 1915-17, until Lenin left for Russia, I was invited to visit him whenever I wanted and I willingly called in on him in his modest little flat in Neumarkt, Zurich. There I also made the acquaintance of his wife, Comrade Krupskaya. Sometimes Lenin visited our Youth Bureau or we went together to a café or to the People's House.

Incidentally, it was in Switzerland that Lenin studied the agrarian relations in Western countries and occasionally even lectured on this subject. He had long discussions with Jakob Herzog** and persuaded him to make a detailed study of this problem which was so important to the Swiss working-class movement.

Lenin wrote a number of articles for the *Youth International**** and gave me valuable instructions on editing this

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* From V. I. Lenin's letter to A. A. Bogdanov and S. I. Gusev (February 11, 1905). First published in 1925 (see V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, Moscow, 1962, p. 146).—*Ed.*

** Jacob Herzog—Swiss Social-Democrat. Participated in the Second Congress of the Comintern. Became a Communist in 1921.—*Ed.*

*** *Jugend-Internationale*—organ of the International League of Socialist Youth Organisations. Published in Zurich (September 1915-May 1918).—*Ed.*

journal and the *Free Youth.** On his advice I made various improvements in the latter journal and also published a series of articles on questions of the Party programme.

We supported Lenin's struggle in the Zimmerwald Left and spread his theses on war** amongst the socialist youth movement, in the Party and at open meetings. In 1916 Lenin therefore had every reason to regard our youth organisation as his group. We struggled for his political programme and would have gone through fire and water for him. That he considered us part of his group can be seen from his "Farewell Letter to the Swiss Workers" which I published in the *Youth International.* In this letter Lenin recalled our joint work in the following words:

"Leaving Switzerland for Russia, to continue revolutionary-internationalist activity in our country, we ... wish to convey to you our fraternal greetings and expression of our profound comradely gratitude for your comradely treatment of the political émigrés....

"We have worked hand in hand with the revolutionary Social-Democrats of Switzerland grouped, in particular, around the magazine *Freie Jugend.* They formulated and circulated (in the German and French languages) the proposals for a referendum in favour of a party congress in April 1917 to discuss the party's attitude on the war. At the Zurich cantonal congress in Töss they tabled a resolution on behalf of the youth and the 'Lefts' on the war issue, and in March 1917 issued and circulated in certain localities of French Switzerland a leaflet, in the German and French languages, entitled 'Our Peace Terms', etc.

"To these comrades, whose views we share, and with whom we worked hand in hand, we convey our fraternal greetings."***

Lenin's Passage Through Germany in 1917

There is absolutely no point in wondering what would have happened if a particular outstanding personality had taken no part in a certain historical event. But it goes without saying that few groups ever exerted such decisive influence on the course of historical development as that which together with Lenin left Zurich early in April 1917 and went to Petrograd through Germany.

As soon as the February Revolution broke out in Russia a committee for the return of the Russian émigrés living in Switzerland was formed in Zurich. But when it was learned that France and England would hinder some of the political groups among the émigrés, especially the Bolsheviks, from returning to Russia, the committee communicated by telegraph with Milyukov to obtain passage through Germany on conditions of exchange for a corresponding number of German war prisoners or Germans interned in Russia. The negotiations dragged on. It therefore occurred to the émigré circles to get in touch with the German Embassy in Berne through the Swiss Social-Democrats and to negotiate the terms on which the Russian émigrés might be allowed to pass through Germany. Robert Grimm, a Swiss and at that time the Chairman of the Zimmerwald Bureau, was chosen as the first authorised agent. An agreement had in principle already been reached by the beginning of April, but Grimm, who was always on the right flank of the Zimmerwaldists, delayed getting the émigrés' documents in order, pending Milyukov's special sanction.

One day, at about noon, I was summoned by telephone to the Eintracht Restaurant, the place where foreign and Swiss Socialists usually met. In the first room I found a small group seated at a table; the group included Krupskaya and other Russian comrades. I was told that I was urgently awaited in the small room of the secretariat. I went there and saw Lenin, Fritz Platten and others.

It was the first time I had ever seen Lenin so excited and furious. He was pacing up and down the room, tersely summing up the situation. He briefly informed me on the state of the negotiations with the Russian Government and Grimm's talks with the German Embassy. We unanimously agreed that Grimm was deliberately hindering the return of the Bolshevik group to Russia and discussed various other ways of getting back to Russia as soon as possible. Lenin weighed all the political consequences that the journey through Germany might have and foresaw that his faction-

* *Freie Jugend*—organ of the Swiss Social-Democratic youth. Published in Zurich (1906-18).—*Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, pp. 149-51.—*Ed.*

*** Ibid., pp. 367-68.—*Ed.*

al enemies might make use of this fact, but kept saying: "We must go at all costs, even if we go through hell."

Since Grimm's behaviour gave us every reason to distrust him, we wondered who should take his place in the negotiations. I was asked to take this mission upon myself, but I had to refuse because as a German subject I was not a suitable intermediary. We then decided on Fritz Platten. At first he entertained doubts as to whether such a mission was compatible with his position of General Secretary of the Swiss Social-Democratic Party and asked for time to think it over. I tried to get from Lenin an article for the *Youth International*, which he subsequently wrote before his departure.

Platten thought it over and consented to replace Grimm in the negotiations with Romberg, the German Envoy to Berne at that time. Platten's co-operation was really a courageous act because he was very well aware that that trip would seriously affect his political activities. Platten and Lenin went to Berne the same day. All the demands of the departing political group were accepted: the railway carriage was granted exterritoriality, the passports were not to be checked, the passengers were to be admitted to the carriage regardless of their views on the question of war and peace, etc.

Before his departure Lenin reminded me of one of the long discussions we had had several months previously in Café Astoria in Zurich. Lenin had tried to convince me then that revolution was imminent in Russia and that it would lead to a world-wide proletarian revolution. At that time, under the influence of Liebknecht's* arrest, his conviction and the absolutely passive attitude of the majority of the people to it, I was in such a pessimistic mood that I was unmoved even by Lenin's very well grounded arguments. And we ended our discussion with "We shall see who was right". When we were saying good-bye he smiled his characteristic smile and asked: "Well, who was right at the Astoria?" I was still unwilling to admit my defeat and answered: "That's what we are about to find out."

It was 1920,* when I saw Lenin in the Moscow Kremlin for the first time after the proletariat had assumed power. After a long conversation with me about German and international affairs and an exchange of personal reminiscences, he asked me again with a smile, this time a triumphant smile: "Well, who was right then at the Café Astoria?" The embarrassed silence that followed clearly indicated the answer.

* Karl Liebknecht (1871-1919)—outstanding leader of the German and international working-class movement, one of the founders of the German Communist Party and leader of the Berlin workers' uprising. Arrested and brutally murdered on January 15, 1919.—*Ed.*

* September 8.—*Ed.*

Lenin's Return

by Fritz Platten

It is now difficult to conceive of the dangers with which the organisation of this journey home and the journey itself through enemy territory during the war threatened the Russian émigrés. More than 500 émigrés and their families wanted to leave Switzerland. They tried to get entrance visas from the Provisional Government, but when, owing to Lenin's efforts, an opportunity to enter Russia without Milyukov's permission presented itself, only 33 persons ventured to avail themselves of it.

That only a small number of people undertook the journey was not due to the threats of the Milyukov government to bring to trial for treason any émigrés who dared to travel through Germany, nor to the short period of time they had to make ready for the journey. The overwhelming majority of the émigrés were afraid of something else; they were tormented by political doubts.

The Mensheviks, more than anybody else, feared to lose their political virginity. They considered Lenin's undertaking politically inexpedient and compromising.

How Lenin Organised the Journey

In the beginning of April 1917, I was urgently summoned to a consultation at the Eintracht, the People's House of the Zurich revolutionary proletariat. At 1:00 p.m. we met with Lenin and at 3:00 p.m. were already on board the Berne train.

The following is a brief résumé of what took place at the consultation. I found Lenin and a few more comrades dining in the restaurant. Suddenly Lenin asked me if there was some place we could talk in private. We went to the office of the Board.

"Comrade Platten," Lenin began, "you know that Grimm, who was Chairman at the Zimmerwald Conference, is negotiating, at the request of Russian émigrés, with the German Envoy Romberg for their transit through Germany. He is making no progress, and we are sure that he is deliberately sabotaging all arrangements and is being influenced by the Mensheviks who are still vainly hoping to get the Provisional Government's, i.e., Milyukov's, consent. We do not trust Grimm. We want you to be our authorised agent in this matter and to take it upon yourself to negotiate with Romberg. We authorise you to talk to Romberg directly on my behalf."

After a brief reflection I agreed. It was decided that the names of the other passengers would be kept secret and that the negotiations should be confined entirely to the problem of the mode of the passage.

At 6:00 p.m. on the same day we met at the Berne People's House with Grimm. He was immediately informed that Platten was going to negotiate with Romberg on behalf of Lenin. Grimm began to object. Since Platten was Secretary of the Party (Swiss Social-Democratic) he thought such action would involve the Party, etc. I retorted that I was going to conduct those negotiations not as a secretary of the Party Committee, but as Lenin's authorised agent. Grimm refused to inform Romberg of the new turn of affairs and left. I telephoned the Embassy and asked to be received by the Envoy with the result that I began direct negotiations the very next day.

Let us turn to the question of whether Lenin was right in believing that the Provisional Government would not consent to the passage of the Russian émigrés through Germany and, secondly, of whether he was justified in distrusting Grimm.

It has now been definitely established that Milyukov, by means of two circular telegrams, prohibited Russian embassies from giving re-entrance visas to the émigrés who had been entered in special international control lists. In other words, visas could be granted only to social-patriots.

Lenin always hated the half-way policy of the Mensheviks and never had any doubts about the attitude of the reactionary bourgeois governments. And in this case, too, he acted correctly and wisely.

As regards Grimm, he was doubly right. In this case Grimm was an instrument in the hands of Martov and Axelrod. Lenin's distrust of Grimm was also justified political-

ly. To prove this, it is enough to mention the Petrograd incident involving Grimm in June 1917.*

That Lenin took matters into his own hands was thoroughly in keeping with his political character, while the need for it was demonstrated by later events.

During the first meeting with Romberg only one main question was raised, namely, was the German Government willing to allow Russian émigrés regardless of their party affiliations to pass through Germany? The answer to this was in the affirmative. It was now necessary merely to work out the terms on which the passage could take place.

Lenin moved to a small room in the People's House. It was there that the final terms were elaborated. Romberg hesitated for a long time and, at last, stated that the terms laid down by Lenin were such that they might compromise the whole undertaking.

One of our terms was strict exterritoriality and assurance from Germany that there would be no personal check on passengers, baggage, etc. I was not authorised to agree to any moderation of the terms. Berlin accepted them.

The departure date was set for April 9. Two extraordinarily important documents were drawn up at the time of the journey. They were drawn up by Lenin, but were later discussed collectively and were published on behalf of the Party.

The first of the documents was a farewell letter from the Central Committee Bureau Abroad of the Bolshevik Party to the Swiss proletariat. It contained destructive criticism of the social-patriots and a programme declaration on the fighting tactics of the Bolsheviks in the Russian revolution.

The second document—the now famous April Theses—was produced as a rough draft** during the journey through Germany. Lenin was given a separate compartment in the railway carriage to enable him to work undisturbed

* During his sojourn in Russia in May 1917 R. Grimm secretly contacted Hoffmann, a Minister of the Swiss Government, to ascertain the German peace terms and informed him of the situation in the country, for which he (Grimm) was deported from Russia. Subsequently Grimm was dismissed from the post of Secretary of the International Socialist Committee.—*Ed.*

** "The Initial Outline of the April Theses" (V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 5th Russ. ed., Vol. 31, pp. 99-100).—*Ed.*

on the April Theses. Everybody but Lenin was to travel incognito.

The circumstances under which the journey was taking place required absolute political clarity. The passengers signed the following commitments:

"I affirm:

"1. That I have been informed of the terms of the agreement between Platten and the German Embassy.

"2. That I will follow the instructions of Platten, our agreed leader for the journey.

"3. That I have been informed of the note published in the *Petit Parisien*, according to which the Russian Provisional Government threatens to bring the Russian émigrés returning through Germany to trial for high treason.

"4. That I am taking all the political responsibility for my journey upon myself.

"5. That Platten guarantees my journey only as far as Stockholm.*

"Berne-Zurich, April 9, 1917."

Already in the train it had been decided that in the event of arrest upon arrival in Russia and trial for high treason the defence would have to be collective and not individual. The aim of that was to attach great political importance to the trial.

Only one incident of a political character and worthy of mention occurred during the journey through Germany. In Stuttgart I, as leader, was called out of the carriage and was informed by the escorting officer that a Mr. Janson from the General Commission of the German Trade Unions wanted to talk to me. Our meeting was extraordinarily unpleasant.

Janson asked me to give the travelling "comrades" the compliments of the General Commission of the German Trade Unions and to arrange a meeting for him. I called his attention to our exterritoriality during our entire journey through Germany, but promised to talk it over and give him an answer the following morning. The compliments of the German trade unions aroused no enthusiasm; they were,

* The text of this commitment was signed by V. I. Lenin and others. —*Ed.*

as was to be expected, received with roars of laughter. For three years running Lenin had castigated the General Commission of the Trade Unions and had mocked at it in his articles, and suddenly here was the General Commission with its courteous compliments.

The returning émigrés held a short consultation and decided that if Janson tried to violate their exterritoriality they would just throw him out of the carriage.

Of course, I submitted this decision to Janson in a somewhat moderated form. I asked him to refrain from pressing for a meeting because I was not sure I could protect him from assault and battery. As for the compliments from the General Commission I could thank him only on my own behalf.

In Stockholm on April 13 we were given a grand reception at the Regina Hotel. Our journey and the terms on which it took place were immediately written up.

Hanecki* and Vorovsky** were appointed representatives of the Bolshevik Party abroad where they formed a propaganda centre. Information printed on a mimeograph and sent to the newspapers throughout the world proved to be a powerful means of agitation. Despite the fact that these reports were an inexhaustible source of most original misprints, both in content and importance they were greatly superior to the Menshevik efforts.

Herald of the Russian Revolution, organ of the Bureau Abroad of the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks) began to be published on September 15, 1917, and served as a source of information for us, foreign Communists, and as a powerful weapon in the struggle against the social-patriots.

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* Y. S. Hanecki (Fürstenberg)—prominent leader of the Polish and Russian revolutionary movement. Member of the Bureau Abroad of the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks) (1917). After the October Revolution in diplomatic service. Director of the U.S.S.R. State Museum of the Revolution (1935).—*Ed.*

** V. V. Vorovsky (1871-1923)—prominent leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and of the Soviet state. Member of the Bureau Abroad of the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (1917). In Soviet time—diplomat: Ambassador Plenipotentiary of the R.S.F.S.R. to Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Italy. Participant in the Genoa and Lausanne conferences. Killed by a whiteguard in Lausanne on May 10, 1923.—*Ed.*

Lenin and Nadezhda Krupskaya in Stockholm
on their way from Switzerland to Russia, April 1 (14), 1917

On April 15 we arrived in the Finnish frontier town of Tornio. Here I was forced to take leave of my comrades since the Milyukov government had refused to give me permission to enter. Most important of all, however, was that our mission had been accomplished.

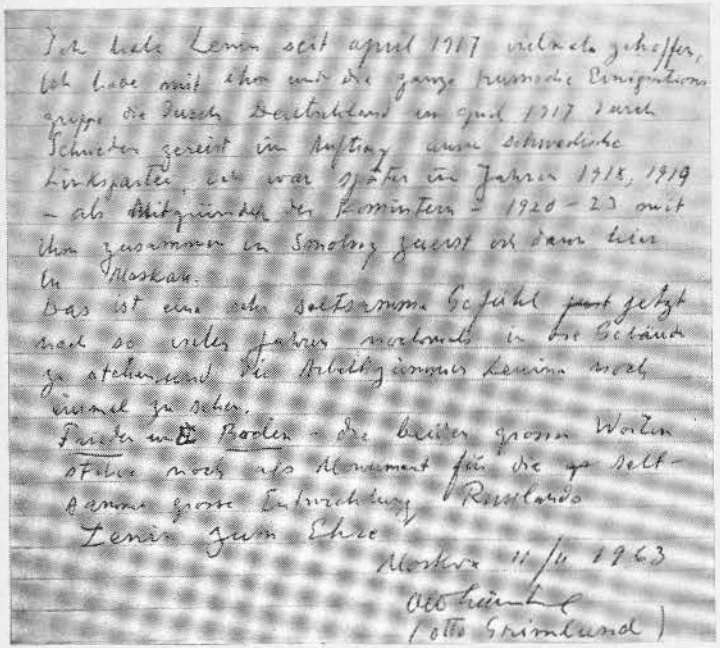
1927

On the Way to the Homeland

by Otto Grimlund

The first time I met Lenin was in April 1917. At that time I lived in Malmö. One day I received a letter informing me that Frederik Ström* was in town and wanted me to visit him at a certain hotel. When I arrived at the hotel I found him with a Russian comrade. They were both excited, and Ström told me he had asked me to come in order that I might help them in an important matter, since he himself had to leave for Stockholm at once. Then he disappeared and left me with the excited Russian who informed me that a group of Russian Socialists was coming by boat from Sasnitz and that there were two very well-known Socialists among them; he asked me to go to Trelleborg with him in order to meet them and help them. "Who is coming?" I asked. "Very well-known Party people, whose names have been kept secret for the journey," he said and then whispered into my ear: "Lenin is coming with them. But mum's the word." I assured him I would keep silent and said I was ready to go with him. The travellers disembarked and passed uneventfully through the customs, after which they set out for Malmö where they were given hot food for the first time in four days. That same evening we went to Stockholm. I was in one compartment with Lenin. That night nobody slept. At first Lenin told us about the difficulties they had in leaving Switzerland, about their attempts to pass through the countries of the Entente, which refused to grant them visas, and about the negotiations with Germany resulting in a permission to go through Germany under a strong guard and without the right to leave their carriages. Lenin asked me several questions, or rather plied me with questions: "Branting and his influence? The membership of the Party? The size of the parliamentary faction? What has the Party accomplished? The trade unions? Their

* F. Ström—Swedish Left-wing Social-Democrat, writer and publicist, one of the persons who met V. I. Lenin in Stockholm and saw him off on his way to Russia (April 1917).—*Ed.*



Facsimile of Otto Grimlund's handwriting

attitude to political trends? Their finances? Who are the leaders? Number of strikes? Youth movement? How extensive? What are the conditions? What tactics? How many pamphlets have been published?" etc.

I have an idea that my answers were for the most part weak and incomplete, but Lenin displayed a very lively interest even in the most insignificant details. After a while the roles were reversed and it was my turn to question Lenin on the conditions of different parties in Europe, the general situation and the revolution in Russia. This interview was never published and the record of it is still in my desk. For me, however, it was a good deal more than just an interview; it was a lecture on socialism, which I shall never forget. Lenin was one of the greatest people and it was most interesting to have an interview with him. All I had to do was from time to time to put questions to him and he imme-

diately gave exhaustive answers. I still remember that I was barely able to keep up with him and take notes of what he was saying. In that interview Lenin completely and clearly revealed the attitude of his Party to the Russian revolution, stigmatised the Kerensky-type "Socialists", castigated the "bourgeois imperialists" and then drew up a programme of action of the "Maximalists" (Bolsheviks): "All Power to the Soviets!" and "Peace and Land!"

After a day in Stockholm where several Swedish comrades arranged a conference with the Russians* the latter set off again through Haparanda and Finland to Petrograd.

1946

* Conference of Swedish Social-Democratic internationalists with the participation of Lenin (April 13, 1917).—*Ed.*

Meetings with Lenin

by Hugo Sillen

Lenin arrived in Stockholm in the morning and stopped at the Regina—a hotel which is still in existence today. I was working in the morning and was therefore unable to meet him at the railway terminal, but as soon as I was through I went with a number of comrades to the hotel. When we reached the hotel Lenin was talking to some representatives of the Swedish Social-Democrats. We greeted Lenin very cordially. He showed a keen interest in our work. I remember one of the comrades asking Lenin to stay in Stockholm a few more days, but it was evident that he could hardly wait to get back to Russia. "The most important thing," he said, "is to be back in Russia as soon as possible. Every day is valuable."

At 7:00 p.m. we were seeing Lenin off at the terminal.* About 100 people had already gathered there, many of them with bouquets of flowers. Everybody was in a cheerful, elated mood, and Lenin was without doubt the centre of attention. He had intelligent, sparkling eyes and made rapid, expressive gestures. The departing comrades were animatedly discussing something on the platform. Then we heard the *Internationale* and little red flags appeared from the carriage windows. As soon as the train started moving our Swedish comrades set up a wild cheering for the coming revolution in the East and the cheers were enthusiastically echoed by all the departing Russians.

Yes, Sweden was bidding farewell to a man who was heading the revolution which had ushered in a new era of human history.

The second time I saw Lenin was after the revolution, in July 1920, at the Second Congress of the Communist International at which I was a member of the Swedish delegation. I still vividly remember Lenin's speech. The power of his logic literally bowled his opponents over. He was a

* The Russian émigrés left Stockholm at 6:37 p.m., April 13, 1917. —*Ed.*

past master at combining jokes and satire with sharp polemic.

During an intermission we, a group of Scandinavian representatives, walked up to Lenin. He greeted us heartily and chatted to us happily.

Forty years have passed since I last saw that great leader of the proletarian revolution, but I shall always cherish my memories of him.

1960

How Lenin Was Hiding in the House of the Helsingfors* Chief of Police

by Kustaa Rovio

Shotman** came and in a tone wrapped in mystery said:

"The Central Committee of the Party has charged me with organising Lenin's removal and with finding lodgings for him here in Finland."

"Some girl has already been here about this, and we have made arrangements," I commented.

"She did the wrong thing," said Shotman. "I have been charged with putting Lenin up here in Helsingfors on the quiet. You have no right to tell anybody about it."

"All right. I am willing to do all I can. And, of course, I shall not tell anybody," I answered.

Since Shotman was in such a hurry to move Lenin we decided that he should bring him directly to my flat and that we would then find a more suitable place for him.

In the beginning of April 1917 workers' organisations elected me Chief of the Helsingfors Militia. Later I was appointed Deputy Chief of the Helsingfors City Police, while a certain Lieutenant von Schrader was appointed Chief of the Police. Unable to stand the attacks of the bourgeoisie and its press, which owing to the intensified class struggle was also constantly attacking the militia that consisted almost entirely of Social-Democratic workers, Schrader quit. Thus I remained as the Chief of the Militia and worked in that capacity until the workers' revolution in January 1918.

I had a flat (one room and a kitchen) in Hagness Square (house No. 1, flat No. 22), and since I had no visitors and

* Now Helsinki.—*Ed.*

** A. V. Shotman—member of the C.P.S.U. (1899). On instructions of the Central Committee of the Party organised Lenin's passage from Razliv to Finland. Active participant in the October Revolution. Subsequently held important government and Party posts.—*Ed.*

my wife was out in the country, we found it safe and more convenient at first to accommodate Lenin at my place. Shotman even joked:

"Our people will be surprised and will laugh their heads off when I go back to Petrograd and tell them that I lodged Lenin with the Chief of the Helsingfors City Police. I am sure not one of Kerensky's bloodhound agents will ever think of looking into your flat."

Shotman and I agreed that he should first bring Lenin to the city of Lahti from where he would telephone me at Police Headquarters in Helsingfors. From Lahti they would go to Deputy Wiik's* flat because the latter lived not within the Helsingfors city limits, but in a suburban area near Malmi. When everything had been talked over and decided Shotman left satisfied and happy.

A couple of days later my telephone rang. Shotman was reporting from Lahti that "everything was all right and that he would arrive the next evening".

The following day Wiik telephoned me and asked for an appointment because some comrade wanted to see me. I told him I would meet him at 11:00 p.m. on the sidewalk near Hagness Market.

I arrived at the appointed place in plenty of time and started waiting. A few minutes later two persons speaking French came up to me. One of them was Wiik and I greeted him.

"Comrade Rovio?" the other comrade asked me calmly in Russian and held out his hand. It was Lenin, and it was the first time I had seen him. I answered him in the affirmative and shook hands with him. We went to my flat. It was either at the end of July or the beginning of August, I do not remember exactly. After taking a good look round and seeing nobody in the street we climbed to my flat on the fifth floor.

I was somewhat excited by having suddenly become Lenin's landlord. Of course, I did not even suspect at the time that four months later Lenin would be the leader of

* K. H. Wiik—Finnish Social-Democrat, deputy of the Finnish Diet. Lenin spent a day at his country house at the station of Malmi on the way to Helsingfors. Carried out Lenin's commissions on connections with the Bolshevik Central Committee Bureau Abroad.—*Ed.*

a great world power, but reading the daily Russian bourgeois conciliatory newspapers and observing the attention they devoted to Lenin's "espionage" I quite understood Shotman's conspiracy and could not help feeling a certain tension, especially since on my job I had to deal almost daily with Kerensky's counter-espionage and sometimes with M. M. Stakhovich, Octobrist and Finnish Governor-General.

I brewed some tea and offered it to my "lodger". Wiik left. Lenin wanted to know how we could get Russian newspapers. I told him that the best way to get them was from 6 to 7 o'clock every evening at the railway terminal after the arrival of the Petrograd train.

"You will have to go to the terminal and get all the Russian newspapers for me every day. Then you will have to arrange to send all letters via your mail because we cannot trust the official mail," Lenin instructed me.

I promised to carry out all his instructions faithfully and told him that I had a very reliable comrade working in the mail-van of the Helsingfors-Petrograd train and that with his aid I could arrange for illegal mail deliveries as soon as I was instructed as to where the mail should be delivered in Petrograd.

When Lenin had found out all he needed for his work he told me to go to sleep, while he would do some work. And, despite the late hour and the fact that he had just moved to a new flat, Lenin calmly sat down at the table and started reading Russian newspapers and writing. I do not know how long he kept this up because I soon fell asleep. I woke up at 9 a.m., looked at the table and saw a notebook with a heading *The State and Revolution*. Lenin was still asleep when I went to work. When I came home at about 4:00 p.m. Lenin said to me:

"I looked through your bookcase. You have many good books and they are just the ones I need."

Then he asked me to buy some eggs, butter, etc., for him. I proposed to bring dinners from the co-operative dining-room where I usually dined, but he flatly refused, saying that on the gas-stove he could very well boil water for his tea and cook some eggs, which was quite enough for him.

"The most important thing for me is the newspapers. Don't you miss them," he said.

I went to the terminal and returned with a pack of newspapers. From then on I watched out for the mail train at the terminal, bought all the newspapers and brought them home to Lenin. He immediately read them and then wrote articles until late at night; the following morning he gave me letters to be forwarded to Petrograd. During the day he prepared his own food.

Lenin stayed in my flat about a week and a half, then Wiik found another lodging for him at Comrade Usenius'. We moved him there late in the evening. But a few days later I had to take Lenin back to my place because the comrade to whose flat he had moved returned unexpectedly and Lenin could no longer stay there.

Lenin spent another week in my flat and we then found fresh lodgings for him with a childless worker.* I do not want to name him because after the suppression of the Finnish revolution he was arrested and sentenced to death and I still do not know whether he was executed or not. This comrade gave Lenin a room, while his wife cooked for him and tried to make him comfortable. Lenin was pleased with both his lodging and his landlords.

I visited Lenin every evening, brought him newspapers, took his letters to be forwarded to Petrograd and acted as interpreter for him and his landlords, who were both very sorry they could not speak to him directly. Lenin was also sorry he spoke neither Finnish nor Swedish and said it was already too late for him to study Finnish. It was at that flat that Lenin lived for the rest of his stay in Helsingfors, until he moved to Vyborg at the end of September or the beginning of October.

Now that I recall Lenin's underground life and work in Helsingfors after a lapse of five years I feel that I have forgotten quite a good deal. My memory has retained only fragmentary but most vivid pictures and episodes from our daily associations.

Lenin lived in Helsingfors when the Finnish working-class organisations, unaware of it, decided to invite him to their annual holiday celebrations in Finland. The last Sunday of August the working-class organisations all over Finland celebrate their traditional labour day, all the receipts going to the treasury of the Central Organisation of the Finnish Trade Unions.

The commission organising this festivity in Helsingfors decided before the July days to invite Lenin to act as speaker. I was charged with writing and sending this letter of invitation to Lenin. I wrote the letter, but before I could send it Lenin became my lodger. One day I showed him the letter and told him about this day. Lenin smiled and said:

"I shall have to refrain from speeches now. True, the day is not far off, but let us leave it for some other time."

Then there was a "financial" problem that had to be solved. Not that Lenin was short of any money, but unfortunately it was Russian money. Owing to the continuous decrease in the exchange value of Russian money, while the Finnish mark had not depreciated so rapidly, and to the speculation in Russian money, the Helsingfors banks were exchanging Russian money only to the extent of 10 marks per person. At the same time I was spending more than that every day on newspapers alone. I myself simply could not exchange enough money, besides it would have been wrong for the Chief of Police to be seen exchanging Russian money every day, since all money-changers were considered speculators and the entire press was conducting a campaign against them.

What was I to do? How could I explain my possession of so much Russian money? I spoke to my comrades in the Police Headquarters, explaining to them that I had a secret assignment from the Party and I therefore had to exchange Russian money for Finnish, for which purpose I needed their help. "I shall explain it all to you later, and if you help me your names will go down in history," I joked in conclusion. The result was that I could immediately send five comrades to exchange the money, and Lenin's "financial crisis" was resolved.

Did anybody know Lenin was in Helsingfors? Of the Russians living in Finland only Smilga* did. When Lenin

* Arthur Blomqvist—engine-driver, member of a workers' organisation of Finnish Swedes. Died in 1951.—*Ed.*

* I. T. Smilga—member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1907). After the February Revolution member of the Kronstadt Party Committee.—*Ed.*

came to live with me he asked me to bring Smilga. I brought Smilga to my flat and Lenin started questioning him about the mood of the sailors and the garrison, about the newspaper, print-shop, etc. Of our Finnish comrades only a few members of the Central Committee knew—Manner,* Kuusinen,** etc., because I told them and arranged a meeting for them with Lenin. At that time Manner was President of the Diet, and one day Lenin and I drove out to his home. We talked partly in Russian and partly in German. I have forgotten most of what we talked about, but I remember we discussed anti-militarism.

Comrade Kuusinen saw Lenin just before his departure for Vyborg. They spoke only German and since I do not know this language I have forgotten all they told me about their talk.

Shotman visited us several times. He gave me the addresses where the letters were to be forwarded and generally organised the mail in Petrograd. Once he came, it must have been after the Kornilov days, and said to me:

"Within four months, you know, Lenin will be our Prime Minister," and he began to explain and prove that to me.

When we saw Lenin he said:

"Comrade Lenin, within four months you will have to appoint a cabinet because you will be Prime Minister."

Lenin started questioning him about everything in detail.

I do not remember whether it was Shotman or Smilga who told us about the notorious Democratic Conference and called it a swamp. Lenin said the work of the conference was mere twaddle, that it would be a good thing to take some soldiers, surround the Aleksandrinsky Theatre and arrest the whole caboodle for they had talked enough rubbish.

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* Kullervo Manner—Chairman of the Finnish Social-Democratic Party (1917-18). One of the founders and General Secretary of the Finnish Communist Party.—*Ed.*

** O. V. Kuusinen (1881-1964)—prominent leader of the Finnish and international working-class movement. One of the founders of the Finnish Communist Party (1918). Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, member and secretary of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1921-39). Deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. (1940). Author of a number of works on the history of the C.P.S.U. and the international working-class movement. Academician (1958).—*Ed.*

Then, smiling cunningly, he asked if that could not be done just by accident.

One day Lenin was visited by Krupskaya. Lenin drew a map showing how he could be found and sent it to her enclosed in a letter. She came to Helsingfors and with the aid of the map found him.

With the aggravation of the class struggle and the increased influence of our Party Lenin began to feel very much out of place in Helsingfors. He wanted to be closer to the events, nearer to Petrograd. One day he announced that he wanted to go to Vyborg and that I must get him a wig, some dye for his eyebrows and a passport, and find him a lodging in Vyborg.

I proceeded to carry out his wishes. In the newspapers I found an advertisement of a theatrical barber and called him up to find out how I could order a wig. He told me I would have to come in person, so that he might take my measure and make anything I wanted.

Early the next morning Lenin and I started out for Vladimirskaya Street and, to remain inconspicuous, walked only along deserted streets. We entered the barber shop. The barber turned out to be an old resident of Petrograd where he had worked at the Mariinsky Theatre and was a real specialist. He told us how he used to "rejuvenate" princes, counts, generals and all other kinds of aristocrats. In answer to Lenin's question as to when the wig would be ready he said that he could not make it in less than two weeks because it was painstaking work. There we were, and Lenin was planning to leave within a couple of days.

"Maybe you have ready-made wigs?" Lenin asked.

The barber measured Lenin's head and asked what colour he wanted. Lenin said that the wig must have some grey hair in it to make him look about sixty. The poor barber almost fainted with surprise.

"Why?" he said. "You are still so young you don't look a day over forty. What do you want with such a wig? You do not even have any grey hair yourself!"

The barber tried very eloquently to persuade Lenin not to insist on premature old age. Despite all of Lenin's objections he tried to talk him out of taking a grey-haired wig.

"What difference does it make to you what wig I take?" asked Lenin.

"I merely want you to look as young as you are," replied the barber, making a last attempt to change Lenin's mind.

Lenin began to examine the showcases and, on catching sight of a grey-haired wig, asked if he might try it on. Reproachfully the barber took out the wig and handed it to Lenin. The wig was almost what we wanted and merely needed some minor alterations. The barber promised to have it ready the following morning. When we returned the following morning the wig was ready. Lenin tried it on, the barber made the final adjustments, gave Lenin instructions on how to wear it, we paid for it and left. The barber must have wondered about this strange client and told his friends about an odd fellow who, although he could easily be taken for a young man, stubbornly insisted on looking old.

When I visited Lenin the following day he told me he was learning to wear the wig. He put it on and asked:

"Can anyone tell that I am wearing a wig?"

I looked him over carefully and said:

"I'd never have guessed it."

Then I got some eyebrow dye and a Finnish passport from my friends and gave them all to Lenin. I asked Deputy Huttunen* to find a lodging for Lenin in Vyborg. When everything was arranged I said good-bye to Lenin and he was taken to Vyborg and thence, some time later, to Petrograd.

Describing in detail one of the most remarkable periods of Lenin's life I cannot help saying a few words about his personality. It is a truism that a person's character manifests itself best in a critical situation. What was Lenin like during these hard times after the July days of Kerensky's rule?

Amazing self-possession and equanimity. No sooner did he arrive than, despite the continuous danger of arrest, he sat down at his desk and began to work. Incidentally, it was in Helsingfors that Lenin finished his *State and Revolution.*

As long as he stayed in Helsingfors I never for a moment saw him in the least nervous. He was always in high spirits. Whenever he heard anything amusing he laughed whole-heartedly.

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* E. J. Huttunen—Finnish Social-Democrat, deputy of the Finnish Diet.—*Ed.*

Lenin worked regularly and assiduously. When he finished working he would go out for a walk. Sometimes we walked together through the city late in the evening when it was dark. When Krupskaya came to visit Lenin he said to me:

"Do not come to see me tomorrow. I shall call for my newspapers at your flat."

To be sure, the following day Lenin and Krupskaya came to my flat, walking through the large park from Tele to Hagness Square.

I noticed that Lenin soberly appraised events under all circumstances. His was not an iron will (this would be putting it mildly), but a steel will. He could always be depended upon to get exactly what he was after. Whenever I failed to carry out an assignment in due time, Lenin reproached me:

"How come? Why haven't you done it?" And despite anything I might say to exonerate myself Lenin insisted that I do everything as he wanted it done.

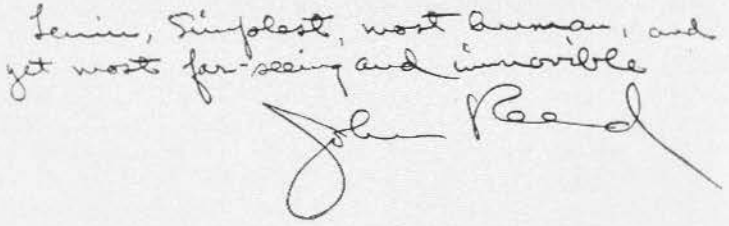
As for his personal needs and requirements, Lenin was unusually modest. Even our enemies can say nothing to the contrary.

As a person Lenin was extremely likable and charming. But first and foremost he was a revolutionary.

Plunging Ahead*

by John Reed

It was just 8:40 when a thundering wave of cheers announced the entrance of the Presidium,** with Lenin—great Lenin—among them. A short stocky figure, with a big head set down on his shoulders, bald and bulging. Little eyes, a snubbish nose, wide generous mouth, and heavy chin; clean-shaven now but already beginning to bristle with the well-known beard of his past and future. Dressed in shabby clothes, his trousers much too long for him. Unimpressive, to be the idol of a mob, loved and revered as perhaps few leaders in history have been. A strange popular leader—a leader purely by virtue of intellect; colourless, humourless, uncompromising and detached, without picturesque idiosyncrasies—but with the power of explaining profound ideas in simple terms, of analysing a concrete situation. And combined with shrewdness, the greatest intellectual audacity....



Now Lenin, gripping the edge of the reading stand, letting his little winking eyes travel over the crowd as he stood there waiting, apparently oblivious to the long-rolling ovation, which lasted several minutes. When it finished, he said simply, "We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order!" Again that overwhelming human roar.

* Excerpts from the book *Ten Days That Shook the World.—Ed.*
** Presidium of the second (last) session of the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets (November 8, 1917).—*Ed.*

"The first thing is the adoption of practical measures to realise peace.... We shall offer peace to the peoples of all the belligerent countries upon the basis of the Soviet terms—no annexations, no indemnities, and the right of self-determination of peoples. At the same time, according to our promise, we shall publish and repudiate the secret treaties.... The question of War and Peace is so clear that I think that I may, without preamble, read the project of a Proclamation to the Peoples of All the Belligerent Countries...."

His great mouth, seeming to smile, opened wide as he spoke; his voice was hoarse—not unpleasantly so, but as if it had hardened that way after years and years of speaking—and went on monotonously, with the effect of being able to go on for ever.... For emphasis he bent forward slightly. No gestures. And before him, a thousand simple faces looking up in intent adoration.

Proclamation to the Peoples and Governments of All the Belligerent Nations

"The Workers' and Peasants' Government, created by the revolution of November 6th and 7th* and based on the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, proposes to all the belligerent peoples and to their governments to begin immediately negotiations for a just and democratic peace.

"The government means by a just and democratic peace, which is desired by the majority of the workers and the labouring classes, exhausted and depleted by the war—that peace which the Russian workers and peasants, after having struck down the tsarist monarchy, have not ceased to demand categorically—immediate peace without annexations (that is to say without conquest of foreign territory, without forcible annexation of other nationalities), and without indemnities.

"The Government of Russia proposes to all the belligerent peoples immediately to conclude such a peace, by showing themselves willing to enter upon decisive steps of negotiations aiming at such a peace, at once, without the slightest delay, before the definitive ratification of all the

* Actually November 7 and 8.—*Ed.*

conditions of such a peace by the authorised assemblies of the people of all countries and of all nationalities. . . ."*

When the grave thunder of applause had died away, Lenin spoke again:

"We propose to the congress to ratify this declaration. We address ourselves to the governments as well as to the peoples, for a declaration which would be addressed only to the peoples of the belligerent countries might delay the conclusion of peace. The conditions of peace, drawn up during the armistice, will be ratified by the Constituent Assembly. In fixing the duration of the armistice at three months, we desire to give to the peoples as long a rest as possible after this bloody extermination, and ample time for them to elect their representatives. This proposal of peace will meet with resistance on the part of the imperialist governments—we don't fool ourselves on that score. But we hope that revolution will soon break out in all the belligerent countries; that is why we address ourselves to the workers of France, England and Germany. . . .

"The revolution of November 6th and 7th," he ended, "has opened the era of the socialist revolution. . . . The labour movement, in the name of peace and socialism, shall win, and fulfil its destiny. . . ."

There was something quiet and powerful in all this, which stirred the souls of men. It was understandable why people believed when Lenin spoke. . . .

Then one after another, amid rising enthusiasm: Ukrainian Social-Democracy, support; Lithuanian Social-Democracy, support; Populist Socialists, support; Polish Social-Democracy, support; Polish Socialists, support—but would prefer a socialist coalition; Lettish Social-Democracy, support. . . . Something was kindled in these men. One spoke of the "coming world revolution, of which we are the advance-guard"; another of "the new age of brotherhood, when all the peoples will become one great family". . . . An individual member claimed the floor. "There is contradiction here," he said. "First you offer peace without annexations and indemnities, and then you say you will consider all peace offers. To consider means to accept. . . ."

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* See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 249.—*Ed.*

Lenin was on his feet. "We want a just peace, but we are not afraid of a revolutionary war. . . . Probably the imperialist governments will not answer our appeal—but we shall not issue an ultimatum to which it will be easy to say no. . . . If the German proletariat realises that we are ready to consider all offers of peace, that will perhaps be the last drop which overflows the bowl—revolution will break out in Germany. . . .

"We consent to examine all conditions of peace, but that doesn't mean that we shall accept them. . . . For some of our terms we shall fight to the end—but possibly for others will find it impossible to continue the war. . . . Above all, we want to finish the war. . . ."

Suddenly, by common impulse, we found ourselves on our feet, mumbling together into the smooth lifting unison of the *Internationale*. A grizzled old soldier was sobbing like a child. Aleksandra Kollontai rapidly winked the tears back. The immense sound rolled through the hall, burst windows and doors and soared into the quiet sky. "The war is ended! The war is ended!" said a young workman near me, his face shining. And when it was over, as we stood there in a kind of awkward hush, someone in the back of the room shouted, "Comrades! Let us remember those who have died for liberty!" So we began to sing the Funeral March, that slow, melancholy and yet triumphant chant, so Russian and so moving. The *Internationale* is an alien air, after all. The Funeral March seemed the very soul of those dark masses whose delegates sat in this hall, building from their obscure visions a new Russia—and perhaps more.

You fell in the fatal fight
For the liberty of the people, for the honour
of the people.
You gave up your lives and everything dear to you,
You suffered in horrible prisons,
You went to exile in chains. . . .
Without a word you carried your chains because
you could not ignore your suffering brothers,
Because you believed that justice is stronger
than the sword. . . .
The time will come when your surrendered life
will count.

That time is near; when tyranny falls the people will rise, great and free!
Farewell, brothers, you chose a noble path,
At your grave we swear to fight, to work for freedom and the people's happiness....

For this did they lie there, the martyrs of March,* in their cold Brotherhood Grave on Mars Field; for this thousands and tens of thousands had died in the prisons, in exile, in Siberian mines. It had not come as they expected it would come, nor as the intelligentsia desired it; but it had come—rough, strong, impatient of formulas, contemptuous of sentimentalism; *real*....

Lenin was reading the Decree on Land:

"(1.) All private ownership of land is abolished immediately without compensation.

"(2.) All landowners' estates and all lands belonging to the Crown, to monasteries, church lands with all their livestock and inventoried property, buildings and all appurtenances, are transferred to the disposition of the township Land Committees and the district Soviets of Peasants' Deputies until the Constituent Assembly meets.

"(3.) Any damage whatever done to the confiscated property which from now on belongs to the whole people, is regarded as a serious crime, punishable by the revolutionary tribunals. The district Soviets of Peasants' Deputies shall take all necessary measures for the observance of the strictest order during the taking over of the landowners' estates, for the determination of the dimensions of the plots of land and which of them are subject to confiscation, for the drawing-up of an inventory of the entire confiscated property, and for the strictest revolutionary protection of all the farming property on the land, with all buildings, implements, cattle, supplies of products, etc., passing into the hands of the people.

"(4.) For guidance during the realisation of the great land reforms until their final resolution by the Constituent Assembly, shall serve the following peasant *nakaz* (instructions), drawn up on the basis of 242 local peasant *nakazi* by the editorial board of the "Izvestia of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies", and published in No. 88 of said *Izvestia* (Petrograd, No. 88, August 19th, 1917).

"(5.) The lands of peasants and of Cossacks serving in the Army shall not be confiscated."*

This is not, explained Lenin, the project of former Minister Chernov, who spoke of "erecting a framework" and tried to realise reforms from above. From below, on the spot will be decided the questions of division of the land. The amount of land received by each peasant will vary according to the locality....

Under the Provisional Government, the *pomieshtchiki*** flatly refused to obey the orders of the Land Committees—those Land Committees projected by Lvov, brought into existence by Shingaryov, and administered by Kerensky!

... At two o'clock the Land Decree was put to vote, with only one against and the peasant delegates wild with joy.... So plunged the Bolsheviks ahead, irresistible, overriding hesitation and opposition—the only people in Russia who had a definite programme of action while the others talked for eight long months.

* February (N. S.).—*Ed.*

* See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 260.—*Ed.*
** Landlords.—*Ed.*

Lenin. The Man and His Work*

by Albert Rhys Williams

*From the Author's Preface to the 1932 Russian Edition***

In the spring of 1918, making ready to leave Russia for the U.S.A., I filled a large valise with pamphlets, posters, appeals, leaflets and issues of *Pravda, Izvestia* and even *Rech.*

In my last chat with Lenin in the Kremlin I mentioned my valise with the literature.

"A fine collection," said Lenin, "but do you really think that your government will admit you to America with this material?"

"I don't doubt it at all," I answered, still naïvely convinced that America wanted to learn the truth about Russia and the Russian revolution.

Lenin shook his head and laughingly said:

"Wonderful. I may be wrong. We shall see."

He took a pen and with his own hand wrote to all station masters, weighers and other railwaymen, asking them to devote special attention to my valise. I brought my valise safely to Vladivostok, but never did get it to America. It disappeared. How? I don't know.

It was during the blockade. America in its own way also suffered a blockade. The export of medicaments and various other goods to Russia was prohibited by the American Government which at the same time banned the import of Russian newspapers and information on Russia.

And yet the American people wanted to know the truth about the Russian revolution. The imagination of the masses was caught by the unusual, staggering events in Russia. They took a particular interest in Lenin, the great leader of the Russian revolution.

The well-known motto of the American newspapers has always been: "Give the public what it likes." If an editor has no news, he must make it himself. And that was why fables and cock-and-bull stories were substituted for the real facts about Lenin. To think of all the stupidities they printed about him in the newspapers! To make all the unmitigated nonsense appear authentic, they always added that they had received it from "their own correspondent" in Paris, London or Stockholm.

These inventions were full of absurdities and the most incredible contradictions. But in virtue of some strange psychology developed by the war the American public gobbled up the "news" and demanded more. It could see nothing absurd or supernatural in it.

In response to these lies and slander I wrote "Ten Months with Lenin". We supplied this book with a detailed biography of Lenin. I beg the readers and critics to remember that it was written for Americans and that the conditions under which it was written were far from normal. Intervention laid its paws on everything. It was dangerous at that time in America to write in a benevolent spirit about Russia. It was difficult to squeeze even a single line into a newspaper or a magazine. . . .

First Impression of Lenin

While a tumultuous, singing throng of peasants and soldiers, flushed with the triumph of their revolution, jammed the great hall at Smolny, while the guns of the *Aurora* were heralding the death of the old order and the birth of the new, Lenin quietly stepped upon the tribune and the Chairman announced, "Comrade Lenin will now address the congress."

We strained to see whether he would meet our image of him, but from our seats at the reporters' table he was at first invisible. Amidst loud cries, cheers, whistles and stamping of feet he crossed the platform, the demonstration rising to a climax as he stepped upon the speaker's rostrum, not more than thirty feet away. Now we saw him clearly and our hearts fell.

He was almost the opposite of what we had pictured him. Instead of looming up large and impressive he appeared short and stocky. His beard and hair were rough and unkempt.

* Excerpts from the book.—*Ed.*
** Retranslated from the Russian.—*Tr.*

After stilling the tornado of applause he said, "Comrades, we shall now take up the formation of the socialist state."* Then he went into an unimpassioned, matter-of-fact discussion. In his voice there was a harsh, dry note rather than eloquence. Thrusting his thumbs in his vest at the arm-pits, he rocked back and forth on his heels. For an hour we listened, hoping to discern the hidden magnetic qualities which would account for his hold on these free, young, sturdy spirits. But in vain.

We were disappointed. The Bolsheviks by their sweep and daring had captured our imaginations; we expected their leader to do likewise. We wanted the head of this party to come before us, the embodiment of these qualities, an epitome of the whole movement, a sort of super-Bolshevik. Instead of that, there he was, looking like a Menshevik, and a very small one at that.

"If he were spruced up a bit you would take him for a bourgeois mayor or banker of a small French city," whispered Julius West, the English correspondent.

"Yes, a rather little man for a rather big job," drawled his companion.

We knew how heavy was the burden that the Bolsheviks had taken up. Would they be able to carry it? At the outset, their leader did not strike us as a strong man.

So much for a first impression. Yet, starting from that first adverse estimate, I found myself six months later in the camp of Voskov, Neibut, Peters, Volodarsky and Yanyshev,** to whom the first man and statesman of Europe was Lenin.

Iron Discipline in Lenin's Personal Life

The same iron discipline that Lenin was injecting into the social life he showed in his individual life. *Shchi* and *borshch*, slabs of black bread, tea and porridge made up the fare of

* These words were spoken by V. I. Lenin at the session of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies on November 7, 1917.—*Ed.*

** A. R. Williams met these Bolshevik émigrés upon their return home from the U.S.A. in the summer of 1917.—*Ed.*

the Smolny crowds. It was likewise the usual fare of Lenin, his wife and sister. For twelve and fifteen hours a day the revolutionists stuck to their posts. Eighteen and twenty hours was the regular stint for Lenin. In his own hand he wrote hundreds of letters. Immersed in his work, he was dead to everything, even his own sustenance. Grasping her opportunity when Lenin was engaged in conversation his wife would appear with a glass of tea, saying, "Here, *tovarishch*, you must not forget to drink this." Often the tea was sugarless, for Lenin went on the same ration as the rest of the population. The soldiers and messengers slept on iron cots in the big, bare, barrack-like rooms. So did Lenin and his wife. Wearied, they flung themselves down on their rough couches, oftentimes without undressing, ready to rise to any emergency. Lenin did not take upon himself these privations out of any ascetic impulses. He was simply putting into practice the first principle of communism.

One of these principles was that the pay of any communist official should be no larger than the pay of an average workingman. It was fixed at a maximum of 600 rubles a month....

I was at the National Hotel when Lenin took a room on the second floor. The first act of the new Soviet regime was the abolition of the elaborate and expensive menus. The many dishes that comprised a meal were cut down to two. One could have soup and meat or soup and *kasha*. And that is all that anyone, whether Chief Commissar or kitchen-boy, could have, for it is written in the creed of the Communists that "No one shall have cake until everybody has bread". On some days there was very little even of bread for the people. Still each person got just as much as Lenin. Occasionally there were days without any bread at all. Those days, too, were breadless days for him.

When Lenin was near death in the days following the attempt upon his life, the physicians prescribed some food not obtainable on the regular food-card and which could be bought only in the market from some speculator. In spite of all the entreaties of his friends, he refused to touch anything which was not part of the legitimate ration.

Later when Lenin was convalescing his wife and sister hit upon a scheme for increasing his nutriment. Finding that

he kept his bread in a drawer, in his absence they slipped into his room and now and then added a piece to his store. Absorbed in his work, Lenin would reach into the drawer and take a bit, which he ate quite unconscious that it was any addition to the regular ration.

In a letter to the workers of Europe and America, Lenin wrote that the Russian masses had never suffered such depths of misery, such pangs of hunger as those to which they were now condemned by the military intervention of the Entente,* although he himself endured the same sufferings with the masses. . . .

Lenin's Manner in Private Address

Only once did I see evidence of weariness in him. After a midnight meeting of the Soviet,** he stepped into the elevator of the National Hotel with his wife and sister. "Good evening," he said, rather wearily. "No," he added, "it's good morning. I've been talking all day and night, and I'm tired. I'm riding the elevator though it is but one flight up."

Only once did I ever see him hurried or rushed. That was in February, when the Taurida Palace was again the scene of a fevered conflict—the debate over war or peace with Germany. Suddenly he appeared, and with quick, vigorous stride was fairly hurtling himself down the long hall toward the platform entrance. Professor Charles Kuntz and I were lying in wait for him, and hailed him with "Just a minute, *Tovarishch* Lenin."

He checked his headlong flight and came to attention in almost military fashion, bowed very gravely, and said, "Will you be so good as to let me go this time, comrades? I haven't even as much as a second. They are awaiting me inside the hall. I beg you to excuse me this time, please." With another bow and a handshake he was off in full stride again.

Wilcox, an anti-Bolshevik, commenting on the amenity of Lenin in intimate relationships, says that an English merchant, in order to rescue his family from a critical situation, went to seek Lenin's personal aid. He was astonished to find the "blood-thirsty tyrant" a mild-mannered man, courteous and sympathetic in bearing, and almost eager to afford all assistance in his power.

In fact, at times he seemed over-courteous, exaggeratedly so. This may have been due to his use of English, lifting bodily from the books the elaborate forms of polite conversation. More probably, it was part of his technic in social intercourse, for Lenin was highly efficient here as elsewhere. . . .

It was hard to get at Lenin, but once you did you had all there was of him. All his faculties were focused upon you in a manner so acute as to be embarrassing. After a polite, almost an effusive, greeting, he drew up closer until his face would be no more than a foot away. As the conversation went on he often came still closer, gazing into your eyes as if he were searching out the inmost recesses of your brain and peering into your very soul. . . .

We often met a certain Socialist who in 1905 had taken part in the Moscow uprising and had even fought well on the barricades. A career and the comforts of life had weaned him from his first ardent devotion. He wore now an air of prosperity, acting as correspondent for an English newspaper syndicate and Plekhanov's *Yedinstvo*. Bourgeois writers were regarded by Lenin as wasters of time; but by playing up his past revolutionary record this man had managed to secure an appointment with Lenin. He was in high spirits as he went away to meet it. Some hours later I saw him in a state of perturbation. He explained:

"When I walked into the office I referred to my part in the 1905 Revolution. Lenin came up to me and said, 'Yes, comrade, but what are you doing for *this* revolution?' His face was not more than six inches away and his eyes were looking straight into mine. I spoke of my old days on the Moscow barricades, and took a step backwards. But Lenin took a step forward, not letting go my eyes, and said again, 'Yes, comrade, but what are you doing for *this* revolution?' It was like an X-ray—as if he saw all my deeds of the last ten years. I couldn't stand it. I had to look down like a guilty child. I tried to talk, but it was no use. I had to come away." A few days later this man threw in his lot with *this* revolution and became a worker for the Soviet.

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* See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, pp. 429-36.—*Ed.*
** Reference is made to the Council of People's Commissars.—*Ed.*

Lenin's Sincerity and Hatred of Unreality

One of the secrets of Lenin's power is his terrible sincerity. He was sincere with his friends. He was gratified, of course, with each accession to the ranks, but he would not enlist a single recruit by painting in roseate hues the conditions of service, or the future prospects. Rather he tended to paint things blacker than they were. The burden of many of Lenin's speeches was: "The goal the Bolsheviks are striving for is far away—further away than most of you dream. We have led Russia along a rough road, but the course we follow will bring us more enemies, more hunger. Difficult as the past has been, the future promises harder things—harder than you imagine." Not an alluring promise. Not the usual call to arms! Yet as the Italians rallied to Garibaldi, who came offering wounds, prison and death, the Russians rallied to Lenin. This was a little discomforting to one expecting the leader to glorify his cause and to urge the prospective convert into joining it. He left the urge to come from within.

Lenin is sincere even with his avowed enemies. An Englishman, commenting on his extraordinary frankness, says his attitude was like this: "Personally, I have nothing against you. Politically, however, you are my enemy and I must use every weapon I can think of for your destruction. Your government does the same against me. Now let us see how far we can go along together."

This stamp of sincerity is on all his public utterances. Lenin is lacking in the usual outfit of the statesman-politician—bluff, glittering verbiage and success-psychology. One felt that he could not fool others even if he desired to. And for the same reasons that he could not fool himself: his scientific attitude of mind, his passion for the facts.

His lines of information ran out in every direction, bringing him multitudes of facts. These he weighed, sifted and assayed. Then he utilised them as a strategist, a master chemist working in social elements, a mathematician. He would approach a subject in this way:

"Now the facts that count for us are these: One, two, three, four—" He would briefly enumerate them. "And the factors that are against us are these."

In the same way he would count them up, "One, two, three, four— Are there any others?" he would ask. We would rack our brains for another, but generally in vain. Elaborating the points on each side, pro and contra, he would proceed with his calculation as with a problem in mathematics.

In his glorification of the fact he is the very opposite of Wilson.* Wilson as a word-artist gilds all subjects with glittering phrases, dazzling and mesmerising the people and blinding them to the ugly realities and crass economic facts involved. Lenin comes as a surgeon with his scalpel. He uncovers the simple economic motives that lie behind the grand language of the imperialists. Their proclamations to the Russian people he strips bare and naked, revealing behind their fair promises the black and grasping hand of the exploiters.

Relentless as he is toward the phraseologists of the Right, he is equally as hard upon those phraseologists of the Left who seek refuge from reality in revolutionary slogans. He feels it his duty "to pour vinegar and bile into the sweetened waters of revolutionary-democratic eloquence", and he treats the sentimentalist and shouter of shibboleths with caustic ridicule.

When the Germans were making their drive upon the Red Capital a flood of telegrams poured in on Smolny from all over Russia, expressing amazement, horror and indignation. They ended with slogans like "Long Live the Invincible Russian Proletariat!", "Death to the Imperialistic Robbers!", "With Our Last Drop of Blood We Will Defend the Capital of the Revolution!"

Lenin read them and then dispatched a telegram to all the Soviets, asking them kindly not to send revolutionary phrases to Petrograd, but to send troops; also to state precisely the number of volunteers enrolled, and to forward an exact report upon the arms, ammunition and food conditions.

In the spring of 1918, while the whole world was ridiculing the idea of a German revolution, and the Kaiser's army was smashing the Allied line in France, Lenin in a conver-

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* Woodrow Wilson—President of the U.S.A. (1913-21). One of the organisers of the military intervention against Soviet Russia.—*Ed.*

sation with me said, "The Kaiser's downfall will come within the year. It is absolutely certain." Nine months later the Kaiser was a fugitive from his own people.

Lenin's Political Far-Sightedness

When I visited Lenin before my departure he wrote the following letter in English* and gave it to me:

"With the American comrade Albert R. Williams I am sending my regards to the American Socialist-Internationalists. I firmly believe that ultimately the social revolution will win in all civilised countries. When it comes to America it will greatly surpass the Russian revolution."

Lenin wrote this quickly and easily, stopping but once for he couldn't think of the word *ultimately*.** I suggested the word to him and he put it in.

"Yes," he said, "the revolution will win. Maybe soon or maybe," he looked at me and smiled, "ultimately. It may even require a couple of decades. At any rate, we have already begun. The world has definitely entered the epoch of proletarian revolutions."

Handing the letter to me Lenin asked:

"When do you intend to return to America?" (It was April 1918.)

"I haven't decided yet," I answered.

"If you are going back to America," said Lenin to me, "you should start very soon, or the American army will meet you in Siberia." That was an amazing statement, as at that time, in Moscow, we had come to believe that America was cherishing only the largest good-will toward the new Russia. "That is impossible," I protested. "Why, Raymond Robins*** thinks there is even a possibility of recognition of the Soviets."

"Yes," said Lenin, "but Robins represents the liberal bourgeoisie of America. They do not decide the policy of America. Finance-capital does. And finance-capital wants control of Siberia. And it will send American soldiers to get it." This point of view was preposterous to me. Yet later, June 29, 1918, I saw with my own eyes the landing of American sailors in Vladivostok, while Tsarists, Czechs, British, Japanese and other Allies hauled down the flag of the Soviet Republic and ran up the flag of the old autocracy.

Lenin's predictions have so often been verified by the events that his view of the future is, to say the least, interesting. Here is the gist of Naudeau's famous interview as it appeared in the Paris *Temps* in April 1919.

"The future of the world?" said Lenin. "I am not a prophet. But this much is certain. The capitalist state, of which England is an example, is dying out. The old order is doomed. The economic conditions arising out of the war are driving towards the new order. The evolution of mankind inevitably leads to socialism.

"Who would have believed some years ago that the nationalisation of railroads in America was possible? And we have seen that Republic buy all the grain in order to use it to the fullest advantage of the state. All that is said against the state has not retarded this evolution. True, it is necessary to create and contrive new means of control in order to remedy the imperfections. But any attempts to prevent the state from becoming sovereign are futile. For the inevitable comes and comes of its own momentum. The English say, 'The proof of the pudding is in the eating.' Say what you will of the socialistic pudding, all the nations eat and will eat more and more of it.

"To sum up. Experience seems to prove that each human group goes on towards socialism by its own particular way.... There will be many passing forms and variations, but they are all different phases of a revolution which tends toward the same end. If a socialistic regime is established in France or Germany, it will be much easier to perpetuate it than here in Russia. For in the West socialism will find frameworks, organisations, all kinds of intellectual auxiliaries and materials, which are not to be found in Russia."

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* Retranslated from the Russian.—*Tr.*

** The letter to the American Socialist-Internationalists was written by V. I. Lenin in May 1918. First published in *Ogonyok* No. 4, 1925.—*Ed.*

*** Raymond Robins—head of the American Red Cross Mission to Soviet Russia. Received by V. I. Lenin on May 11, 1918.—*Ed.*

My Acquaintance with Lenin

by Louise Bryant (Reed)

(Excerpt from *Mirrors of Moscow**)

Legends spring up around every famous man. ...The life of the leader of a great world movement must harmonise with his doctrines; his conduct must be as austere or as lax as his doctrines dictate.... So it is worthy of note that even the narrowest moralist could not pick a flaw in Lenin's personal conduct.

... Whatever inward storms arose he was impressive because of his outward serenity, because of his calm.... Without any fuss he took power, faced world opposition, civil war, disease, defeat and even success. Without fuss he retired for a space, and without fuss he has returned again. His quiet authoritativeness inspired more confidence than could any amount of pomp. I know of no character in history capable, as he was through such distressing days, of such complete, aristocratic composure.

... I will never forget the day during the blackest time of the blockade when I went to Lenin and asked permission to go to the Middle East after the Foreign Office had flatly refused me this permission. He simply looked up from his work and smiled.

"I am glad to see there is someone in Russia," he said, "with enough energy to go exploring. You might get killed down there, but you will have the most remarkable experience of your life; it is worth taking chances for."

In two days I was on my way, with every necessary permit to ride on any train or stop in any government hotel. I carried a personal letter from Lenin and had two soldiers for escort! Any other official in Russia would have considered me an infernal nuisance even to suggest such an adventure in the middle of a revolution.

... In private conversation, no subject is too small for

* *Mirrors of Moscow* was published in the U.S.A. in 1923.—*Ed.*

his attention. I remember one time some foreign delegates were talking about the Russian theatre and particularly about the lack of costumes and stage property.

Someone said that Geltser, the great ballerina, complained that she had no silk stockings. The delegates were of the opinion that this was a slight matter. Not so Lenin. He frowned and said he would see to it that Geltser had everything she needed immediately. Calling his stenographer, he dictated a letter to Lunacharsky* about it. Yet Lenin had never seen Geltser dance and took no further interest in the affair.

... She** invited me to take tea with her in her apartment and I was very glad to go, since I wanted to see for myself how the Lenins lived.

They have two small rooms, which is the regulation in overcrowded Moscow. Everything was spotlessly clean, though, as she explained, she had no servant. There were quantities of books, plants in the windows, a few chairs, a table, beds and no pictures on the walls.

I found her to have the same charm which Lenin has and the same way of focusing all her attention on what her visitor is saying. When you go to Lenin's office he always jumps up and comes forward smiling, shakes hands warmly and pushes forward a comfortable chair. When you are seated he draws up another chair, leans forward and begins to talk as if there was nothing else to do in the world but visit.

He likes harmless gossip and will laugh mightily over some story about how Mr. Vanderlip fought with a Hungarian over a few sticks of wood on a cold day, or an incident which occurred on a train, or in the street. He himself loves to tell stories, and tells them very well. But no conversation runs on lightly for long with Lenin. He will stop suddenly in his laughter and say:

* A. V. Lunacharsky (1875-1933)—prominent Soviet statesman, publicist, playwright and author of a number of books on questions of education, art and literature. In the revolutionary movement from early 1890s. Member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1917. First People's Commissar of Education (October 1917-29). Academician (1930).—*Ed.*

** Lenin's wife.—*Ed.*

"What sort of a man is Mr. Harding,* and what is his background?"

It does not matter how determined one is to ply him with questions, one always goes away astonished because one has talked so much and answered so many questions instead of asking them. He has an extraordinary way of drawing one out and of putting one in an expansive mood.

This capacity for personal contact must be a big influence with the men with whom he comes constantly in touch.

* W. G. Harding—American statesman and journalist. President of the U.S.A. (1921-23).—*Ed.*

Recollections of Meetings with Lenin

by Mihai Bujor

In 1917 I was in Odessa where I directed the Rumanian revolutionary centre and supervised the newspaper *Lupta* (*Struggle*). Immediately after November 7 I decided to go to Petrograd to co-ordinate our revolutionary activities in the South with the Council of People's Commissars headed by Lenin.

I left Odessa in the beginning of December 1917 and three days later arrived in Petrograd.

As soon as I had reached Petrograd I went to the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs and submitted to the People's Commissar two copies of a long memorandum—one for him and one for Lenin.

The following days I spent in the archives of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs where I examined documents and diplomatic correspondence concerning Rumania's entrance into the war in 1916.

One morning the telephone rang in my room at Hotel Astoria, the telephone girl informing me that I was being summoned by Lenin who had sent a car for me. Within five minutes I was at Smolny. The chauffeur carried out some formalities and we entered a large, light office with typists sitting at their desks. The chauffeur entered the adjacent room.

This was my first meeting with Lenin. I sat in the office waiting to be received. In the doorway, behind which the chauffeur had disappeared, a middle-aged man dressed in an ordinary black suit appeared; the man had a large round forehead and a small beard and held a sheet of paper in his hand. I took him for the secretary who was to take me to Lenin. We looked amicably at one another, warmly shook hands and without saying a word entered the room—Lenin's "secretary" first and I following him. But the room was empty. Surely this could not be Lenin? But apparently it was. Upon entering the room he stopped at a small round table and without unnecessary formalities got straight down to business by starting to read passages from the sheet he

was holding in his hand. Charmed by the simple manner in which Lenin introduced himself and started the conversation I voiced my opinion of what he had just read to me; I spoke French to him. Lenin considered what I had said and, taking a pen from the table, crossed out two or three lines from the resolution which he had just read to me. Then we exchanged opinions on the situation in Rumania and the Balkans.

At that moment somebody entered the room and immediately reported that during the preceding night some gang had attacked the Italian Embassy (those were the doings of counter-revolutionaries who not only organised riots, but also caused difficulties to the point of diplomatic conflicts in relations with foreign powers). Annoyed by the report Lenin sat down and demanded to be told everything in detail, after which he issued instructions.

With that our meeting ended. My memory has for ever retained the features of this man, revealing his profound thought and inner energy.

On leaving I once more glanced at the ordinary room at Smolny, which had been divided in two to form a "study" and a "bedroom" and in which Lenin lived and worked during the first weeks of the revolution.

That was the observation and command post of the Supreme Commander of the proletarian troops, who conducted himself fearlessly and confidently despite great revolutionary shocks and who ushered in a new era for his country and humanity.

*

The second time I saw Lenin was at the first and last session of the Constituent Assembly.* Lenin attended the session together with other members of the government, but did not directly participate in any of the discussions. His leading role was nevertheless obvious. The eyes of all who attended the session, including the public, which crowded the hall and tensely followed the heated discussion, were fixed on him. I, too, was looking at him.

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* The Constituent Assembly opened in the Taurida Palace (Petrograd) on January 18, 1918 and lasted till 4:40 a.m.—*Ed.*

At the session of the Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets* Lenin, this brilliant speaker who evoked a storm of applause and cries of "hurrah", happily and excitedly spoke of the causes of the victory of Soviet power and its successes. He said that the new proletarian state had demonstrated its viability by the fact that it had already outlived the only other proletarian state known to history—the Paris Commune—by five days. In his clear foresight these five days were transformed into many weeks, months, years, decades and even centuries; and they were the guarantee of the invincibility of Soviet power.

I sat near the rostrum, listened to the report and watched the speaker; in the meantime some artist was making skilful pencil sketches of Lenin in his pad, drawing him in various postures and poses.

During this Congress of Soviets I saw Lenin several times after sessions in the corridor leading to the exit. He smiled, while still some distance away from me, shook hands with me, exchanged a few sentences and made his way out to a waiting car.

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A little more than a month after this congress I saw Lenin again. It was in the middle of February 1918. One evening I was summoned to Smolny. The meeting of the Council of People's Commissars had dragged on and on already well past the expected time. At about 2 o'clock in the morning Lenin came out of the conference hall. He informed me that it had been decided to organise a board to supervise the struggle against counter-revolution in the South and that I had been appointed a member of that board. Lenin again wanted to know more about the situation in Rumania and the prospects of the struggle in the South. Then he handed me a document attesting my appointment to that important body; we shook hands and warmly took leave of each other. That was the last time I spoke to Lenin.

I greatly treasured the document given to me by Lenin. Every time I read and reread it and looked at Lenin's sig-

* Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets (January 23-31, 1918). Lenin addressed the congress on January 24 (see V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 455-77).—*Ed.*

Lenin in his Kremlin study. Moscow, October 1918

nature, the inspiring image of this great man rose before me and I had the feeling that he was standing by my side.

But when I was hiding from the whiteguard counter-espionage in the little resort town of Balaklava on the Black Sea coast, not far from Sevastopol, I had to hide that document to keep it from falling into the hands of the enemies. Soon afterwards I was arrested and never managed to return and recover it.

But if the house in Balaklava that then belonged to some railwayman and the mirror in that house are still intact, then a document, yellowed with time and signed by the greatest man of our days, may still be there, hidden behind the mirror.

1957

With Lenin in Smolny*

by Adam Egede-Nissen

It was 2 o'clock in the morning. I had just returned from Smolny where I had met Lenin who did not seem in the least worried about the recent attempt on his life.** Four shots had been fired, at least one of them hitting the car and grazing our Swiss Comrade Platten who was sitting beside Lenin. "This attempt shows that Lenin's power is weak," said the enemies.

Lenin, for his part, assured me, having invited me to tea in the modest Smolny dining-room, that the internal situation of the government was good and that he was, on the contrary, more uneasy about the position of the Germans. Peace negotiations were under way and Lenin was continuously being informed of their course.

We touched upon the question of the break between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. I reminded him that at the 1906 Congress they had seen eye to eye.***

"Yes, that is true," said Lenin. "But that was more formal than real. At the London Congress we divided into two parties. Whereas the Mensheviks think that we must limit ourselves to a bourgeois revolution, although they assert that this revolution is not only of a political character, we say that when the time comes we must carry out our social programme completely. We consider it our duty. We should betray the cause of the proletariat if we did not do this. The programme we now want adopted, with or without the participation of the Constituent Assembly, will be set forth on January 18, the day of the opening of this Assembly."

I asked Lenin if he hoped to win the majority, and he answered:

"A majority in the Constituent Assembly is now immaterial. Today we have the majority of the people. We, i.e.,

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* Excerpt from the book *Life in the Struggle*, Oslo, 1945.—*Ed.*

** This happened on January 14, 1918.—*Ed.*

*** Fourth (Unity) Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in Stockholm (April 23-May 8, 1906).—*Ed.*

the Bolsheviks and the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries. Besides, the conditions have changed since the time of the elections."

Lenin impressed me by his great composure. Unlike many other comrades, he spoke with prudence and without sweeping gestures, but at the same time with an undoubted sense of humour.

It was very interesting to meet the chairman of a large planning commission, a tested revolutionary with his health entirely undermined after many years of imprisonment, but very strong spiritually. On Lenin's initiative the commission had to work out a proposal for locating large new enterprises. The young Soviet Republic had to become as independent of import as possible. People were summoned from all large Russian provinces to report on what was produced in their areas and what could be expanded and changed.

Plans were being continuously drawn up. Suffice it to recall at least the gigantic electrification project, which was likewise launched on Lenin's initiative. Plans were also being worked out for parts of the country still under enemy rule, for example, the plan for building the Dnieper Hydroelectric Power Station.

The Third Congress of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies from all over Russia opened on January 23, 1918 after the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. More than 700 delegates, of whom some 440 were Bolsheviks, took part in the congress.

How majestic the *Internationale* played by a military band sounded after Sverdlov's* introductory speech.

The *Internationale* was followed by salutatory addresses delivered by representatives of the socialist parties of Switzerland, America, England, Rumania, Sweden and Norway, as well as delegates from the Ukraine and other parts of vast Russia.

I should very much like to describe my impression of the great Congress of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. Many people called it the "Red Convention". The

* Y. M. Sverdlov (1885-1919)—outstanding leader of the Communist Party and the Soviet state. Member of the Party (1901). Active participant in the October Revolution. Elected Chairman of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee (November 8, 1917).—*Ed.*

Parliament of the Russian Soviet Republic. But how can I describe all that passion, the torrent of words and the striving for freedom so long suppressed? I sat in the Presidium and gazed at the hall. Before me was a sea of people. No one was still. Everywhere surged waves large and small, rolling back and forth with emotion and spreading freely all around.

A little more about Lenin. How he wins people! How attractive are his kind eyes. He remarks:

"I should love to take a half an hour's nap."

But he patiently listens to all we say and ask.

"I am not a speaker any longer," he says. "I have lost the command of my voice. Half an hour—kaput. I should like to have the voice of Aleksandra Kollontai."

He is trying to help our fishermen to get raw material for nets and other goods which Norway needs and Russia can spare. He is impatiently waiting for the new life to be organised. But this is not easy.

"Take a clockwork apart and assemble it again. A watchmaker can do it, but even he will need some time. Now imagine that the clockwork has been taken apart and some parts have to be reshaped, and you will understand how gigantic a task the Council of People's Commissars of Russia has set itself."

Lenin is plain and everything about him is natural. He speaks plainly, too. Without the usual patter of rhetorical phrases. His words on the seriousness of the situation, organisation and unity are sound and balanced. People understand him. They greet their leader enthusiastically, and the "Red Convention" ends its work with his words. The greater part of the night is spent in approving all the decrees of the Council of People's Commissars on the agrarian problem; naturally, the peasants do not want to leave Petrograd until this is done.

For the last time the inspiring *Internationale* and the *Marseillaise* ring out under the roof of the Taurida Palace.

1945

We Have Met Lenin

by Robert Minor

I do not remember where I first met Lenin. It might have been in the ball-room of the Metropole Hotel where the All-Russia Central Executive Committee was meeting. In any case, Comrade Sverdlov was there, the Chairman of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, one of the first Russian Bolshevik leaders I met.

I remember standing apart and looking at the group of leaders gathered around the platform—the leaders of the Bolshevik revolution! I remember how thrilled I was and how keen I was to know their names. At first I could only judge by appearances.

A Russian comrade who had been in America was kind enough to point out Lenin to me. My whole sense of proportion, so to speak, was upset. Lenin turned out to be a short, modest-looking man. He was standing in a corner resting his foot on something. He was dressed very simply: he wore an ordinary cap and he was even without the glistening topboots which were worn very much at that time. In short, he was nothing like my idea of a great man. I looked at him hard, thinking I might be mistaken.

But no, this was the Lenin I had seen in photographs.

I was struck by the animation of his features, the way they changed when he was engaged in conversation. Little by little my attention became centered on him. Everything else receded, melted away, fitted into its place: the proportions were restored. Without understanding a single word of what had been said at the meeting I left the hall engrossed in my impressions of the one man, Lenin.

. . . I do not know how Lenin managed to find time for me in the difficult months of spring and summer 1918. But I think it should be ascribed to the deep interest he displayed throughout the Russian revolution in the revolutionary movement of the "outside world", and the attitude of the Socalists of other countries. On this occasion (I think it was the end of April) I was in his place for about 15 minutes.

Lenin himself said little, he knew how to make the other fellow talk, while he did the listening.

He was interested in the slightest detail of how the working class of the U.S.A. was reacting to the revolution. He asked me what was the attitude of the trade unions to the Bolshevik revolution. I told him how appreciative the militant workers in the A.F.L.* were of the action of the workers and sailors of Petrograd in helping to save Tom Mooney's** life by making President Wilson intervene and have the death sentence commuted.

Then, on behalf of the trade unions affiliated to the Mooney Defence Committee I expressed my thanks to Lenin as the head of the Bolshevik Party for this fine act of international solidarity. Lenin said nothing, but his eyes sparkled. . . .

We discussed the prospects of the revolution in Europe. Lenin mentioned the lack of reliable information and touched upon the technical methods of getting information from abroad. I must say I was astonished when I heard the leader of the world revolution expatiating on little things like paper, pasteboard, ink and other "trivialities" and technicalities.

At this first meeting of ours, Lenin started off in Russian. I had to tell him that I did not speak Russian, but I knew French. At first Lenin said that he did not know enough English so we spoke French for a time, then Lenin dropped into German, after which, to my surprise, he continued in faultless English without making a single mistake and only stopping now and then to search for a word (all our subsequent conversations were in English and I do not remember Lenin making a single grammatical mistake).

I saw Lenin again at the time when the whiteguards were systematically making attempts on the lives of the leaders of the revolution. After greeting me Lenin asked me point-blank:

"What do you think of the Red terror?"

I said that, if the bourgeoisie were not made to feel that their endeavours to destroy the revolution would lead to

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* A.F.L.—American Federation of Labour.—*Ed.*

** Thomas Mooney—active American labour leader, steelworker, member of the Socialist Party (1907). Framed up and sentenced to death (1916). The protests of progressive people all over the world forced President Wilson to intervene, and the death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Released during Roosevelt's presidency (1939).—*Ed.*

their own physical destruction, the revolution would really fail. Lenin did not comment on that, but from the way he looked at me I understood that the question was not casual.

After a pause and an exchange of a few more words with me Lenin suddenly and without any apparent connection with the preceding question asked:

"Have you seen Kropotkin?"*

"Yes, I have."

"What do you think of him?"

"I think he is a hopeless bourgeois."

"Yes?" queried Lenin. "How do you mean?"

I told him about my visit to Kropotkin, about how Kropotkin, whom I had idealised before, sharply reproached me for my unwillingness to support the war of the Allies "for democracy" and how he continued to upbraid me in the presence of a group of Americans, members of the YMCA,** who had come in military uniform to see him. I also told him how the Americans flattered Kropotkin by addressing him (and clearly pleasing him) as "Prince", and how I had left completely disappointed in my "hero".

Lenin only uttered:

"H'm! That's interesting...."

Later, the following circumstance made it clear why Lenin had suddenly spoken about Kropotkin to me. One of my acquaintances, who worked as a translator in Moscow, met me in the street and excitedly muttered:

"The bourgeoisie are terribly scared and worried; the most influential of them are pressing for Lenin to receive Kropotkin so that the latter may persuade him to discontinue the Red terror...."

Lenin seemed to be quite unaffected by his high position, and this feeling of surprise at his unassuming manner grew upon me the more I got to know of his role as the greatest leader of mankind at this greatest moment in history.

Once, when I was putting my coat on to go home my

* P. A. Kropotkin (1841-1921)—old revolutionary, theoretician of anarchism. Received by Lenin (May 9, 1919).—*Ed.*

** In Russia its representatives engaged in anti-Soviet activities under the guise of religious propaganda.—*Ed.*

elbow caught a big revolving bookcase and some heavy books fell on the floor. Lenin immediately knelt down and began to pick them up, while he went on talking.

At the end of the same summer one incident clarified to me the firmness of Lenin the Bolshevik.

M. Ch., a former Chicago needle-worker, appeared in Moscow and asserted that he knew me from the struggle we had waged to save Tom Mooney. He told me he was an anarchist and was in command of a "partisan" detachment fighting against Kaledin's counter-revolutionary army.

Incidentally, his absence from the front at that time seemed inexplicable. Suddenly he disappeared. Several days later I was visited by his wife who sobbingly told me that her husband had been arrested, tried for desertion and theft, and was sentenced by a court martial to be shot. She tried to persuade me that her husband was innocent and was a victim of a rash trial or perhaps even a "victim of a plot of ill-intentioned elements". She beseeched me to intervene with Lenin for a retrial.

I hastily jotted down all she had told me and with my note hurried to see Lenin.

One of Lenin's secretaries took my note and left with it. Soon he returned and told me that at the moment Lenin was at a meeting of the Political Bureau and could not come out to see me, but that he had carefully read my note and would not be long in complying with my request.

Late that night a messenger knocked at my door and handed me Lenin's reply, a note written in his own hand. At the time I could as yet hardly read Russian, but I still remember its contents. It read:

"Comrade Minor, I ordered, as I promised you, an investigation of Ch.'s case. The following facts have come to light: Ch. had deserted his post at the front during fighting. He embezzled the money that was to be paid as salaries to the soldiers of his regiment. I cannot intervene for such a person. He must be shot.

"Lenin."

I am reproducing the text from memory. I piously revered this note and carried it with me until the middle of November 1918 when I had to cross the Soviet-German front and had to rid myself of all documents of Bolshevik origin.

After the incident with the condemned deserter I visited Lenin a few more times, on different occasions, but this case was never mentioned again.

To my mind Lenin's most amazing trait was his habit of drawing into the background in conversation.

I went to see Lenin again after the Third Congress of the Comintern. I had a bad cold. Lenin was also indisposed, but displayed great concern for my health.

Soon afterwards he fell seriously ill and I did not see him for several weeks. I learned about his health from comrades and newspapers. I visited him when he had returned to work. As I entered he asked me:

"Have you recovered from your cold?"

When I was taking leave I recalled with a feeling of vexation that we had not talked about his health, but only about mine.

One day in autumn 1921 I had to send a letter to him urgently. I gave it to a youngster about 12 years of age, the son of a Red Army man killed at the front, and told him to take it to the Kremlin. I explained that the letter was addressed to Comrade Lenin which he must deliver at once, wait for a reply and come back right away.

This made a great impression on the lad and he was off like a shot. I waited and waited, hour after hour, but there was still no sign of my messenger. At last, when it was quite dark, the youngster came back with an air of great importance. I went for him:

"Where have you been all this time?"

"Oh," said the youngster, "*I have been talking to Comrade Lenin*!"

Later I was told in the Kremlin that this actually had been the case. The youngster had refused to give the letter to anyone but Lenin: he waited till the end of the meeting after which Comrade Lenin kept him for quite a time asking how the children of fallen Red Army men were being looked after.

*

About this letter. It was a long missive covering about three pages. When I saw Lenin again the first thing he said was:

"First of all, Comrade Minor, you should know that when you send such a long letter to a busy man like me you should write the subject of the letter very concisely, telegraph style, in the top left-hand corner. Then you must point out what your own suggestions are. Don't you think that's the proper way?"

What always surprised me was that whenever I needed an appointment with Comrade Lenin (I went to see him a dozen times or so if not more), I always managed to see him (excepting one occasion when Lenin was at a meeting of the Political Bureau). Lenin made a point of getting in touch with people coming *from abroad*, even if they had not played an important part in things. *Comrade Lenin had a way of organising his time* to make the *most of it.*

Once I made quite a *faux pas*: In my surprise at Lenin finding time to see me and settle in a few minutes a question which I could not get other people to settle in as many days, I exclaimed:

"Comrade Lenin, you have more time than anyone in all Moscow!"

Of course, I did not mean this literally. But Lenin raised his eyebrows.

"No, Comrade Minor," he said, "I have no more time than other people."

And I read on his face what a gigantic burden this great leader had on his shoulders, a burden which undoubtedly was responsible for the death of this great world figure at the age of fifty-four.

*

Directly after the Third Congress of the Communist International some American comrades and myself visited Lenin at midnight (he could not get free any earlier),* to discuss with him what forms of organisation the Party should take in the existing situation, and the question of getting out the *Daily Worker*, a plan which had not yet been realised, and other points.

Lenin made us some excellent suggestions on these questions. . . .

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* V. I. Lenin received R. Minor, L. Cutterfeld and B. Beatty on December 3, 1921.—*Ed.*

One of the comrades present, who held pronounced factional views of an ultra-Left character, kept interrupting Lenin. Lenin paused each time and let him have his say patiently before he continued. . . .

*

The last time I saw Comrade Lenin was at the end of 1921. I had to return to America, and I asked him if I might introduce the comrade who was to take my place.* Comrade Lenin took a great interest in people coming from the U.S.A. He was particularly interested in every symptom of the turn of the American-born workers to the revolutionary policy, at a time when the Communist Party of the U.S.A. depended largely for support on the revolutionary emigrant sections of the working class. Lenin's first question to the comrade I brought was:

"Are you an American?"

"Yes," the comrade replied.

"*An American American*?" said Comrade Lenin.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Where were you born, in America?"

"Yes."

"And your father?"

When he heard that this comrade's father was the son of a European farmer who had emigrated to America, Comrade Lenin said: "Ahha ...", then added with a twinkle in his eye:

"But Minor here is an *American American*. Comrade Minor, your father was born in America and your mother too? Isn't that so?" and went on: "And your grandfathers? On both sides?"

"Born in America."

"Very good. Tell me, how many generations of your people were born in America?"

I replied that my forebears lived in America long before the Revolutionary War of Independence. Then Comrade Lenin asked:

"*And what did they do* during the American Revolution?"

I replied that as far as I knew, they had all taken part in it.

* On the Executive Committee of the Comintern.—*Ed.*

"Ahha," he said. "That might help you some time if you ever get put on trial."

We had a long discussion on the factional struggle in the Communist Party of the U.S.A., Comrade Lenin asking most of the questions. I do not remember if it was then or another time he asked me what this struggle was all about and I replied very clumsily that this was a struggle between the "dreamers" of the revolution and the "realists". At the word "realists" Lenin's face darkened.

"I hope you mean realists in the best sense of the term," said Comrade Lenin.

1935

Lenin in the Red Warsaw Regiment

by Helena Bobinska

The summer of 1918 abounded in storms. Black clouds gathered all over the young Soviet Republic; and not only in the sky. The troop trains of mutinous Czechoslovak war prisoners excellently armed by the "allies" were all along the Volga. The armies of the White generals threatened to cut off the Crimea and the Ukraine. The population of Moscow was very often left without bread.

Those were days of great love and great hate. There is no other way in which I can describe the atmosphere in which we lived. The victorious revolution had inflamed the hearts. The knowledge that we were building a new, formerly unknown system (at that time we only thought about revolution on a world scale) inspired us. There were no small tasks. Everything that had to do with the revolution became great, became the most important. The world was divided with amazing clarity into allies and enemies.

It was precisely under such peculiar circumstances that the revolutionary Red Warsaw Regiment was being formed.

Bobinski,* the commissar of that regiment, plunged into work with his characteristic enthusiasm.

Some detachments of the Warsaw Regiment had already distinguished themselves in the struggle against the uprising of the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries in Yaroslavl. At the end of July it was rumoured that the Warsaw Regiment would almost any day now engage the gangs of the Greens. A farewell meeting was to be held at the Commercial Institute in Moscow on August 2. The meeting was set for 11:00 a.m.

When we got into the carriage that was standing in the rain and the wet horses started off at a trot Bobinski whispered to me that the meeting was to be attended by Lenin. The reason for his excitement was now clear to me. I knew that all our Polish comrades fervently wanted to see Lenin who, at that time, was not often permitted to go out for fear that some harm might befall him.

"I guaranteed his safety and Marchlewski* backed me up. This is quite an achievement. But it is already late," he became excited again.

We turned into the street leading to the Institute.

"Why is it so deserted here?" Marchlewski wondered. "The rain has stopped and yet the street seems abandoned."

Now we began to pass groups of uhlans at every step. As we passed them Bobinski leaned out of the carriage and asked:

"How goes it? Everything in order?"

"Everything's under control, Comrade Commissar," a young soldier answered merrily. "You can depend on us. We won't let a single person pass."

"What do you mean?" Bobinski said anxiously. "There must be delegations from factories?!"

"We let the delegations with banners go through, but we will not allow anybody to pass singly, Comrade Commissar."

"We have sent out invitations and you won't let the people through," Bobinski shouted at him.

But the uhlan was not disconcerted.

"Any counter-revolutionary scum can write out a little paper for himself [Marchlewski laughed], and here we are, responsible for his life."

Bobinski interrupted him:

"Has he arrived yet?"

"Yes, he has only just come through," the uhlan blushed.

"Take the guards off and go to the Institute."

"Right, Comrade Commissar!"

The horses started with a jerk. The merry young voice reached us again:

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* S. Bobinski—noted leader of the Polish Communist Party. Active participant in the October 1917 events in Moscow.—*Ed.*

* J. Marchlewski (1866-1925)—prominent leader of the Polish and international working-class movement. After release from a German concentration camp, upon insistence of the Soviet Government, came to Soviet Russia in 1918. Member of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee till the end of life. Filled a number of important posts.—*Ed.*

"Come on, fellows, take the guards off!"

"What do you think of that?" Bobinski was angry. "Any counter-revolutionary scum can write out a little paper for himself." Suddenly he burst out laughing.

"What am I to do with these boys now?"

"They are the results of our propaganda," Marchlewski joked. "We want revolutionary soldiers to think and there they are—they are thinking. As long as they are responsible for Lenin's life, what do they care about a scrap of paper?"

*

We found Lenin in a study next to the big hall. He had just come and was now talking to a group of comrades. We joined them. While Lenin was taking his coat off, Marchlewski availed himself of the opportunity to say something to him. Lenin burst out laughing. Bobinski cast a suspicious glance in their direction.

*

The enormous hall was filled to overflowing. Lenin's appearance was greeted with a storm of applause. The band struck up the *Internationale* and everywhere fluttered purple and gold banners. The uhlans stood in lines from the door right up to the stage. No sooner did Lenin take the first step than sabres flashed and crossed over his head. Lenin started, cast a cursory glance at them and calmly proceeded on his way.

On reaching the stage he turned and said with a playful reproach:

"You, my Polish comrades, can't do anything without a show."

He ran his hand over his head and looking at them with laughing eyes continued:

"You should at least have warned me. I really did get scared, you know."

A smile passed over hundreds of young faces. Admiration, amazement and joy were expressed in a spontaneous cheer:

"Long live Lenin!"

He mounted the rostrum and began to speak.

Lenin's words were well chosen. Each word hit home. He said: we know that the war is nearing its end. But the imperialists will not be able to finish the war. The war will be finished by the working masses who have already shed enough blood. Predatory imperialism is narrowing the circle around us. It wants to strangle us. But we know that we have dependable allies—the working masses of the world. We must give our all, for it is either the power of the kulaks, capitalists and the tsar or the power of the proletariat. The victory depends on you, comrades.

In the enormous, overcrowded hall no one was doubtful of victory any longer.

*

Bobinski returned late in the evening; he had talked himself hoarse and was excited over the send-off of the Warsaw Regiment.

"If you only knew," he said, "how grateful the boys were to me for this meeting with Lenin."

1957

Meeting with Lenin

by Laszlo Rudaš

In the middle of February 1919 three comrades and I left for Moscow, on the instructions of the Hungarian Communist Party, to represent the Party at the First Congress of the Third International. The journey was not an easy one, for we had to cross two fronts. The Poles and Ukrainians were fighting for Lvov, while Petlyura's counter-revolutionary gangs retreating under the onslaught of the Red Army were also in our way.

Two members of the delegation did not care to take the risk and went back; only Gabor Mesaros came along with me and later died the death of a martyr. Since there were no railway communications with Soviet Russia we had to make the greater part of our way on foot or by cart. In Tarnopol I was suspected of being a "Bolshevik agent" and only by a lucky chance escaped with my life. I arrived in Vinnitsa just as Red Army units were entering the town. With their aid I encountered no more difficulties in continuing my "travels". This time I set off alone because Gabor Mesaros, who had been a prisoner of war in Russia, was better able to appraise the situation and had therefore left earlier. On March 23 I arrived in Kiev where information had been received that a dictatorship of the proletariat had been proclaimed in Hungary. There, too, I learned that the Congress of the Third International had already finished its work. Upon arrival in Moscow I chanced at once to get to the session of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets.*

Lenin was just speaking as I entered the hall. He nominated Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin for Chairman of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee. After Lenin's speech Chicherin,** then People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, took me to the Presidium and directly to Lenin. On learning who I was Lenin rejoiced at my safe arrival (he already knew about my misadventures in Tarnopol from Mesaros)

* Session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee (March 30, 1919).—*Ed.*

** G. V. Chicherin (1872-1936)—Soviet statesman and outstanding diplomat. Internationalist during the First World War. Bolshevik (1918). People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs (1918-30).—*Ed.*

and suggested that, if I wanted, I could say a few words to the delegates of the congress. But pleading fatigue after my journey I declined the honour and did not avail myself of the opportunity to speak to the delegates of the congress on behalf of the Hungarian working people. I consider it to have been an oversight on my part, which can be explained by the fact that I was only 34 years old at the time, did not have enough revolutionary experience and, besides, being so close to Lenin for the first time, I was naturally taken aback.

A week after my arrival in Moscow Lenin asked me to come to see him. I went to the Kremlin accompanied by Comrade Klinger,* then Secretary of the Comintern. At that time Lenin's study was in the building of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee. The guard let my companion pass because he had a permit, while I had to wait for a few minutes. Soon Lenin himself came out, took me by the arm and led me to his study.

For the first few minutes I was, of course, very nervous, for there I was talking to a great man beside whom I felt very small and inconspicuous. I was particularly afraid that I might be unable to answer all his questions fully enough.

To begin with, Lenin asked, I think it was in German, in what language I should like to speak to him.

"We can speak German, French or English," he said. "It makes no difference to me for I have an equally poor command of any of them."

I chose German, and after the very first sentences began to feel that Lenin not only spoke German better than I, but that his command of the language was perfect.

Lenin's modesty amazed me.

When our conversation turned to the proletarian dictatorship in Hungary Lenin asked me point-blank:

"What kind of dictatorship is it if the first thing you do is nationalise the cabarets and theatres? Haven't you any other, more important business?"

I assured Lenin that we did not confine ourselves only to these measures in Hungary. It was quite possible that the European bourgeois press at that time had started a hullabaloo about these secondary undertakings, but it would

* G. K. Klinger—Bolshevik (1917). Comintern office manager. Participant in the First, Second and Third Congresses of the Comintern. —*Ed.*

soon undoubtedly begin to write about more essential things when we start nationalising large enterprises.

After hearing me out Lenin immediately began to speak about our amalgamation with the Social-Democratic Party.

"I believe this amalgamation to be dangerous," he said. "It would have been better to form a bloc in which both parties retained their independence. In that case the Communists would have remained an independent party in the eyes of the working people, would gather strength with each passing day and when necessary could break with the Social-Democrats altogether, if the latter betrayed the cause of the revolution."

There was nothing for me but to answer that I did not know why our people in Hungary had done as they had.

"I asked our Hungarian comrades," Lenin continued, "what guarantee they had that this union would prove strong. They told me not to worry because the leaders of the Communist Party were allegedly pupils of Marx and Lenin. But that, I rejoined, was not an adequate guarantee because there are some pupils who never learn their lessons well."

Then Lenin wanted to know if the dictatorship of the Hungarian proletariat was given strong enough support by the poor peasants.

"How many agricultural workers and poor peasants are there in Hungary?" he suddenly asked me.

On the basis of the figures of pre-war Hungary I said there were about 4 million.

"As many as that?" asked Lenin in astonishment, and I could feel from his voice that he was in doubt. "Look here," he said very seriously, "you must be very careful about such things. Yesterday I spoke to one of the leaders of the Communist Party of your neighbour country and when I asked him the same question he could not answer it. What sort of Communist is he if he does not know the correlation of the class forces in his own country and, what is more, does not know how many agricultural proletarians and semi-proletarians there are in his country?

"Maybe you think that it is enough to cite any figure and that it is not necessary to be absolutely sure it is the correct one? Far better to admit that you don't know." And he looked fixedly at me.

I assured Lenin that even if this figure was not altogether exact it was very close. Lenin said he would check to see how correct my figure was.

"You better look out if I find it to be wrong," he added good-naturedly.

Incidentally, Lenin later really checked on my figure and, when Tibor Szamuelly* was in Moscow, asked him to tell me I was fully exonerated.

Then he asked me if the proletarian dictatorship in Hungary was in danger of a counter-revolution or uprising. I told him that after losing the war the former ruling classes were dispirited and not strong enough to offer serious resistance. The situation was different, I said, in the east of the country, in Transylvania, where there were still strong feudal survivals and the class stratification of the peasantry was more pronounced. There was a danger that the well-to-do peasantry would join in some counter-revolutionary action.

"That is to say, it is Hungary's Vendée," Lenin observed and fell to thinking.

I asked Lenin to write a letter to the Hungarian working class and appeal to it, by using his authority, for revolutionary self-control.

"That I cannot do," Lenin answered. "I have no right to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. Especially in the affairs of countries whose internal situation I do not know well enough."

Several months later, however, Lenin did write such a letter, and Tibor Szamuelly brought it to Budapest.**

At the end of our meeting we talked about the international revolutionary movement and the role of Kautsky and others like him. With that our talk ended. When I came to Moscow again in 1922 Lenin was very ill. Nevertheless, at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern, while still incompletely recovered from his illness, he made his historical report on the New Economic Policy.***

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* T. Szamuelly—prominent leader of the Hungarian working-class movement, one of the founders of the Hungarian Communist Party and leaders of the Hungarian Soviet Republic.—*Ed.*

** "Greetings to the Hungarian Workers" (see V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, pp. 387-91).—*Ed.*

*** Fourth Congress of the Comintern held November 5-December 5, 1922 (the last Congress in which Lenin took part).—*Ed.*

Lenin, Nadezhda Krupskaya, Maria Ulyanova, Tibor Szamuelly and A. Belenky during the parade of the *Usevobuch* troops. Moscow, May 25, 1919

There is probably no need emphasising that meeting Lenin was one of the most important events in my life and that it is one of my most cherished memories. Lenin was able to help me, a rank-and-file member of the Party, to get over my timidity within the first few minutes of our meeting. To be sure, I soon realised that I was talking to an older comrade who had immeasurably more experience than I. I was enormously impressed by his modesty, which manifested itself in everything, and at the same time by his intent look when he thought I had not been sincere with him and had not had enough courage to admit my ignorance. I shall forever remember the impressions of my meeting with Lenin. He seems to stand before me alive, now smiling and now stern, but always sympathetic and tactful.

Lenin*

by William T. Goode

Compared with the brilliant light that Lenin's close friends can shed on his life my tribute to him will be like the light of a match. But even as a match struck in front of a picture may suddenly reveal some new feature here and there, so will perhaps my few words throw a feeble ray of light on some special trait of Lenin, which the others may have failed to notice.

I was a stranger, a foreigner, and only saw Lenin twice. It was in the summer of 1919 when Russia was in difficult straits. While working on my book about Russia, which I was writing for the *Manchester Guardian*, I received generous help from the officials of the new government, but was very anxious to see Lenin himself, both because of his position and the fantastic stories which were circulated about him in the West.

I was given permission to visit Lenin, but before I visited him I had seen him at the Moscow Teachers' Conference.** It is now interesting to recall the impression he produced on me then. How quietly, simply and without any rhetorical tricks he had captured that vast and unfamiliar audience! How his steadfast logic made the audience understand his point of view! It seemed he intuitively understood the thoughts of his listeners. I felt at once that I was in the presence of an unusual man. But I felt this more than ever when I visited him in the Kremlin.

I climbed the stairs, went through an anteroom, an office, a conference hall and found myself in Lenin's simple study. It was empty, but on the desk there was an open book—Henri Barbusse's*** *Clarté*—which Lenin was reading and in which he was making notes in pencil. While I waited I read the first chapter which he had just finished. The door opened.

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* Retranslated from the Russian.—*Tr.*

** First All-Russia Congress of Workers in Education and Socialist Culture (July 28-August 1, 1919). Lenin addressed the congress on July 31.—*Ed.*

*** H. Barbusse (1873-1935)—noted French writer and public figure. Communist (1923).—*Ed.*

Lenin entered quickly and greeted me. One word of greeting, a warm handshake and I began to talk, unwittingly in the language of the book I had just read, i.e., French.*

"If it makes no difference to you, I should rather speak English," he said. I was so surprised that I exclaimed: "Oh! I didn't know you could speak English." "If you speak slowly and clearly, I shall not make a single mistake," he rejoined. And he didn't. Our conversation continued, I asked questions and was given answers; we discussed important matters, and all in English. Not once did Lenin go off the key. He had promised not to make a single mistake and he never did.

I am not dwelling on the essence of this conversation which is now the property of history. But what I want to recall is the man himself. During our conversation I noted the remarkable shape of his head, the quiet, ironical smile that played on his face, and the sparks of humour in his eyes. That day he looked content, although I could imagine that at times he could frown. It is easy to understand how avidly I scrutinised him, how carefully I noted the changing expressions of his face. I was looking at the most spoken of man in the world, the unknown genius of the revolution that had shaken the world.

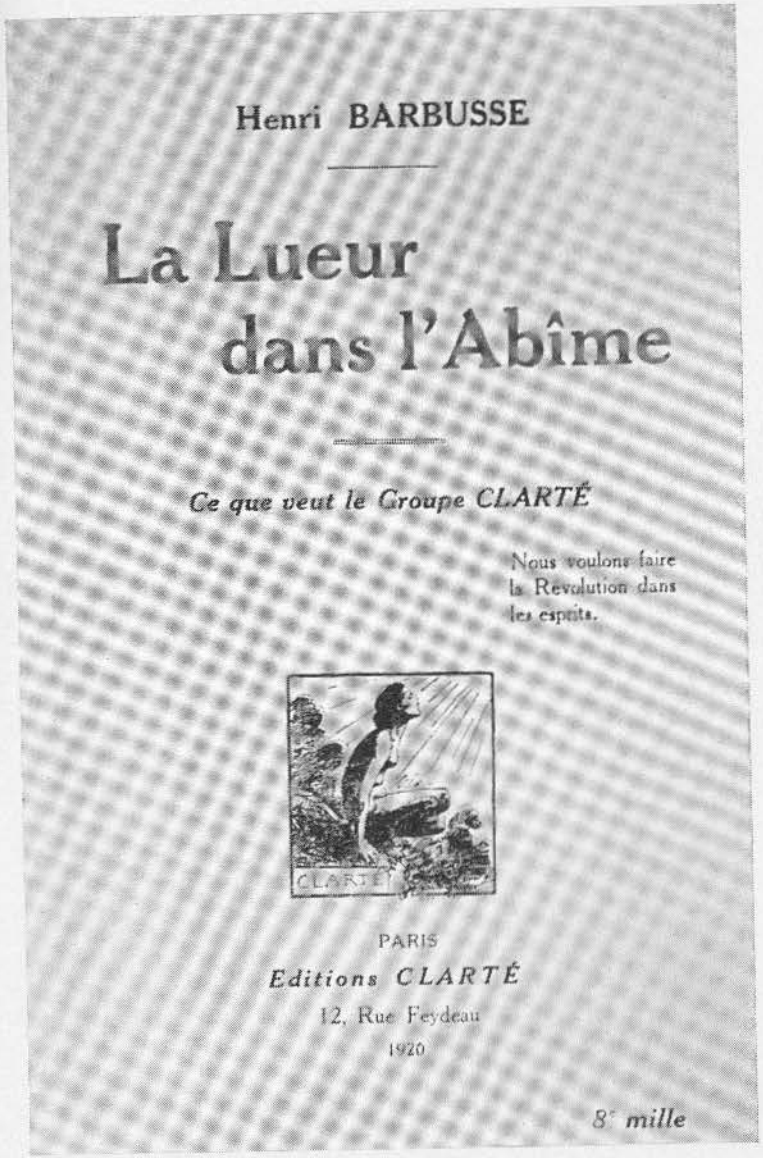
The impression of the power emanating from him was enhanced by his forceful speech. What he had to say he said outright, clearly and without any vague words. In conversation with Lenin there could be no misunderstanding and nobody could gain a false impression. He was way too clear and straightforward for it.

A conversation with a usual diplomat conceals the thoughts. With Lenin it expressed them. And this makes a world of difference.

From the force of his speech, the energy which seemed to emanate from him and the liveliness of his facial expression I began, before the end of our conversation, to form an idea of what the people called Lenin's magnetism. And I understood—feebly, I admit—the source of the power with which he ruled the minds of men.

The impression he produced on me will never be blotted out of my memory.

* W. Goode was received by V. I. Lenin on August 20, 1919.—*Ed.*



Cover of Henri Barbusse's book *Light from the Abyss*

Before our parting he autographed his picture for me in Russian and in English; it was a wonderful photograph of him standing in the Kremlin. I was the first to bring a photograph of Lenin to Western Europe. Then a few words wishing me good speed and a last handclasp. I left Lenin, never fated to see him alive again.

In the course of my life I met in different countries with people who were called great. Not about any of them could I say what I can rightfully say about Lenin: "'A was a man, take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again."*

* Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act I, Scene II.—*Ed.*

In the Name of Emancipating Mankind

by Isaac McBride

Mr. Lenin is a man of middle height, close to 50 years of age. He is well proportioned and very active physically, in spite of the fact that he carries in his body two bullets fired at him one year ago last August.* His head is rather large, massive in outline, and is set close to his shoulders. The forehead is broad and high ... the eyes wide apart, and there appears in them at times a very infectious twinkle. His hair, pointed beard, and mustache, have a brown tinge.

In conversation his eyes never leave those of the person to whom he is speaking. In replying to questions he does not hesitate, but goes straight to the point. He pushed a chair over near his desk for me, and turned his own chair in my direction. After we had been talking for some time about conditions throughout the world he said that he would be glad to answer any questions.**

On being informed that newspapers, periodicals, and magazines in the various countries had been stating for the past 22 months that Soviet Russia was a dictatorship of a small minority ... Mr. Lenin replied: "That, of course, is not true. Let those who believe that silly tale come here and mingle with the rank and file and learn the truth.

"...You say you have been along the Western front. You admit you have been allowed to mingle with the soldiers of Soviet Russia; that you have been unhampered, as a journalist, in making your investigation. You have also visited factories and workshops. You have had a very good opportunity to understand the temper of the rank and file. You have seen thousands of men living from day to day on black bread and tea. You have probably seen more suffering in Soviet Russia than you had ever deemed possible, and all this because of the unjust war being made upon us, including the economic blockade, in all of which your own

* V. I. Lenin was wounded by F. Kaplan, Socialist-Revolutionary terrorist, on August 30, 1918.—*Ed.*

** The interview took place at the end of September 1919.—*Ed.*

country* is playing a large part. Now I ask what is your opinion about this being a dictatorship of the minority?"

In answer to the question: "What have you to say at this time about peace and foreign concessions?" Mr. Lenin said, "I am often asked whether those American opponents of the war against Russia—as in the first place bourgeois—are right, who expect from us, after peace is concluded, not only resumption of trade relations but also the possibility of securing concessions in Russia. I repeat once more that they are right. A durable peace would be such a relief to the toiling masses of Russia that these masses would undoubtedly agree to certain concessions being granted. The granting of concessions under reasonable terms is also desirable for us, as one of the means of attracting into Russia the technical help of the countries which are more advanced in this respect, during the coexistence side by side of socialist and capitalist states."

Continuing he said: "As for Soviet power, it has become familiar to the minds and hearts of the laboring masses of the whole world which clearly grasped its meaning. Everywhere the laboring masses—in spite of the influence of the old leaders with their chauvinism and opportunism, which permeates them through and through—became aware of the rottenness of the bourgeois parliaments and of the necessity of Soviet power, the power of the toiling masses, the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the sake of the emancipation of humanity from the yoke of capital.

"...The bourgeoisie inundates Russia with war and by inciting against us the counter-revolutionaries, those who wish the yoke of capital to be restored. The bourgeoisie inflicts upon the working masses of Russia unprecedented sufferings, through the blockade, and through their help given to the counter-revolutionaries, but we have already defeated Kolchak and we are carrying on the war against Denikin with the firm assurance of our coming victory."

1919

* The U.S.A.—*Ed.*

My Reminiscences of V. I. Lenin

by Ivan Olbracht

I saw Lenin for the first time on March 16, 1920 at the Moscow Bolshoi Theatre soon after my arrival in the Soviet Union. It was at the first anniversary commemoration of the death of Yakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov, one of the leaders of the Russian revolution and founders of the first state of Soviets of Workers' Deputies.

I shall never forget my impressions. The theatre, one of the largest in Europe, was all gold and purple. The balconies and boxes jutted out like golden semicircles against a background of red upholstery and silk curtains. The spacious tsar's box with canopy, situated opposite the stage and two tiers high, was also all gold and purple. And yet there were workers everywhere. They came wearing leather jackets, sheepskin coats, and all manner of headgear, including Red Army helmets, tall Caucasian fur-caps, woollen shawls, girls' fur-hats and kerchiefs; they came as they would to their own home, simply and joyously, filling all seats in the stalls, in the purple-and-gold tiers, including the tsar's box, and the chairs placed on the open stage whose back drop was some sort of bluish-grey Gothic cathedral ornamented with columns. A broad strip of red calico with the inscription: "Workers of All Countries, Unite!" was stretched across the columns. Below it hung a portrait of Sverdlov in a frame of pine needles.

In front, at a long table covered with red cloth and taking up the entire stage, sat the leaders of the revolution, the leaders of the Communist Party, those great men who had ushered in a new era.

Shortly before the beginning of the meeting Lenin entered the stage from the wings. Short, broad-shouldered, with a brown beard and steep forehead which looked as though ready to batter down anything that might come in its way. Within a few days Lenin would be 50 years old. He was greeted with applause. Not too loud, friendly rather than enthusiastic. He sat down in one of the free chairs at the Presidium table, the third or fourth from the end;

an entirely inconspicuous place. Why? Merely because here he was among comrades with whom he had been working for 25 years, whom he knew very well and who also knew him very well.

The chairman opened the meeting with a short speech. Lenin looked at his watch, ran his hand over his bald head, touched his hand to his full lips, turned back to somebody and said something. I stared at that most powerful man in the world. None of his portraits do him any justice. They lend to Lenin's screwed-up eyes a sort of sarcastic expression which is alien to him; nor do the portraits show that he has light hair. Small wrinkles radiate from the corners of Lenin's eyes.

Comrade Lenin! No more and no less. The man whom the epoch had lifted out of the garrets and museum libraries of emigration and placed in the centre of the events of world history.

He, whom the mass of people raised from their very bosom to express their discordant cry in his words clear and sonorous as the stroke of a bell, so that from the turbid chaos of unco-ordinated thought he might forge an idea, that he might lead them, unite them and together with them win the world.

Lenin rose and came to the proscenium. He was dressed like a worker doing some sort of clean work: a brown coat and russet, creased trousers. He took the floor and at once seemed to grow still firmer and even more collected. His strong and resonant voice sounded somewhat muffled. It happens to people who very often have to strain their vocal folds, speaking at meetings. But it may also be the result of the lung wound inflicted on him by the Socialist-Revolutionary Kaplan at the Michelson factory two years previously.

Lenin spoke about Sverdlov.* His sentences were calm and expressive; they were all equally distinct and clear, because everything he had to say was important; nothing had to be especially emphasised, nor was there anything superfluous. Such were also his gestures: categorical and admitting of no doubt. His clenched fists rose and fell in time with his speech; a few smooth, broad movements with

* See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, pp. 433-34.—*Ed.*

Cover of the book *The Second Comintern Congress*

the index finger; a resolute swing of the arm—passion crystallised into a law. His passion had been formed by prison, it had gathered strength in exile, had been whetted under the gallows of his brother and the gallows of his comrades and had been hardened in the bloody fires of counter-revolution.

But was it only Sverdlov that Lenin talked about?

Well, Lenin mentioned the name of this remarkable person several times; he told us what a brilliant organiser Sverdlov had been. But after saying that, Lenin turned to the question of the importance of organisation and discipline, and emphasised that only organisation and discipline would lead the Russian proletariat to victory. Without them, without continuously enhancing them it would be impossible to complete the building of the Soviet state and ensure the victory of the working class all over the world.

Who was Sverdlov, Lenin's friend and comrade in arms? He was a creation of the epoch, one of many, a soldier of the revolution. Like Lenin, a soldier of the revolution, he was born by and belonged to the revolution.

Lenin recounted that the people Sverdlov was so capable of selecting and placing he had met not in salons or at banquets, as was the custom in the West, but in prisons, on the way to prison, in Siberia and in emigration. This mention was necessary in order to emphasise the difference between Russia with her old revolutionary traditions and the rest of Europe, insofar as it was generally necessary to say anything about the West, about the policies of the Entente imbued with hatred for the proletarian revolution, about the agents of the bourgeoisie among European pseudo-socialists, about the attempted revolution in Germany, about the reports on this subject received that evening by the Soviet Government, and about the hopes and real chances of German "Kornilovism". Lenin lived only for the present and the future. For him the revolution was everything: his thoughts were riveted only on the revolution, he spoke only of the revolution and lived only by the spirit of the revolution.

He reminded the masses of the necessity of organising labour, and his calm, expressive words and firm gestures implied: thus, thus and thus! His speech was convincing,

and nothing was so alien to it as flattery: it was a speech of elementary truths and experience. He could not tolerate phrase-mongering. Revolution does not leave a single phrase unverified, and that is one of its most wonderful characteristics. And the masses were listening to Lenin. They looked like an enormous bronze bas-relief of heads and busts hardened in immobility. Thousands of eyes staring from the stalls and the boxes converged on one point.

The same smile, mild, barely noticeable, tender smile of great love. Lenin was flesh of the flesh and blood of the blood of these masses, and his lips did not once utter a word that at the same time was not their own word.

Lenin finished his speech and left the stage. The eyes of every person present in the hall followed him to the wings.

And the crowd that had been stock-still during his speech was again engulfed by the tide of everyday life, came to life again and began to move.

Other speakers also took the floor and spoke about the late Sverdlov. Then the orchestra pit was filled by musicians, apparently the same musicians who three years previously had played there for staff officers, high officials and rich merchants. The concert began, the programme including Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and works of Rimsky-Korsakov and Chaikovsky.

The concert ended with the *Internationale*. Everybody rose, the hats and fur-caps which had remained firmly on the heads were now taken off and throughout the theatre with its six tiers of purple and gold and the tsar's spacious box, the thousands of workers, peasants and soldiers caught up in a single, mighty chorus the words of the *Internationale*:

'Tis the final conflict,
Let each stand in his place. . . .

The West-European proletariat was still singing: "It will be the final conflict." Only three years previously the Russian working people had also sung like that.

During my nine months stay in Soviet Russia I saw and heard Comrade Lenin several times.

The Second Congress of the Communist International, which I had the good fortune to attend, opened in Petro-

grad and then continued its work in Moscow. From this congress I retained one precious memory, the memory of Lenin, the great historical figure who has forever remained simple and humane.

When the members of the Executive Committee had taken their seats in the Presidium Lenin entered upon the stage. He looked round the large conference hall and, for some reason, suddenly went down into the orchestra and proceeded along the aisle to the amphitheatre. Everybody turned round, all eyes fixed on Lenin. Somewhere in the back rows sat Shelgunov,* a blind Petersburg worker and revolutionary and one of the oldest of Lenin's friends who was still alive. He had worked together with Lenin in underground circles, had participated in most of the political campaigns conducted at the time, distributed leaflets, in 1895 was one of the first members of the League of Struggle and in 1900, when the *Iskra (Spark)* began to be published under Lenin's editorship, while working at an electric-power station near Baku, became a zealous distributor of the newspaper. He had taken part in preparing the October Revolution, but was already blind when the revolution actually occurred.

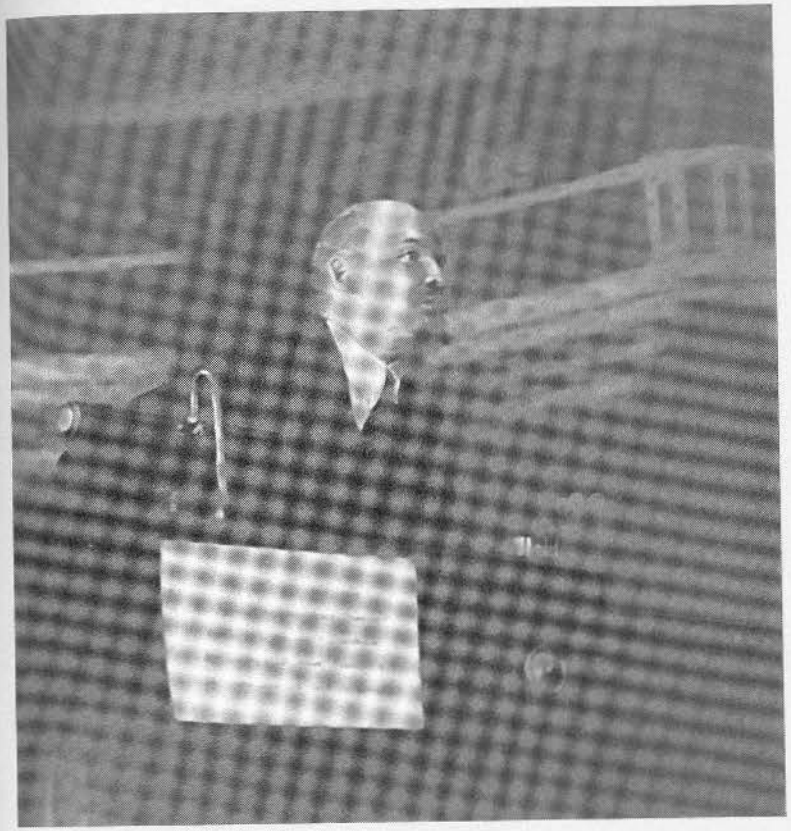
As Lenin approached the blind Bolshevik's seat the latter was told about it. Shelgunov rose, advanced two paces to meet Lenin, and the two fighters embraced and kissed. That was all. I don't think they uttered a word. And still that meeting was wonderful for its humaneness. Then Lenin returned to the stage and the session soon began.

I retained one more, outwardly insignificant, but pleasant personal reminiscence of Lenin.

I had written a long article on the situation in Czechoslovakia for a book entitled *International* and published in several languages. I think it was the first thorough report on my country.... Later I found out that it had been read by Lenin. That was how Lenin came to know me.

At the end of spring a delegation of Czech Communists headed by Comrade Šmeral arrived from Czechoslovakia.

* V. A. Shelgunov (1867-1939)—Petersburg metalworker, one of the oldest members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and active leader of the revolutionary underground. Participated in the Revolution of 1905. From 1918 held Party posts in Moscow.—*Ed.*



Lenin at the Second Comintern Congress. Petrograd, July 19, 1920

Šmeral was soon invited to see Lenin. In Šmeral's book *The Truth about Soviet Russia* there is only the following note dated Friday, May 21: "This evening I visited Lenin at his flat in the Kremlin." And not another word, although otherwise the book contains a very detailed account. What Lenin talked to Comrade Šmeral about remains unknown. But Šmeral related one detail to me.

"How does your comrade like Soviet Russia?" Lenin asked him. "Has he any complaints?" "Why, he is, of course,

delighted with the Soviet Union," answered Šmeral. Then, remembering something, he added: "Only he cannot, however hard he tries, get any matches."

Lenin smiled at the joke and took a box of matches out of his pocket. "Here, give him this from me," he said. I kept Lenin's match-box, already empty, of course, in my desk for a long time. At that time there was really a shortage of matches in Moscow and we had to go from the fifth floor of the Second House of Soviets down to the ground floor, where water was always being boiled for tea and we could light our cigarettes from the stove.

A box. A lifeless thing made of wood. But it is a present from Lenin. And it is one of my dearest possessions.

From My Diary

by Bohumir Šmeral

The first time I had the good fortune of meeting Lenin was in the spring of 1920 when I visited the R.S.F.S.R. At that time there was as yet no Czechoslovak Communist Party and I represented the "Left" Social-Democrats. Together with a group of comrades who had returned from Russian captivity I helped the "Lefts" to join the Third International and to organise our own Communist Party.

I was 40 years old then. I did not know a word of Russian and had hardly read any Bolshevik literature. The October Revolution affected me tremendously. I had already decided that the way of reformism was a false way, but, burdened with 22 years of my Social-Democratic past, I was still very far from Bolshevik clarity and firmness. My visit to Moscow decided the fate of the second half of my conscious life.

At that time it was difficult to cross the frontier cordons. I left Prague on March 3 and, travelling through Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, Revel, Narva, Yamburg and Petrograd, arrived in Moscow only on March 31. On April 3 I saw Lenin for the first time.

It was in the Kremlin at the session of the Ninth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks),* to which I had received a permanent guest pass.

Lenin entered, greeted me, asked me in German how I had been accommodated and whether the Secretariat of the Comintern had given me the necessary assistance, and promised to receive me in the near future. A few seconds later he was already delivering his speech.

What impression did Lenin's manner of speech produce on me, a Western Social-Democrat? At that time I was accustomed to West-European "parliament" speakers, having heard many of them, including Wilhelm Liebknecht, Bebel, Victor Adler and Jaurès. After Lenin's very first words I

* The Ninth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) was held March 29-April 5, 1920.—*Ed.*

knew that the person who was speaking was entirely different from all I had heard before. A complete absence of outward theatricalness and effect, of pathos emphasising a feeling of personal importance, simple, inconspicuous, modest—such was the first impression produced on me by Lenin's speech. Since I did not know any Russian and had no interpreter I could not understand his report, but by the faces and the eyes of the listeners I could see that Lenin's words were exerting an enormous influence on the audience. The same evening I entered in my travel diary:

"When Lenin spoke I was seated behind him on the rostrum. He was neither tall nor short, neither stout nor slender; he wore a short jacket of coarse cloth. Nothing conspicuous. His passport would probably read 'no distinctive marks'; from behind I did not even notice his baldness, although I did notice his slight stoop and involuntarily asked myself: 'Is it Lenin or isn't it?' It seemed to me that the most characteristic thing about Lenin was that nothing in his appearance attracted any particular attention. He was one of the many and could equally be taken for a city worker or a country intellectual. Such was his appearance and such was his speech. Nothing theatrical, nothing pathetic.

"This great leader of the masses did not speak loudly, nor did he strain his voice. The words flowed rapidly one after another, the sentences followed each other with an almost monotonous regularity. He stressed those parts of his speech to which he wanted to call special attention; then his voice became still calmer, the pitch rose, and he spoke faster.

"When I closed my eyes and only listened to his voice without understanding what he was saying it seemed to me that two ordinary people were animatedly discussing something. Lenin usually asked a question and then somewhat more loudly answered it. The effect of his speech was reflected in the hall filled with the delegates of the congress.

"The congress was attended by people from all parts of Russia—from Siberia to the western borders. Tall white fur-caps, field shirts, black leather jackets, strongly-featured faces of city workers, and heads of girls still looking half-childish. All eyes were riveted on Lenin, on his eyes; the crowd formed a single bas-relief cast in metal.

"The longer Lenin spoke, the tenser the mass of the listeners became. Hands rose for applause and seemed to freeze before clapping: the tension produced by the new sentence left no time for them to strike together. Only the coughing restrained with difficulty betrayed signs of life in this seemingly petrified tension. Lenin thus not only perfectly mastered his own thoughts, but also controlled his audience. The faces of the delegates showed that his thoughts were their thoughts, his life was their life. He finished suddenly with a very short, terse sentence."

Later, on April 23, I spoke at the People's House in Petrograd at a meeting in honour of Lenin's fiftieth birthday. It was characteristic of my thinking at that time that, in comparing that epoch with the break-up of the system of antiquity, I compared the communist movement with early Christianity and Lenin with Jesus Christ. The manner of my speech made to the Petrograd proletarians in Czech apparently appealed to them, but after hearing a translation of it they objected to its content. A note with the following remarks was sent to the Presidium: "We object to the comparison with Jesus."

I had my first political talk with Lenin on May 5 by sheer accident and much sooner than I had expected. A joint session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, the Moscow Soviet and representatives of the trade unions and factory committees was called at the Bolshoi Theatre in connection with the war Poland had just unleashed against Soviet Russia.*

I went to the meeting. The square in front of the theatre was cordoned off. Vainly did the comrade who accompanied me try to explain that I was a foreigner and point at the sentence in my document that read: "The bearer of this document is allowed free passage everywhere."

The Red Army guard answered calmly, but categorically:

"Yes, Comrade, that's what it reads, but it makes no difference. We are soldiers, we haven't been told anything about exceptions and for us orders are orders. No use!"

Suddenly I heard my companion speak to someone behind my back.

I am now quoting from my diary again:

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* See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 129-34.—*Ed.*

" 'Oh, Comrade Šmeral!' Somebody extended his hand to me, lightly but cordially clasped mine and without releasing it marched ahead of me, leading me along. The Red Army guard who at first had refused to let me pass showed his white teeth in a broad smile and let all three of us pass without a word. At that moment I did not as yet know who was leading me along. Through my misted spectacles I saw before me only a somewhat stooping back, a coarse-cloth jacket, shoes worn down at the heels and a cap worn in my country only by workers. Before I could utter a word we were inside the theatre. I could not see a thing, while I was climbing the dark, narrow staircase.

" 'At last I can see you,' said the comrade who now took me by the arm and led me on.

"Is it he or isn't it? The simplicity and natural ease of those whom we know only by their great name amaze us.

"A door opened and we entered a small room set aside for the theatre administration. My companion threw his cap on the nearest chair and bared his characteristic bald head. Thus I stood face to face with the great leader of the world proletariat.

"He immediately came to the point. I wanted to tell him a bit about myself, but he interrupted me:

" 'I know your past history. We do not have to talk about it.' He was being very tactful about my Social-Democratic past. 'What do you think of the present situation in Europe?' "

That started a conversation which concentrated his thoughts to such an extent that he continued for more than three quarters of an hour, although he was just about to deliver an extremely important political speech. He wanted to know the smallest details about the situation and moods in Czechoslovakia and Central Europe.

I felt that he devoted such attention to me not only because I was one of the few foreigners who had come to the R.S.F.S.R. while the country was still partly blockaded, but also because I was a Social-Democrat. I was taken aback. Most of Lenin's questions were about the national problem in Czechoslovakia.

The next day I recorded the following remarks in my diary:

"In the epoch of finance capital, the epoch of imperialism, it cannot be said that any country which has formal political

independence is already independent. Today there are altogether special forms of colonial and financial subjugation of the overwhelming majority of the world's population by a small minority of the richest capitalist countries. The struggle for national self-determination will now increasingly assume the character of a struggle against this yoke. This formula is typical of the national problem for the present, as well as the future. The imperialist world war has revealed the falsity of formal bourgeois democracy in that it has more rapidly shown the working people its results in practice. After this war life itself will demonstrate to whole nations what a delusion it is to carry into life only formally the principle of 'national self-determination' for which the 'Western democracy' that has engendered the Versailles Treaty takes the 'credit'. In all newly established small states and throughout the colonies the working people will see in practice how insufficient mere political liberation is also for a nation as a whole. Real proletarian internationalism requires that the interests of the proletarian struggle in one country should be subordinated to the interests of this struggle on an international scale and that the nation which has defeated the bourgeoisie should be able and willing to make the greatest national sacrifices in order to defeat world capitalism."

Lenin did not voice these or any other thoughts with an air of absolute authority. Not at all! He was more interested in the opinion of his interlocutor. Often he actually drew words out of me so that he could judge my reactions. One of his eyes was screwed up, while the other seemed fixed on my eyes. He actually seemed to grind with his brain every new fact I gave him.

"You come from a milieu of very sensitive national relations, and your thoughts reflect reality, for which reason you must speak up without feeling shy about them," Lenin said. "Yes, yes, the situation in your country is indeed complicated. A militant unification of the Czech and the German proletariat is rendered very difficult by your past relations. And yet you must see to it that the Czech and the German proletariat unite as soon as possible. If you do not achieve this, the class struggle in your country will assume still more painful forms. As for the prejudices of the petty bourgeoisie, its national egoism and its national narrow-

mindedness, you will have to take them into account even when the national misunderstandings between the Czech and the German proletariat have been overcome. These prejudices will disappear only with the disappearance of imperialism and capitalism."

Since I had to go back abroad I thought it the better part of wisdom not to commit to the diary anything Lenin had said about Poland's attack on the Soviet Republic.

Soon it was reported from the hall that the meeting was about to begin. We made our way up to the rostrum. Lenin was given the floor. When Lenin had finished his speech he was approached by a comrade who told him, as I found out later, that some important information had been received. Lenin immediately had to dash off to the Council of People's Commissars.

I sat on the other side of the rostrum. Although concerned with matters of historical importance, Lenin did not forget before leaving that he had talked to a plain person from a small nation. He tore a sheet out of his pad, wrote something down in pencil, folded the paper and forwarded it to me. His note was in German, some words in it were underscored once or twice. It read about as follows:

"Comrade Šmeral, if you need anything, but cannot, despite all your efforts, get it (which unfortunately is frequently the case here), *ask* for me personally (telephone: *Kremlin*, extension third floor) or write to me, indicating on the envelope: personally *from so and so*. With best regards, Lenin."

On May 21 I was summoned by telephone at the Savoy Hotel, where I was staying, to come and see Lenin in his Kremlin flat. This time Lenin spoke to me in detail about establishing a Communist Party in Czechoslovakia. I was advised on how to win over the greater part of the "Left" of Social-Democracy to the Third International and how, without losing contact with the mass of workers in the Social-Democratic Party, to form a Communist Party.

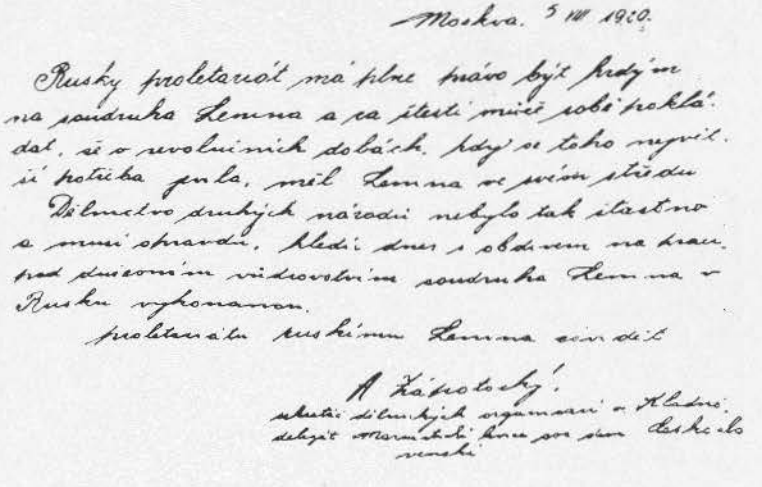
I returned home a changed person. I had embarked on the path to communism, to Bolshevism, sincerely and honestly.

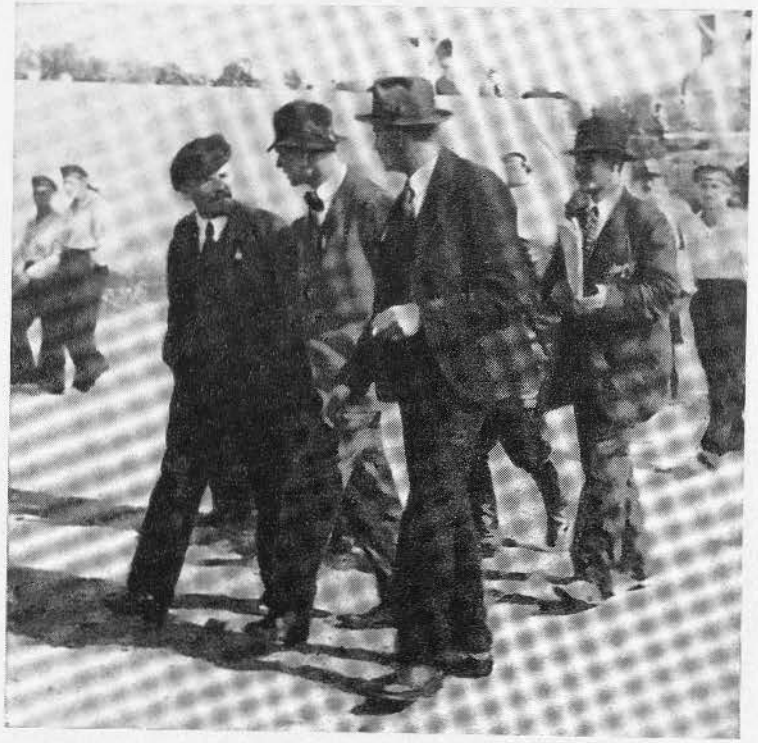
Reminiscences of Lenin

by Antonin Zápotocký

It was after the First World War in the summer of 1920. Europe was still in the throes of revolutionary upheavals caused by the war. New states were being established on the ruins of the old. On more than one-sixth of the earth's surface a Soviet Socialist Republic was forming in place of old tsarist Russia. Old Austria-Hungary was also breaking up and new states were emerging on its territory. Czechoslovakia was one of them. The new states were not only being established, but were also seeking new forms of existence. These quests were often the subject of numerous debates and violent struggle. Not only different political parties, but also whole social classes came into conflict in this struggle. The new was being born and was growing, the old was being destroyed. Europe was restless. There was no peace in Russia, nor in Czechoslovakia.

A World Congress of the Third, Communist International





Lenin among delegates to the Second Comintern Congress. Petrograd, Fallen Revolutionaries Square, July 19, 1920

was called in Moscow* and I was sent as a delegate from the Left opposition which had formed in the Czechoslovak Social-Democratic Party. The opposition was the strongest in Kladno. And it was Red Kladno that had sent me to the congress. I went, although at that time it was no easy journey. Poland was at war.

I had to go through Germany, then by boat from Germany to Revel (Estonia), thence to Riga (Latvia), and lastly

* The Second Congress of the Comintern.—*Ed*

to Petrograd and Moscow. There were stops and obstacles all along the way. Finally I reached Moscow, even if somewhat late. The congress had already opened in the Andreyevsky Hall of the Moscow Kremlin.

I entered the hall during an intermission and saw Lenin for the first time. On the steps of the Presidium rostrum sat a small and, at first sight, inconspicuous man. In his lap lay a writing pad in which he was rapidly jotting something down. I stopped, as did many delegates. No one dared interrupt him. So that was he—Lenin, the man whose name had caused such panic in capitalist Europe over the past three years.

And it had had good reason to be scared. But if Lenin inspired the capitalists with fear when he was alive, he is scaring them still more now. Lenin died, but Leninism lives on. A correct understanding of Lenin and Leninism spelled the end to the capitalist system in many countries and set the working people on the path to freedom and socialism.

In 1920 many people did not as yet believe it. Many of those who stood before Lenin sitting on the rostrum steps during intermissions in the sessions of the Congress of the Communist International may not have believed it either. Nor did many of those who took part in the congress and with whom Lenin debated and argued from the speaker's stand. And, as it turned out later, some of my comrade-delegates from Czechoslovakia did not believe it. But millions of working people did believe. They not only believed, but also did what Lenin taught them. Then, at the Congress of the Communist International, after my first meeting with Lenin, I also became a firm believer and have never regretted it.

At the congress I had a chance to speak to Lenin personally.

One day in June I came to the hotel and was told that Lenin wanted to see the Czech delegates in the Kremlin. We were excited by the invitation; we, the Czechoslovak delegates, had suddenly become an object of attention. Many delegates from other countries undoubtedly envied us. I was taken aback. How should I talk to Lenin and what should I talk to him about? I, a rank-and-file worker of the Social-Democratic Party from the small coal-mining

town of Kladno!? Besides, what interest could Lenin possibly have in our little Czechoslovakia?

I was in the same frame of mind even in the anteroom of Lenin's study. But all my apprehensions proved vain. Lenin knew a good deal about us.

To begin with, he understood Czech. We, too, understood Russian, although we could not speak the language. It turned out that we needed no interpreter. Lenin knew Prague. He had been there at the illegal conference of the Russian Bolshevik Party in 1912.

He started the conversation with a question that would hardly have perplexed any Czech. He asked if they still ate *knedliks* with plums in Czechia. He remembered this favourite Czech dish from the time when he had been in Prague! It goes without saying that after such an introduction the conversation ran very amicably even when we touched upon political questions. Lenin displayed a great interest in Czechoslovakia. On a large map he drew, according to our directions, a line in blue pencil around our new borders. The conversation turned to Transcarpathian Russia, then he asked us about our attitude to Hungary (that was after the fall of the Hungarian Commune); several other political questions were also discussed. Lenin was particularly interested in the Hungarian problem and wanted the most detailed information on it. At the same time he very interestingly explained the reason for his preoccupation with the Hungarian problem.

"We have many Hungarian émigrés here. But I want to know your personal opinions. I know only too well from my own experience that émigrés very often picture things in their country as they would like to see them, but not as they actually are."

It was thus that Lenin spoke—simply, understandably; and yet in each sentence one could perceive great truth, experience and uncommon knowledge. It is because of this power of conviction issuing from intrinsic truth that Lenin and Leninism have triumphed.

They have won in one-sixth of the world and are now triumphantly marching to other parts of the world.

Lenin died, but Leninism will live forever and with it our memories of that great man.

Memory of Lenin

I knew about Comrade Lenin long before I met him personally. By the end of 1917 Lenin was already well known, and it was as impossible not to talk, write and think about him as it was impossible not to talk, write and think about the Great October Socialist Revolution.

The October Revolution in Russia was an event that literally "shook the world". It stirred everybody and disturbed the peace of those who reviled and cursed it, as well as those who, despite the distorted and hostile information, sympathised with it.

Different sections of the people greeted it in different ways—some with rage, others with fear, and still others with hope.

But the light of the October Revolution could not be extinguished. It dispersed the darkness and whipped up a veritable storm. "Revolution" and "Lenin" were the words that resounded all over the world. They acted like litmus paper—they separated the classes and placed on opposite sides of the barricades the exploited and the exploiters, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

The inexorable course of events demanded that the working class and working masses of the world should make a historical decision. They had to choose between the revolution and Lenin and the old capitalist world with the traitors who were in its service.

The war fronts wavered. The soldiers threw down their arms, discontinued the mutual slaughter and began to fraternise. The world imperialist war ended in chaos. States fell and secular empires and powers broke up.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire also broke up. New states and lands arose on its ruins. Our people, too, threw off their age-old thraldom, and an independent Czechoslovak Republic was born.

But its birth did not in any way mean that the revolutionary process was completed. The exploited and exploiters remained. The working masses immediately rallied in a strong organisation, and it turned out that in the new Czechoslovak state Social-Democracy had become a decisive factor.

Social-Democracy was faced with the fatal question of what to do: to go with the socialist revolution and Lenin or with the old regime? To lead the workers and the working masses to a revolutionary struggle for power, for the abolition of exploitation of man by man and for the construction of socialism or treacherously to renounce the revolutionary militant class line and opportunistically to serve the bourgeoisie of the newly born Czechoslovakia, helping the bourgeoisie to build a capitalist state? A struggle on this question flared up in Czechoslovak Social-Democracy. An opposition to the opportunist leadership arose and in 1920 the opposition sent delegates to the Second Congress of the Third, Communist International in Moscow.

The delegation included me, a delegate of the Kladno miners and metalworkers.

That was how I got to the Soviet Union for the first time. I was given an opportunity to acquaint myself with the practical results of the Great October Socialist Revolution and the country's first steps in building socialism. I was given a chance to meet Lenin and make his personal acquaintance.

I have written a series of articles and reminiscences about this first journey to the Soviet Union and the meeting with Comrade Lenin.

My impressions are best described in my first letter sent to the Kladno miners and metalworkers from Moscow in July 1920. I am quoting it:

"Post-war, post-October Moscow has produced an unforgettable impression on me. Ruins, decay, desolation, broken and boarded-up shop windows, transport and communications in disorder, and often even no light and heat.

"But working Moscow is alive. Like inconspicuous, patient ants, people are pottering about in the ruins of houses searching for a little firewood, a board to make a shelf and an old nail or some other much needed trifle. In these searches one discerns a tremendous thirst for life, a striving to live again after all the mishaps, catastrophes and despair experienced during the war and post-war years.

"I do not know why, but walking through the streets of Moscow and tripping over the broken-up asphalt I believe, I firmly believe that these people will live on and, what

is the most important, that they will live a new life, under a new system.

"This strong faith that life is still ahead and that live they must, even if it is very hard to live today, is, in my opinion, the fundamental principle of all socialist construction.

"I shall never forget my first meeting with Comrade Lenin. In the throne-room of the tsarist Kremlin, where the sessions of the congress are being held, an inconspicuous man sat on the steps of the rostrum jotting something down in a pad lying in his lap. That was Comrade Lenin, an ordinary enough looking man. But this 'ordinary' man was forging a new link in the history of mankind. Beside and behind him were rows and rows of common people. How can the 'uncommon' people of the West believe that these plain workers have imparted a new direction to man's historical development? History does not stop, and to common people it assigns extraordinary tasks. But the 'uncommon' people very willingly and very often fail to observe common things. They want to be above the crowd and its daily interests. Their 'high culture' does not allow them to soil their hands in clearing up the mess. But common people are not squeamish about it, especially when they have to arouse labour consciousness and strengthen the discipline. Lenin volunteers to work in his spare time like any other worker. All of us, delegates to the congress, work together with him."

Such were my first impressions of the Socialist Revolution, the Soviet Union and Lenin.

Several decades have elapsed, but my impressions have not changed. Subsequent events have only served to confirm them.

This is also true of my opinion of Lenin, formed at first sight and during his speech at the Second Congress of the Comintern.

This opinion was consolidated after my meeting with Lenin and my conversation with him in his study at the Moscow Kremlin.

Lenin asks questions and immediately answers them. He answers them simply and understandably. His conclusions are distinctly and clearly formulated.

I shall never forget how he dispelled my illusions about

my erstwhile friends, the leaders of Social-Democracy; at that time I still believed that they would be able to obey the will of the mass of Party members and the decisions of the congress and that they would not slide further down the treacherous slope of reformism and opportunism.

Lenin speaks. He speaks briefly, tersely, and his every word is like the stroke of a hammer.

"And what about the Party Congress? How soon will you have one? You think you will have it in September? What does the Left-wing expect? Will you win a majority? I don't know, I don't know; don't count your chickens before they're hatched for you don't know yet what the Rights will do nor what they are capable of. You say that a clear majority of the Party is with you. That is all well and good, but the leadership is in the hands of the Rights! And as long as this is the case they can still do a lot. They can even call off the congress. You think that would cause the Party to split? You don't believe the Rights will risk a split? Don't be naïve! The Rights caused a split in the other parties and I see no reason why they should hesitate to do the same with yours. You will see yet what they are capable of, when they have to fight to retain their power in the Party. We have already had this experience, we, too, have gone through this type of struggle."

Then we turned to the question of trade unions.

"And how about the trade unions?" asked Lenin. "In the West they are a force to be reckoned with. And in your country? Are they united? They are not? Which trade unions are the strongest? Your Social-Democratic unions?! And in whose hands is their leadership? Most of them are in the hands of the Rights. This is a big mistake and your weak spot. In your country the trade unions will play an important role and they must not be underestimated. No revolutionary action is possible without the support of the trade-union movement. You must work in the trade unions. You must advance the slogan of trade-union unity.

"You have a tendency to organise independent Left trade unions? Don't do it! A revolutionary political party is quite a different thing; it is necessary to keep the party clean and to expel the opportunists. The trade unions, however, must be united. Uphold correct revolutionary tactics within them. You must safeguard and not destroy the trade unions."

I have memorised Lenin's words about unity in the trade-union movement for ever. While the Czechoslovak Communist Party was being built, this slogan caused considerable debates and a great struggle. There were many mistakes and deviations from the correct Leninist principle of safeguarding trade-union unity, but in the end this principle proved correct and it won.

It was the same with the question of unity among Socialists. This question was widely discussed at the Congress of the Comintern and the terms for establishing this unity were worked out.

In the Czechoslovak Republic the question of joining the socialist camp, then united under the banner of the Third International, was particularly vital.

Using threats and demagogy about the "dictates of Moscow"—these were their chief arguments—the Rights and opportunists of every stripe resisted the establishment of a truly united camp of Socialists and thereby refrained from carrying out a truly socialist policy.

After my talk with Comrade Lenin in August 1920 I wrote the following to my Kladno comrades:

"... And in conclusion about the Third International. The revolutionary socialist Third International which is creating an international organisation of the proletariat is also inviting the proletariat of the Czechoslovak Republic to join its ranks. To all panic reports spread in our country it is necessary to answer thus:

"The Moscow International is not trying to lure or force anybody to join it. Resolutely and directly enhancing its principles and terms of admission the International declares: according to our conviction, the organisation of the revolutionary proletariat must be such, in order that it may win the struggle against international capitalism. Let any workers' party, which feels that the class consciousness and convictions of its members are sufficiently clear to reject opportunism and social-chauvinism, to renounce the union with the bourgeoisie and join the union of the revolutionary proletariat, extend to us in a comradely manner its working-class hand and join with our proletarian camp."

I think we would do well to recall these Leninist principles and views on the necessity and usefulness of unity in the camp of Socialists.

This question is still being debated.

Many people express and proclaim different views and consider them to be the truth.

Experience teaches, however, that truth becomes real only when confirmed by the course of events. Lenin's truths were and are precisely such: the course of events has completely confirmed them.

That is why after Lenin's death there remained Leninism, the practical confirmation of the correctness of Marx's teaching of scientific socialism, the practical manual and guide for all the builders of socialism.

True to the principles of Leninism, and building socialism in our country our Czechoslovak Communist Party highly esteems international solidarity and proletarian internationalism and advocates unity of the socialist camp.

True to Marx's slogan "Workers of All Countries, Unite!" we are also true to Leninism. That is why we are also true to our unbreakable union and indestructible friendship with the U.S.S.R. We regard the Communist Party of the Soviet Union with its Marxist-Leninist principles as a model Communist Party, and its decades of experience in socialist construction as a model of socialist construction. But we do not in any way overlook the conditions and requirements of our own country, nor the question of peaceful coexistence of all countries regardless of their social and economic system.

Nobody emphasised with as much force as did Lenin the necessity of using the scientific principles of Marxism with due regard for the concrete situation and the variety of prevailing conditions.

That is why Lenin and his teaching, his principles and the truths he expressed will forever be our true and indispensable support; we not only remember them, but also learn from them.

When I recall my meetings with Lenin, even now, several decades later, Lenin's irrefutable truth sounds everywhere like the clear voice of a bell.

Lenin is dead, but Leninism lives on!

Lenin

by William Gallacher

In 1920 I got appointed by the comrades in Glasgow, associated with the Clyde Workers' Committee (Shop Stewards Movement), to attend the Second Congress of the Communist International. We were at that time "Left" sectarian and refused to participate in the discussions taking place between the B.S.P. and the S.L.P.* on the questions of the formation of a Communist Party in Britain. We had the project in view of starting a "pure" Communist Party in Scotland, a party that would not under any circumstances touch either the Labour Party or parliamentary activity.

As I hadn't a passport and as there was little likelihood of getting one I set out for Newcastle, where after a week's effort I succeeded with the assistance of a Norwegian comrade, who was a fireman, in getting safely stowed away on a ship for Bergen. From Bergen I travelled up to Vords, from Vords to Murmansk and from there to Leningrad.

When I arrived in Leningrad, the congress which had opened there was in session in Moscow to where it had been transferred after the opening.

In Smolny I was made comfortable in a room while some of the comrades tried to find an interpreter. While I was writing one of them came in and handed me *"Left-Wing" Communism—an Infantile Disorder,*** which had just been printed in English. I started reading it quite casually, but when I came to the section dealing with Britain and saw what it had to say about me, I sat up with a jolt. I had come away from Glasgow with the notion that our case against the Labour Party and against participation in parliament was so sound, so unassailable, that all I would have to do would be to put a few well-rehearsed arguments and the B.S.P. and S.L.P. would be wiped off the mat. It was

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* B.S.P.—British Socialist Party; S.L.P.—Socialist Labour Party.—*Ed.*

** This book was first published on June 12, 1920 and was repeatedly reprinted in German, French, English and Italian. In November 1920 the Executive Committee of the British Communist Party opened a subscription to it.—*Ed.*

a real shock to find that already, before I had been anywhere near the congress, all the fancy building I had been doing was knocked into complete ruin. But at that time all the questions raised by Lenin were far from being clear to me, as was evident later in my speeches at the congress.

I got to Moscow on a Saturday at midday, was taken to a hotel just in time to be taken to a "subbotnik". I got a job till eight at night stacking pig-iron in a foundry....

On Monday, with other delegates, I made my way to the Kremlin and to my first acquaintance with an international congress.

In the main hall groups of delegates were standing chatting and arguing.

We passed through into the side room where delegates sat drinking tea, writing reports or preparing speeches. I was introduced to delegates from this and that country and then I got into a group and someone said:

"This is Comrade Lenin," just like that.

I held out my hand and said, "Hello!" I was stuck for anything else to say.

He said, with a smile, as he was told that I was Comrade Gallacher from Glasgow:

"We are very pleased to have you at our congress."*

I said something about being glad to be there and then we went on talking about other things. I kept saying to myself: "Christ, there's war everywhere, there are internal problems and external problems that would almost seem insurmountable. Yet here is a comrade supremely confident that the Bolsheviks can carry through to victory." Lenin joked and laughed with the comrades and occasionally when I said something he would look at me in a quaint way. I later discovered that this was in consequence of my English. He had difficulty in understanding it.

I immediately felt that I was talking, not to some "far-away great" man hedged around with an impassable barrier of airs, but to Lenin, the great Party comrade who had a warm smile and cheery word for every proletarian fighter.

When I got going in the discussions on the political resolution and the trade-union resolution, I got a very rough handling. Some of my best arguments were simply riddled. My opponents, when I got up to speak, never missed a chance of "cutting in". Naturally I would snap back at them and things sometimes got very hot. As I felt the ground slipping away from beneath my feet I got very bad tempered. But Lenin, while carrying on an irreconcilable criticism in principle of my line, would always take the opportunity of saying something helpful, something that took away a lot of the soreness from the difficult position my wrong ideas had rushed me into....

On several occasions at these sittings Lenin passed me short pencilled notes explaining a point or showing me where I was wrong.

When the sitting would finish I'd tear up my own notes and I tore up Lenin's along with them. It seems incredible now that I could do such a thing, but I never thought of it at the time. Towards the end of the Political Commission, when I had been very aggressive about the B.S.P. and S.L.P., he passed me across a note which in a very short caustic way gave an estimation of these groups. At night I mentioned in confidence to one or two comrades that Lenin had given me a note about the B.S.P. and S.L.P. which if I had shown them would have made them blink.

"Where is it?" one of them asked.

"Oh, I tore it up," I casually replied.

"You what? You tore up a note in Lenin's handwriting?" He was aghast.

"I tore up several," I said, "but they were personal and I didn't think he'd want me to keep them...."

Two days later, in the Political Commisson, in the midst of a breeze and while I was speaking, someone made a reference to *Infantile Disorder*.

"Yes," I said, "I've read it, but I'm no infant. It's all right to treat me as one and slap me around when I'm not here but when I'm here you'll find I'm an old hand at the game."

This latter phrase caught Lenin's attention and some time later, when Willie Paul* visited Russia, Lenin repeated

* Gallacher made V. I. Lenin's personal acquaintance on July 26, 1920.—*Ed.*

* W. Paul was received by Lenin on October 6, 1920.—*Ed.*

it to him with a quite creditable Scotch accent. When I sat down after this effort he passed me a note which read, "When I wrote my little book, I hadn't met you...."

While insistent in carrying through his political line Lenin gave both in the open sessions and in the Political Commission every conceivable assistance to myself and other comrades in order to help us to political clarity.

Then when I went to visit him at home I had my greatest experience.* I sat down before him and we talked of the building of a party and its role in leading the revolutionary struggle. I had never thought much about the Party before, but I began then to get a real understanding of what a Communist Party should be.

Lenin was dead against the project for a separate party in Scotland. I would have to work, join up in the newly-formed party in Britain. I made objections. I couldn't work with this one or the other one.

"If you put the revolution first," he said, "you won't find any difficulty. For the revolution you will work with all sorts of people, for a part of the way at any rate. But if you start off by shutting yourself away from everyone, instead of getting in amongst them and fighting for the time of revolutionary advance, you won't get anywhere. Get into the Party and fight for the line of the Communist International and you'll have the strength of the Communist International behind you."

In all our talk the "proletarian revolution" was the living, throbbing theme of all that was said.

I had never had an experience like it. I couldn't think of Lenin personally. I couldn't think of anything but the revolution and the necessity of advancing the revolution whatever the cost might be. This ever since to me seemed to be the outstanding quality of Lenin's great genius. He never thought of himself, he was the living embodiment of the revolutionary struggle and he carried with him wherever he went the inspiration of his own great conviction.... That is the last memory I have of our great Comrade Lenin.

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*. August 18, 1920.—*Ed.*

Leader, Teacher and Friend*

One evening, after the end of the plenary session of the Second Congress, I was told that Lenin had sent his car for me and that it was waiting outside the hotel. When I entered his room he warmly shook my hand and said he would like to have a serious talk with me. We exchanged opinions on certain delegates and in the course of the conversation he mentioned a woman delegate from England,** who did not belong to the B.S.P. and who bitterly said concerning the leaders of that party that she would not believe a single one of them.

"I told her," said Lenin, "that she could trust you, so if any difficulties arise, try to make out what they are."

I said I would do all I could.

"All right. And now let's get it straight. You say that whoever gets into the British Parliament becomes corrupt. Comrade Gallacher," he continued shading one eye with his hand and scanning me with the other, "if the workers send you to Parliament to represent them, will you too become corrupt?"

I even recoiled.

"You are hitting below the belt," I said.

"This is a very important question and I should very much like you to answer it," Lenin insisted.

I hesitated for a moment and then answered:

"No, I'm sure the bourgeoisie will never be able to corrupt me."

Lenin smiled warmly and said:

"Comrade Gallacher, see to it that you are elected to the British Parliament and show the workers how a revolutionary can make use of it."

It was 15 years before I got into Parliament of which I was a member for the following 15 years. I did all I could to discharge my duties as a revolutionary, as a member of the Communist Party. I'm sure my comrades will agree that nobody was able to corrupt me.

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* Retranslated from the Russian.—*Tr.*

** Sylvia Pankhurst who participated on behalf of the Workers' Socialist Federation of England in the Second Congress of the Comintern.—*Ed.*

The congress was still under way when a telegram came from London with a report that a Communist Party had been organised in England* and that it was trying to gain admission into the Labour Party. The Scotch comrades did not join the new party, however, proposed to set up a separate Scotch Communist Party and were against joining the Labour Party. In this connection Lenin told me frankly that in this question such a position was untenable.

"Do you agree with me?" he asked.

"I do," I said.

"In that case, when you get back to England, join the new Communist Party and persuade your Scotch comrades to follow you."

I promised to join it and to spare no efforts in persuading my Scotch comrades to do likewise.

I returned to Glasgow just in time for the opening of the conference called for the purpose of organising the Scotch Communist Party. I reported on the Second Congress of the Comintern and appealed to the participants not to set up a separate party, but to appoint a commission to meet with the Executive Committee of the already organised party with a view to uniting all the Communists. The comrades agreed with me, and at the Unity Conference in Leeds two months later we all formed a single party.

Had it not been for Lenin I should never have returned in time to prevent the organisation of a separate party. John Reed and I were appointed to represent the Anglo-American delegation at the Congress of the Peoples of the East to be held in Baku.** One evening, while we were preparing for our departure, a car again came to the hotel with a message from Lenin. He wanted to see me immediately. When I entered Lenin asked me about my health and how I was taken care of. After hearing me out he asked:

"When are you going home?"

"Not very soon," I answered. "I'm going to Baku as a delegate to the Congress of the Peoples of the East."

Lenin jumped to his feet.

"No, no!" he exclaimed. "You must go home. You'll

* The British Communist Party was formed on August 2-3, 1920. —*Ed.*

** The First Congress of the Peoples of the East was held in Baku, September 1-7, 1920.—*Ed.*

have plenty to do there. The workers are organising Councils of Action to foil Churchill's attempts to start a war against Soviet Russia. You can be very helpful. You must go home. Anybody can be a delegate to the Baku Congress, but nobody will do your work for you in England."

When I voiced my agreement with him he asked:

"When will you be able to leave?"

"I have no luggage," I said, "except the clothes I'm wearing, so that I don't have to do any packing and can leave tomorrow morning."

"Why not this evening?"

"This evening?" I gasped. "There is not enough time to book my passage and get my documents."

"Will you go?" asked Lenin. "Then I'll take care of your passage and documents."

"I will go," I said and held out my hand.

For a moment we stood there clasping each other's hand and looking into each other's eyes. I shall never forget this parting from the great teacher and friend.

Memorable Meetings*

Forty years have elapsed since the establishment of the Communist International. The greater part of my political life has passed in a struggle under the banner of this militant international organisation which has left a deep imprint in world history. Many of those who struggled side by side with me have already departed this life, and now, recalling the deeds of the Communist International, I bow my head in reverence to their memory.

When the First World War broke out, all the Social-Democratic parties of the belligerent countries, except the Party of Bolsheviks, proved to be captives of the deceivers of the working class, betrayers of its interests. The Second International collapsed like a house of cards. Lenin proposed to rename the R.S.D.L.P. the Communist Party, retaining at that stage its historical designation—Bolshevik.**

* Interview given by Gallacher to Vadim Nekrasov, London correspondent of *Pravda.—Ed.*

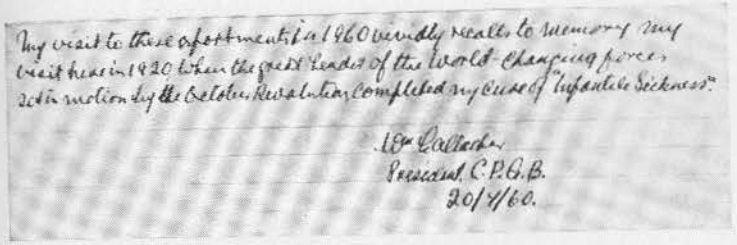
** See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, pp. 84-88.—*Ed.*

He did not want the name of a truly Marxist Party to be suggestive of those who had betrayed the Socialist International. The new International was supposed to unite in its ranks people of all countries devoted to the cause of socialism.

I personally did not have the good fortune of attending the historic First Congress of the Communist International held in Moscow in March 1919. It paved the way for the Second Congress which was to work out the strategy and tactics of the world communist movement on all basic political and organisational problems. At that congress I represented, together with others, the Left wing of the British working-class movement as a delegate from the Scotch working-class committee.

What is the first thing that comes to my memory when I recall those days? The simple and great image of Lenin. Lenin always manifested a cheerfulness and an unshakable confidence in the righteousness of communism, combined with a very keen insight. Looking at him, not one of us Communists ever had any doubts about the final victory. His very presence was an inspiration. He was a brilliant master of revolution. It was amazing how his own conviction inspired others. Coming back home after the congress I said to my comrades: "When you're in the presence of Lenin you think only about the revolution." I shall never forget the touching concern Lenin displayed for me personally. Other comrades told me about similar solicitude for them. Lenin was affable, friendly and of ready sympathy. Looking back I recall with amazement how patiently he worked with us in those days. He lent an attentive ear to all delegates, although at that time there were, as is well known, many sectarians and opportunists among them. He elucidated all important problems and tried to help everybody to get on the right track. And that was when he was completely absorbed in the urgent and vital problems of struggle against the whiteguards and interventionists. He never seemed to tire. Lenin took a particularly active part in the work of the political and trade-union commissions.

We saw members of the Komsomol who went to the front to defend the young Soviet Republic. They were inspired by Lenin, while their heroism, in its turn, inspired him. All of us, delegates to the Second Congress of the Communist


My visit to these apartments in 1960 vividly recalls to memory my visit here in 1920 when the great leader of the World-Changing power, 2cth in motion by the October Revolution, completed my Course of Infantile Sickness."

Wm Gallacher
Pres. C.P.G.B.
20/4/60.

William Gallacher's entry in the Visitors' Book at Lenin's Kremlin flat and study

International, felt that no difficulties or suffering could subdue the revolutionary courage of the Soviet people, young and old, in military uniform or out. What we witnessed in Moscow exerted on us delegates enormous influence. It strengthened our own determination to act, endure and overcome difficulties. In those days our task of creating a powerful, united world communist organisation also seemed incredibly difficult.

Recalling those distant days, I see Lenin before me leading the sessions of the Second Congress of the Comintern again, and I understand why we Communists managed to surmount all obstacles during the past four decades.

I attended also the Third Congress of the Communist International in 1921, at which the decisions of the previous congress were examined in the light of the experience gained in the work and struggle during the preceding year. Heated discussions flared up again, but I was no longer a "Leftist"; now I firmly adhered to the positions of Marxism-Leninism.

The Kremlin Dreamer*

by H. G. Wells

We opened our talk** with a discussion of the future of the great towns under communism. I wanted to see how far Lenin contemplated the dying out of the towns in Russia. The desolation of Petersburg had brought home to me a point I had never realised before, that the whole form and arrangement of a town is determined by shopping and marketing, and that the abolition of these things renders nine-tenths of the buildings in an ordinary town directly or indirectly unmeaning and useless. "The towns will get very much smaller," he admitted. "They will be different. Yes, quite different." That, I suggested, implied a tremendous task. It meant the scrapping of the existing towns and their replacement. The churches and great buildings of Petersburg would become presently like those of Novgorod the Great or like the temples of Paestum. Most of the town would dissolve away. He agreed quite cheerfully. I think it warmed his heart to find someone who understood a necessary consequence of collectivism that many even of his own people fail to grasp. Russia has to be rebuilt fundamentally, has to become a new thing....

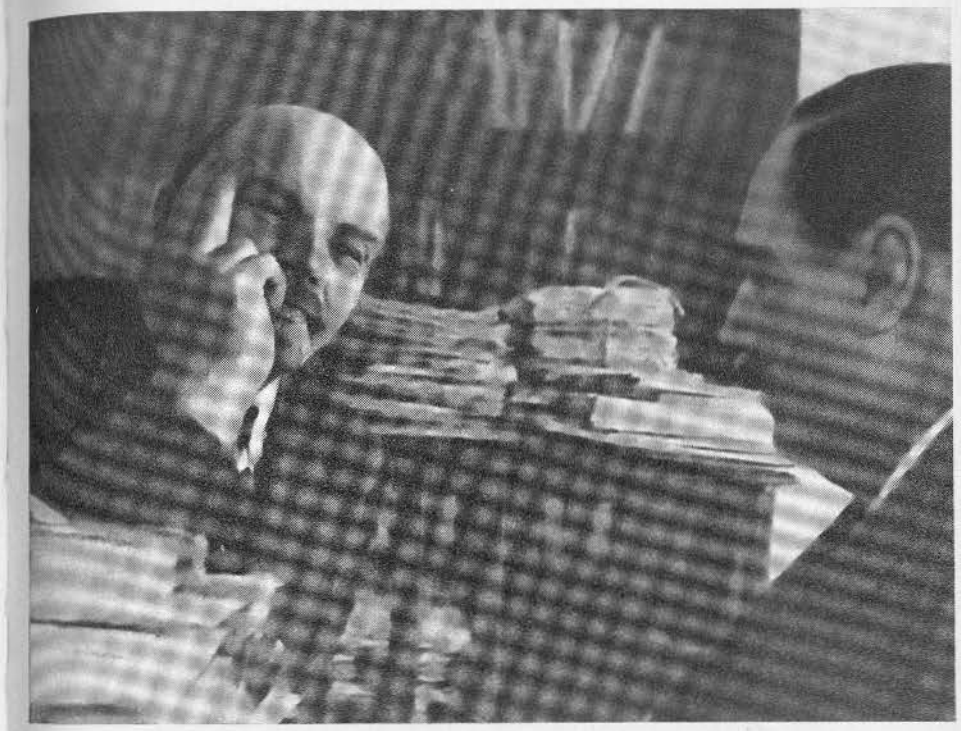
And industry has to be reconstructed—as fundamentally?

Did I realise what was already in hand with Russia? The electrification of Russia?

For Lenin, who like a good orthodox Marxist denounces all "Utopians", has succumbed at last to a Utopia, the Utopia of the electricians. He is throwing all his weight into a scheme for the development of great power stations in Russia to serve whole provinces with light, with transport, and industrial power. Two experimental districts he said had already been electrified. Can one imagine a more courageous project in a vast flat land of forests and illiterate

* Excerpt from the book *Russia in the Shadows* (London, 1920). The book was received in Russia in 1921. While reading it, Lenin made notes on the margins of its pages.—*Ed.*

** October 6, 1920.—*Ed.*



Lenin and Herbert G. Wells. Moscow, October 6, 1920.

peasants, with no water power, with no technical skill available, and with trade and industry at the last gasp? Projects for such an electrification are in process of development in Holland and they have been discussed in England, and in those densely-populated and industrially highly-developed centres one can imagine them as successful, economical, and altogether beneficial. But their application to Russia is an altogether greater strain upon the constructive imagination. I cannot see anything of the sort happening in this dark crystal of Russia, but this little man at the Kremlin can; he sees the decaying railways replaced by a new electric transport, sees new roadways spreading throughout the land, sees a new and happier communist

industrialism arising again. While I talked to him he almost persuaded me to share his vision.

"And you will go on to these things with the peasants rooted in your soil?"

But not only are the towns to be rebuilt; every agricultural landmark is to go.

"Even now," said Lenin, "all the agricultural production of Russia is not peasant production. We have, in places, large-scale agriculture. The government is already running big estates with workers instead of peasants, where conditions are favourable. That can spread. It can be extended first to one province, then another. The peasants in the other provinces, selfish and illiterate, will not know what is happening until their turn comes. . . ."

It may be difficult to defeat the Russian peasant *en masse* but in detail there is no difficulty at all. At the mention of the peasant Lenin's head came nearer to mine; his manner became confidential. As if after all the peasant *might* overhear.

It is not only the material organisation of society you have to build, I argued, it is the mentality of a whole people. The Russian people are by habit and tradition traders and individualists: their very souls must be remoulded if this new world is to be achieved. Lenin asked me what I had seen of the educational work afoot. I praised some of the things I had seen. He nodded and smiled with pleasure. He has an unlimited confidence in his work.

"But these are only sketches and beginnings," I said.

"Come back and see what we have done in Russia in ten years' time," he answered.

In him I realised that communism could after all, in spite of Marx, be enormously creative. After the tiresome class-war fanatics I had been encountering among the Communists, men of formulae as sterile as flints, after numerous experiences of the trained and empty conceit of the common Marxist devotee, this amazing little man, with his frank admission of the immensity and complication of the project of communism and his simple concentration upon its realisation, was very refreshing. He at least has a vision of a world changed over and planned and built afresh.

He wanted more of my Russian impressions. I told him that I thought that in many directions, and more particularly the Petersburg Commune, communism was pressing too hard and too fast, and destroying before it was ready to rebuild. They had broken down trading before they were ready to ration; the co-operative organisation had been smashed instead of being utilised, and so on. That brought us to our essential difference, the difference of the Evolutionary Collectivist and Marxist, the question whether the social revolution is, in its extremity, necessary, whether it is necessary to overthrow one economic system completely before the new one can begin. I believe that through a vast sustained educational campaign the existing capitalist system can be *civilised* into a collectivist world system; Lenin on the other hand tied himself years ago to the Marxist dogmas of the inevitable class war, the downfall of capitalist order as a prelude to reconstruction, the proletarian dictatorship, and so forth. He had to argue, therefore, that modern capitalism is incurably predatory, wasteful, and unteachable, and that until it is destroyed it will continue to exploit the human heritage stupidly and dimlessly, that it will fight against and prevent any administration of natural resources for the general good, and that, because essentially it is a scramble, it will inevitably make wars.

I had, I will confess, a very uphill argument. He suddenly produced Chiozza Money's new book, *The Triumph of Nationalisation*, which he had evidently been reading very carefully. "But you see directly you begin to have a good working collectivist organisation of any public interest, the capitalists smash it up again. They smashed your national shipyards; they won't let you work your coal economically." He tapped the book. "It is all here."

And against my argument that wars sprang from nationalist imperialism and not from a capitalist organisation of society he suddenly brought: "But what do you think of this new Republican Imperialism that comes to us from America?"

Here Mr. Rothstein* intervened in Russian with an objection that Lenin swept aside.

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* F. A. Rothstein—member of the Party (1901). Emigrated to England (1890). Actively contributed to the Russian and English press. After returning home (1920)—in diplomatic service.—*Ed.*

And regardless of Mr. Rothstein's plea for diplomatic reserve, Lenin proceeded to explain the projects with which one American at least was seeking to dazzle the imagination of Moscow. There was to be economic assistance for Russia and recognition of the Bolshevik Government. There was to be a defensive alliance against Japanese aggression in Siberia. There was to be an American naval station on the coast of Asia, and leases for long terms of sixty or fifty years of the natural resources of Kamchatka and possibly of other large regions of Russian Asia. Well, did I think that made for peace? Was it anything more than the beginning of a new world scramble? How would the British imperialists like this sort of thing?

Always, he insisted, capitalism competes and scrambles. It is the antithesis of collective action. It cannot develop into social unity or into world unity.

But some industrial power had to come in and help Russia, I said. She cannot reconstruct now without such help....

Our multifarious argumentation ended indecisively. We parted warmly....

A Truly Great Man

(Excerpt from *Experiment in Autobiography**)

I went to Russia as I have recounted in *Russia in the Shadows*, and I had a long talk with Lenin and a number of talks about him.

Now here was a fresh kind of brain for me to encounter and it was in such a key position as no one had dreamt of as possible for anyone before the war. He appeared to be the complete master of all that was left of the resources of Russia.

...He had a personal prestige based on his sound advice and lucid vision during the revolutionary crisis. He became then the man to whom everyone ran in fear or doubt. He had the strength of simplicity of purpose combined with subtlety of thought.

* *Experiment in Autobiography* was published in New York in 1934.—*Ed.*

...Like everybody else he belonged to his own time and his own phase. We met and talked each with his own preconceptions. We talked chiefly of the necessity of substituting large-scale cultivation for peasant cultivation—that was eight years before the first Five Year Plan—and of the electrification of Russia, which was then still only a dream in his mind. I was sceptical about that because I was ignorant of the available water power of Russia. "Come back and see us in ten years' time," he said to my doubts.

When I talked to Lenin I was much more interested in our subject than in ourselves. I forgot whether we were big or little or old or young. At that time I was chiefly impressed by the fact that he was physically a little man, and by his intense animation and simplicity of purpose. But now as I look over my fourteen-year-old book and revive my memories and size him up against the other personalities I have known in key positions, I begin to realise what an outstanding and important figure he is in history. I grudge subscribing to the "great man" conception of human affairs, but if we are going to talk at all of greatness among our species, then I must admit that Lenin at least was a very great man.

...Lenin was already ailing when I saw him, he had to take frequent holidays, early in 1922 the doctors stopped his daily work altogether and he became partly paralysed that summer and died early in 1924. His days of full influence, therefore, extended over less than five crowded years. Nevertheless in that time, he imposed upon the Russian affair a steadfastness of constructive effort against all difficulties, that has endured to this day. But for him and his invention of the organised Communist Party, the Russian revolution would certainly have staggered into a barbaric military autocracy and ultimate social collapse. But his Communist Party provided, crudely no doubt but sufficiently for the survival of the experiment, that disciplined personnel for an improvised but loyal Civil Service without which a revolution in a modern state is doomed to complete futility. His mind never rigid he turned from revolutionary activities to social reconstruction with an astonishing agility. In 1920, when I saw him, he was learning with the vigour of a youth about the possible

"electrification of Russia". The conception of the Five Year Plan—but as he saw it, a series of successive provincial plans—a Russian grid system, the achievements of Dniepropetrovsk, were all taking shape in his brain. He went on working, as a ferment, long after his working days had ended. He is still working perhaps as powerfully as ever.

During my last visit to Moscow, in July 1934, I visited his Mausoleum and saw the little man again. He seemed smaller than ever; his face very waxy and pale and his restless hands still. His beard was redder than I remembered it. His expression was very dignified and simple and a little pathetic, there was childishness and courage there, the supreme human qualities, and he sleeps—too soon for Russia.

Naked Truth*

by Clare Sheridan

At ten-thirty on Monday morning the train steamed into Moscow station. . . . We then drove at frantic speed amid frenetic hooting through half-deserted streets. . . . Then the Kremlin towered before us, with its square high gate towers . . . what a sight! . . . Our car slackened speed to show a permit to a sentry at a gate, who let us pass into the amazing precincts, where gold-domed buildings of all shapes and sizes confronted us on every side.

I knew little and understood less either of communism or of the conditions (except what I had read in novels) that had provoked it. The laws of property and the theories of capitalism were nothing to me. I had neither property nor capital, and in spite of my father being an economist I understood nothing about economics—(as H. G. Wells said to me once, "What a pity, Clare, that you are not educated")—but I was instinctively a revolutionary. . . . There was no logic in me, only a passionate resentment and an emotional uplift.

I wanted to remain in Russia to help in reconstruction. Russia satisfied my pacificism. If for no other reason I would have liked to educate my children there. I was convinced (and I am still convinced) that . . . new Russia . . . will never enter upon aggressive military warfare. The Red Army is for defence. Experience has proved the necessity of maintaining that defence, but every Red Russian soldier and every relative of that soldier knew, and knows, that they would never be sent to sustain a cause outside their country.

The horror and dread of war has filled my heart ever since Dick** was born. What if he should be taken one day, taken for cannon fodder or labelled a coward? What if worse than death befell him? Blindness, gas poisoning, defacement?. . . Whenever I heard the sound of marching soldiers I thought of Dick, and of Wilfred*** too, who had been so miserably duped, who had given his life in the vain belief that it was the last war—"the war to end war".

* Excerpts from the book *Naked Truth*, New York, 1928.—*Ed.*
** Clare Sheridan's son.—*Ed.*
*** Clare Sheridan's husband killed in World War I.—*Ed.*

. . . Such were my rather indefinite incoherent thoughts, varying in colour and design, changing kaleidoscopically, but changing only to re-form into a more emphatic pattern.

. . . The very day after H.G.'s departure the commandant of the Kremlin informed me... that I was to go and work in Lenin's room on the morrow from eleven until four o'clock. I did not sleep that night.

The next morning Borodin* accompanied me to the Kremlin. I was very nervous, more nervous than I ever remember in my life. He said to me on the way:

"Just remember you are going to do the best bit of work today that you have ever done."

We went in by a side door, guarded by a sentry. I knew that Lenin lived somewhere in that part of the building, and I had often wondered . . . which were the great man's windows, and which his door. There were so many!

On the third floor we went through several doors and passages . . . and finally through two rooms full of women secretaries. Mikhail Borodin handed me over to a hunchback girl who was Lenin's private secretary. Then he shook my hand firmly and said, "Work well!"

It was like being left at school! And I was so frightened, so nervous because it was the most important work I would ever have to do. The secretary pointed to a white baize door and told me to go through. It did not latch, it merely swung to.

Lenin was sitting before a gigantic desk littered with books and papers in a well-lighted room. He looked up when I came in, smiled and came across the room to greet me. He had a manner that put one instantly at ease. I apologised for having to bother him. He laughed, and explained in English that the last sculptor had occupied his room for weeks. . . .

Whilst three soldiers were struggling into the room with the stand and clay, he said that I could work as long as I liked, but on condition that I let him sit at his table and read. The room was peaceful, and Lenin settled down to his book. . . . Even as I walked round him in circles measuring him with calipers from ear to nose, I did not seem to

* M. M. Borodin (Gruzenberg)—Communist (1903). Lived in America (1907-18). Worker of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs of the R.S.F.S.R. (1918-22).—*Ed.*

arouse in him any consciousness of my presence. He was immediately and completely detached, concentrated and absorbed. I worked until a quarter to four, which is the longest I have ever done at a stretch. During that time he never ate or drank or smoked. Secretaries came in with letters; he opened them, signed the empty envelope . . . and handed it back. Only when the low buzz of the telephone accompanied by the lighting up of a small electric bulb signified a call, did his face become animated.

My efforts to start a conversation met with no encouragement, and knowing that my presence was a bore, I dared not persist, though I longed to. When I rested in the window-seat and looked at him, I kept saying to myself that it was true, I really was in Lenin's room at last, I was fulfilling my mission. . . . I said his name over and over to myself: "Lenin! Lenin!" as if it couldn't be true.

There he sat in front of me, a quiet calm little man with a stupendous brow. Lenin, the genius of the greatest revolution in history—if only he would talk to me! But he . . . hated the bourgeoisie, and I was a bourgeois, and he hated Winston Churchill, and I was Winston's cousin; he only admitted me to his room . . . and it was my business to get on with my job, and not waste his time: he had nothing to say to me. When I plucked up courage to ask for news from England he handed me some *Daily Heralds*!

At four o'clock I left, having worked six hours on end without food. I had missed lunch, and dinner was not until nine. Mikhail came to see me and we drank *chai*.* He asked me how I got on, and advised me to go to bed early so as to be strong for the morrow.

. . . The next day Lenin greeted me as before, quite amicably.

. . . More hours passed in silence.

Suddenly he looked up from his book and saw me as if for the first time. He looked at his bust and smiled as one smiles indulgently at a child who is making a house of cards; and then he asked: "What does your husband think about your coming to Russia?"

". . . My husband was killed in the war," I answered.

"In which war?"

* Tea.—*Tr.*

"In France."

"Ah, yes—of course," and he nodded wisely. "I was forgetting, you have had only one war. We have had besides the imperialist capitalist war, the Civil War, and the wars of self-defence."* He then talked for a little while about the "futile and heroic" spirit of self-sacrifice in which England entered the war of 1914, and he advised me to read *Le Feu*, and *Clarté*, of Barbusse. Then switching off from the war he asked whether I worked as a rule in London, and:

"How many hours a day?"

"An average of seven."

He seemed satisfied.

... Our conversation was interrupted by the arrival of President Kalinin,** and Lenin turned to talk to him, and for the first time sat facing the window. I was able to see him in a new light, and as the interview lasted some time it was a great help, for Lenin's face in repose was not what I wanted, but as he talked animatedly to Kalinin, he screwed up his eyes and puckered his eyebrows. His expression was a mixture of severity, thoughtfulness and humour. He looked at Kalinin in a piercing way as if he could read into his very brain, as if he knew all that Kalinin could tell him, and more besides.

Kalinin was a peasant; elected by the peasants. He had the kindly simple face of the man of the soil. He was loved by the peasants, and his office in the town was easily accessible. They came to him in crowds with their petitions or complaints, and he dealt with each indefatigably. Kalinin's respect and love for Lenin was apparent in his whole bearing. When they had finished talking Kalinin looked at the bust and said it was *khorosho*,*** and asked Lenin what he thought; and Lenin laughed and said he did not know anything about it, whether it was good or bad, but that I was a quick worker. When we were alone again, I plucked

* The war against the interventionists.—*Ed.*

** M. I. Kalinin (1875-1946)—professional revolutionary, outstanding leader of the Communist Party and the Soviet state. Active participant in the October Revolution. March 1919-46—Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the R.S.F.S.R., Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R., Chairman of the Presidium of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet.—*Ed.*

*** Russian for all right.—*Tr.*

up courage and asked him if he would mind sitting on the revolving stand. He consented and seemed amused, said he had never sat so high.

... As he seemed disposed at last to unbend a little, I showed him some photographs of my work. Although he had protested that he knew nothing about Art he expressed most emphatic opinions about "bourgeois art", which he said aimed always at beauty. He referred contemptuously to beauty as an abstract ideal. There was nothing, he said, that could justify the beauty of my Victory. Militarism and war were hateful and ugly; not even sacrifice or heroism could lend them beauty. "That is the fault of bourgeois art—it always beautifies."

Then he looked at the photograph of Dick's head and an expression of tenderness passed over his face. I asked: "Is that also too beautiful?"

He shook his head and smiled.

Then hurriedly he went back to his chair in front of the big writing-table as if he had wasted too much time. In another second I and my work existed no more.

Lenin's power of concentration was perhaps the most impressive thing about him, that and his ponderous and mighty brow.... His expression was always thoughtful rather than commanding. He seemed to me the real embodiment of le penseur (but not of Rodin's*).... He looked very ill. The woman assassin's bullet was still in his body.** One day his hand and his wrist were bandaged, he said it was "nothing", but he was the colour of ivory. He took no exercise, and the only fresh air reached him through a small revolving ventilator in an upper window pane. I believe he sometimes took a day off in the country; it was rumoured once or twice that "Lenin est à la chasse", but they must have been rare occasions, rare enough to create comment.

When the bust was finished as well as it could be under the unsatisfactory working conditions, he shook my hand warmly, said I had worked well, and that he thought his friends should be pleased. Then, at my request, he signed a photograph.

* F. A. R. Rodin's sculpture *The Thinker*.—*Ed.*

** Reference to F. Kaplan, Socialist-Revolutionary terrorist who made an attempt on Lenin's life on August 30, 1918.—*Ed.*

Russia on the Road to Progress

by Mirza Muhammed Yaftali

While an Afghan Embassy was being organised in Moscow in 1921, the fire of revolution was raging all over the Soviet Land and Moscow Region was almost completely surrounded by enemies.

On the one hand, Polish troops were approaching the city of Smolensk, and, on the other, Denikin, Wrangel, Makhno, Petlyura and the Cossack chief Semyonov were fighting the Red Army. The country was in difficult straits. But as a result of the staunchness and sagacity of Lenin, the great leader of the Soviet state, despite famine and cold, the lack of bare necessities and the general stress, the struggle ended successfully. The life of the country was normalised and Russia embarked on the road to progress.

Since I had a letter to Lenin from the Afghan Government I was received by him in the Kremlin in the spring of 1921. My meeting with Lenin has left a remarkable imprint on my memory. I well remember that at the time Lenin spoke of the necessity of improving the conditions of the peoples of the East. Lenin's statements bore witness to his ardent desire that the peoples of the East should free themselves from colonial oppression and should win their independence. Part of our conversation was concerned with the recently established relations between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union.

In a word, Lenin's thoughts about the peoples of the East were noble. Despite the many years that have elapsed since that time, my mind has retained the most vivid impressions from my meeting with that great man.

Remembrances of Lenin

by Thomas Bell

Early in 1921 I received instructions to go to Moscow as the first official representative of the C.P.G.B.*

For an English worker to get a passport to leave the country at that time was extremely difficult. Having got the passport, as I did after some delay, I came up against another serious obstacle, that of visas to travel through capitalist countries. Judging from the difficulties I encountered there seemed to be an understanding or agreement among the Consulates as to certain applications from people going to the land of the Soviets. As a result I found it necessary to make arrangements to travel without papers, bag or baggage, which I did, and arrived in Moscow in the month of March, 1921, after a journey which took several weeks.

The apparatus of the Comintern in those days was confined to a small house in the Denezhny, off the Arbat, with a modest staff. In the intervals between meetings the delegates' time was occupied in studying the events of the revolution, in international propaganda, and, of course, attending all manner of meetings of the Party and the Soviets.

It was at one of those Party meetings I first saw Lenin and heard him speak. The occasion was, I believe, a meeting of Party workers following the Tenth Party Congress held in the month of May, 1921, at which Lenin was expounding his views on the tax in kind.** I had been a little late in arriving, due to no fault of mine, and was immediately conducted to the door leading to the platform.

When I got inside, the platform, like the hall, was crowded almost to suffocation. People were craning their necks in the side wings and at the back of the platform to hear every word or catch a glimpse of the speaker. The

* T. Bell was the first representative of the Communist Party of Great Britain on the Executive Committee of the Communist International.—*Ed.*

** Tenth All-Russia Conference of the R.C.P.(B.) held from May 26 to May 28, 1921.—*Ed.*

speaker was Lenin. So interested and keen was everyone that comrades literally crowded round the rostrum, some leaning up against it.

It is always a difficult situation for a translator when meetings of such importance take place. The translator becomes so engrossed in the proceedings as to forget, at times, his charge. I am afraid this was the case on this occasion. The New Economic Policy had just been adopted, and the times were serious; in connection with which, deviations were discovered in the Party prior to the congress. Lenin had been triumphant at the Tenth Congress. Now the chief task was to get the whole Party to work, but before it could get down to work the opposition to this policy had to be overcome. Here was Lenin, dealing in Bolshevik fashion with the opposition, severely criticising them and explaining the politically mistaken character of the assertions of the opposition and the harm done by them, as to provoke repeated bursts of laughter at their expense.

On the eve of the Third Congress of the C.I.* a number of extended executive meetings of the E.C.C.I. were held in the hall directly opposite the Dom Soyuzov at the corner of Sverdlov Square. Serious discussions took place at those meetings on the Italian situation and the March uprising in Germany, as well as a number of problems connected with the Centrists who were knocking then at the doors of the C. I. Throughout these discussions I followed with intense interest how Lenin was able in his speeches to brilliantly combine an irreconcilable adherence to principle and firmness with a surprising flexibility and tact, and could reach out the hand of comradeship and correct the wavering elements (the Italians behind Serrati at that time) and at the same time restrain the impetuosity of those ultra-Lefts (Bordiga's followers) who tried to utilise the opportunist mistakes made by their Party to advance their own sectarian line.

Every student of Lenin's life and work knows how he loved to have conversations with simple workers and his habit of closely questioning them. This practice of ascertaining the feelings of the masses he invariably carried out

* Communist International.—*Ed.*

in the workers' circles he attended and led in Petersburg. After the proletariat seized power nothing delighted Lenin more than to have conversations, put questions and listen eagerly for every scrap of information from comrades coming from abroad concerning the living and working conditions of the toilers and their moods. This was one of the channels which linked Lenin's life and policy with the lives and struggles of the working masses, enabling him to better sense every mood and to formulate the correct Party tactics and slogans that finally brought victory.

Lenin knew England and the working-class movement there very well. In his study of imperialism* he gave a profound analysis of the role of the English bourgeoisie in the period of imperialist expansion and of parasitic, decaying and moribund capitalism. Again and again in articles and speeches he returns to the strategy and tactics of the English bourgeoisie in corrupting the upper strata of the workers' movement, the labour aristocracy, and through them exerting pressure on the wider mass of the proletariat.

Lenin's articles never were nor could be of a character which set problems formally and theoretically; he always directed the revolutionary workers to the political tasks of the current revolutionary struggle. He loved, when he was in London, to visit the workers' quarters, go to socialist meetings and study the English workers' movement.

This practice of conversations, of listening to what workers had to say, continued up to his untimely death.

In 1921, despite his responsible duties as Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, as leader of the Party and the revolution, whenever a workers' delegate arrived from a brother party abroad he insisted on having a personal conversation at the earliest opportunity.

An iron-moulder by occupation, of Scotland, I had been active in the workers' movement since 1900, as propagandist, instructing workers' circles, strike leader, trade-union and Party worker, and assisted to form the C.P.G.B. I had known and met most of the labour leaders and had come almost straight from the foundry floor. I mention these

* *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, pp. 185-304).—*Ed.*

details because in my conversation with Lenin I was free not only to speak of our Party, of the labour leaders, the various streams in the workers' movement, but also about the living conditions and moods of the workers, which made up the substance of our talk.

It was on or about the 3rd of August, 1921 that I had a real comradely talk with Lenin. Our conversation took place in his room in the far corner of the building formerly used as the High Courts of Moscow situated in the Kremlin. Up the narrow unpretentious stairs we entered a room occupied by a staff of stenographers and typists. After announcement of our arrival we were invited to Lenin's room. No fuss or bureaucratic formalities, and punctual to the minute. The furniture consisted of a heavy writing desk against the wall and two bookshelves, one immediately behind the chair used when working, so that he had only to turn and reach for any book desired. Rising to greet us with the hearty handshake, Lenin assisted in drawing a couple of chairs near the corner of his desk, inviting us to be comfortable, and we settled down to a real comradely talk. His first enquiry was as to our welfare. How we were in health, where did we live, had we a good room, did we have enough to eat, etc. To all of which enquiries we were able to give him satisfactory assurances.

He was very interested to know how I had travelled, legally or illegally, and chuckled with amusement at some incidents I had to relate about my journey. Formalities over, he begged to be excused for not having been able to give much attention to the English situation since his illness. Drawing his chair closer he rested his right elbow on his desk and with his right hand shading his right eye he proceeded to listen to me intently as if not to lose anything this new comrade might have to say.

Our conversation turned on the situation in England, particularly the labour leaders: who they were; their characteristics and the support they had amongst the workers; of the whiteguard Russians abroad and their counter-revolutionary role.

Notwithstanding his assertion that he had not been able to follow events closely in England, he astonished me by taking down from his bookshelf some of the recent publications from England which he certainly had been reading,

for example, Bertrand Russell's* *Practice and Theory of Bolshevism* and R.W. Postgate's *Revolution* and *Bolshevik Theory*.

He enquired about Postgate, who he was, if a Party comrade, etc. (Postgate was then in our Party and sub-editor of our Party organ, *The Communist*. Subsequently, in 1923, he left the C.P.G.B. to collaborate with his father-in-law, George Lansbury, in the new *Lansbury's Weekly*.)

With regard to Postgate's book, *Revolution*, Lenin classed this as a mere catalogue of documents, important in themselves, but how much better, he thought, it would have been if the author had given us the material events of the respective periods, treating each period from the standpoint of the class struggle and knitting all the documents together.

We talked about the Trade Unions and the Labour Party and their relative strength and influence in the working-class movement; about our Communist Party, who was who, and its influence among the workers. Lenin was extremely interested in the miners' movement, particularly in South Wales, and I promised to give him more information from time to time. On returning to my room I jotted down in detail everything that had transpired during our talk.

A few days later (on August 7th) I sent Lenin a letter in keeping with my promise. In this letter I informed him about the Annual Conference of the South Wales Miners' Federation and its decision to affiliate to the Third International. Moreover, I sent him some information I had received from comrades who had attended the First Profintern Congress held in July 1921.**

These notes gave interesting details of the communal kitchens in Fifeshire among the miners, the manner in which the funds were raised by the workers; the support

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* In July (before the 22nd) 1920, Bertrand Russell was in Moscow and talked to Lenin on the peculiarities of the political and economic development of England, the ways of communist construction in Soviet Russia, and the establishment of trade relations with capitalist countries. —*Ed.*

** The First International Congress of Revolutionary Trade and Industrial Unions (Profintern) in Moscow (July 3-19, 1921). See Lenin's message of greetings to this congress in V. I. Lenin's *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 501.—*Ed.*

given by the local co-operative movement, and the part played by the marines drafted into the colliery districts to quell strikes. I gave several particulars of how the workers fraternised with the sailors and expressed the hope that he would find them interesting. Lenin found such details sufficiently interesting as to write a reply almost by return. To this letter I sent another giving my views and some new information I had received. Almost immediately I left for England and our correspondence was interrupted. When I returned in 1922 he was already ill.

Here is the letter I received in full:—

"To Comrade Thomas Bell (Lux 154)

"Dear comrade,

"I thank you very much for your letter, of August 7. I have read nothing concerning the English movement last months because of my illness and overwork.

"It is extremely interesting what you communicate. Perhaps it is the *beginning* of the real proletarian mass movement in Great Britain *in the communist sense*. I am afraid we have till now in England few very feeble propagandist societies for communism (inclusive the British Communist Party) but no really *mass* communist movement.

"If the South Wales Miners' Federation has decided on July 24 to affiliate to the Third International by a majority of 120 to 63—perhaps it is the beginning of a new era. (How many miners there are in England? More than 500,000? How much in South Wales? 25,000? How many miners were *really* represented in Cardiff July 24, 1921?)

"If these miners are not too small minority, if they fraternise with soldiers and begin a *real* 'class war'—we must do all our possible to *develop* this movement and strengthen it.

"Economic measures (like communal kitchens) are good but they are not much important *now*, *before* the victory of the proletarian revolution in England. *Now* the *political* struggle is the most important.

"English capitalists are shrewd, clever, astute. They *will support* (directly or indirectly) communal kitchens *in order* to divert the attention *from political aims*.

"What is important is (if I am not mistaken):

"1) To create a very good, really proletarian, really mass *Communist Party* in this part of England, that is,

such party which will *really* be the *leading* force in *all* labour movement in this part of the country. (Apply the resolution on organisation and work of the Party adopted by the Third Congress to this part of your country.)

"2) To start a daily paper of the working class, for the working class in this part of the country.

"To start it not as a business (as usually newspapers are started in capitalist countries), not with big sum of money, not in ordinary and usual manner—but as an *economic and political* tool of the *masses* in their struggle.

"Either the miners of this district are capable to pay *halfpenny* daily (for the beginning *weekly*, if you like) for their *own* daily (or weekly) newspaper (be it very small, it is not important)—*or there is no beginning of really communist mass movement in this part of your country.*

"If the Communist Party of this district cannot collect few pounds in order to publish *small leaflets* daily as a beginning of the really *proletarian* communist newspaper —if it is so, if *every* miner will not pay a penny for it, then there is *not serious*, not genuine affiliation to the Third International.

"English Government will apply the shrewdest means in order to suppress every beginning of this kind. Therefore we must be (in the beginning) very prudent. The paper must be *not too revolutionary* in the beginning. If you will have three editors, at least one must be *non-communist*. (At least two genuine workers.) If nine-tenths of the workers do not buy this paper, if two-thirds $\left(\frac{120}{120+63}\right)$ do not pay special contributions (f. 1 penny *weekly*) for *their* paper—it will be no workers' newspaper.

"I should be very glad to have few lines from you concerning this theme and beg to apologise for my bad English.

"With communist greetings,

"*Lenin.*"*

As a matter of fact the C.P. was extremely weak then in South Wales. Amongst the miners there was a radical movement. Many trade-union workers at that time were follow-

* The letter dated August 13, 1921 was published on January 21, 1927 in the *Workers' Weekly* No. 205 (see V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, pp. 510-11).—*Ed.*

ing the Russian revolution with deep proletarian sympathy, but still not communist. Lenin understood this. That is why he proposed the elementary step, though exceptionally important as far as the whole work of the Party was concerned, of starting a small paper to be published and maintained by those who were for support to the Third International. That this was not done was due primarily to the fact that this vote was not the result of a sustained communist influence, to the feeble condition of the Party and its failure to grasp the political significance of such a measure. Indeed, it was not till nine years after, in 1930, that the Party was able to launch a national daily paper.

As for applying the organisational theses of the Third Congress of the C.I.,* it was not till the autumn of 1922 that a beginning was made to apply these theses. This work has still to be completed.

Lenin has left us a rich heritage in economic and political science, and in revolutionary literature, which the English workers, and especially the Communists, should with great advantage study.**

* Theses on "Organisational Construction of Communist Parties, the Methods and Contents of Their Work".—*Ed.*

** *Lenin on Britain*, London, Lawrence, 1934, 316 pp.—*Ed.*

Three Meetings with Lenin

by Umberto Terracini

1. In a Country House

I happened to see Lenin three times between July 1921 and January 1924. Until then I knew little about him and his activities. He was known more as a revolutionary than a Marxist theoretician. And for a very short time at that. Looking back and surveying my life today I can recall half a century of the Italian and international working-class movement, whereas at that time owing to my youth and long service in the army, I was quite ignorant of the events in the socialist movement outside of my country. I did not know about the congresses of the Second International, the history of different parties affiliated to it, the factional struggle or the different standpoints of the leaders, etc.

It was only in September 1915, when I was barely twenty years old, that I first heard about Lenin and his importance in the world socialist movement. To be exact, it happened when *Avanti!*, the organ of the Italian Socialist Party, published reports on the Zimmerwald Conference (August 1915—*Ed.*). As is well known, at that conference the Italian Socialist Party united with the so-called 'Centrists' against Lenin's proposals to wage a struggle for transforming the imperialist war into a civil war. But our censorship greatly distorted the reports, and the editorials which accompanied them sharply criticised Lenin's positions, extolling the slogan of "war on war". With this slogan the Italian Socialist Party had waged a struggle against entering the war.

As a soldier I paid for my beliefs by being convicted for defeatism. That hindered me from immediately gaining a good understanding of Marxist principles and the revolutionary significance of the stand taken by Lenin in Zimmerwald. But two years later they arose before me in all their clarity and sublimity, and I realised that the struggle waged by the Bolsheviks from March to November 1917 had transformed the bourgeois revolution into a socialist revolution, had turned the imperialist war into a civil war under the slogan of peace.

The Italian Socialist Party did not then vacillate in its just appraisal of the struggle which, the day after the overthrow of tsarism, brought face to face the different political parties, all clamouring for the support of the masses of Russian people. Supporting the Bolsheviks and their struggle for socialist power *Avanti!* acquainted its readers with the names and personalities of Bolshevik leaders who had theretofore been completely unknown in Italy, but thereby became more popular than anybody else.

At the same time the advanced working-class leaders began to search out and read the writings of the Bolsheviks, beginning with those produced at the very dawn of Russian Social-Democracy and ending with their current works which theoretically determined and explained the tactics of their interrelated decisions. These decisions, which had led to the October Revolution, ushered in a new era in human history.

But the majority of the Italian people, who were backward and undeveloped plebeians rather than a mature working class, received the Soviet Revolution and its dramatic development as something half-mythical, almost legendary, made of its chief inspirers heroes and saints and hung their pictures on the walls of their miserable hovels side by side with the traditional cheap popular prints. To their minds the inspirers of the revolution were wonder-workers who had managed by superhuman efforts to destroy the hydra of absolutism, to free the oppressed and tormented people and to open for them the way to a better future. And the savage hatred with which the Italian bourgeoisie and its main institutions—the court, the higher officials, the church and the academic culture—received the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks and, especially, Lenin only served to kindle a still greater feeling of boundless love for them in the hearts of the poor and unfortunate.

People wore on their necks small lockets with Lenin's picture and ascribed to it a miraculous power capable of warding off disease and other misfortunes.

It was in such a frame of mind and with such sentiments that the members of the delegation of the Italian Communist Party set off in June 1921 for the Third Congress of the Comintern in Moscow. The delegation did not include a single well-known leader of the international working-class movement. The main reason for it was that during the split of the Italian Socialist Party in Livorno* hardly a single leader of that party, i.e., not one prominent political leader of the trade-union and co-operative movement of the Italian proletariat, had gone over to the Communist Party.

In virtue of this the delegates were not so interested in the coming congress, which was enormously important because of the tactical directives for the world-wide proletarian struggle it had adopted, as they were filled with an almost passionately naïve desire to see as much as possible of the Soviet capital where they would meet the leaders of the revolution, people from Smolny and the Kremlin, where they would meet Lenin!

But would they really see Lenin and speak to him? During our long journey from Italy to Moscow—it lasted twelve days—we kept putting this question over and over again to the Soviet comrade who accompanied us. His pseudonym was Nikkolini and at that time he was living in Italy illegally as a representative of the Communist International. I never did manage to learn his real name, nor what subsequently became of him. He was particularly besieged with questions by a shoemaker from Naples who jealously guarded in his little trunk and refused to show to anybody two pairs of shoes of his own make—one man's and one lady's—which he intended to present to Lenin and Krupskaya, a barber from Caserta who had his own definite opinion of Lenin's beard and wanted to give him some advice on this score, and lastly, a farm-hand from Tuscany who, having learned from Nikkolini that Lenin presumably liked Chianti, had bought a bottle of this wine in an Italian shop in Berlin.

Upon our arrival in Moscow we were accommodated at

* Congress of the Italian Social-Democratic Party (January 15-21, 1921). The advocates of unconditional affiliation to the Comintern left the congress and founded the Italian Communist Party.—*Ed.*

Lenin at the Third Comintern Congress. Moscow, the Kremlin. June-July 1921

the Lux Hotel in Tverskaya Street, and Gennari* and I, together with a group of workers from Turin and two from Milan, at once plunged into the strenuous work of preparing for the congress, participating in commissions and meetings with other delegates.

One day our Neapolitan comrade suddenly burst into my room. Under his arm he had two pairs of shoes neatly wrapped up in black cloth. Excitedly he told me to get ready

* E. Gennari—prominent leader of the Italian working-class movement. One of the founders of the Italian Communist Party and permanent member of its Central Committee. Delegate to the Third Congress of the Comintern. Member of its Executive Committee. Continuously persecuted by fascists.—*Ed.*

because within an hour Nikkolini was going to take all the Italians to Lenin.

I confess I was surprised to learn that at that time of strenuous work and cares—the congress was about to open, the internal and international situation put enormous tasks before the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet Government—Lenin should find it possible to spare us even a second of his valuable time to satisfy the naïve, although touching, desire of my barely educated and politically inexperienced delegation comrades to see him.

But when I saw Lenin, when I saw how lightly he rose from behind his desk and came forward to greet us the moment we entered the spacious room on the second floor of a country house (it may have been in Gorki) where we had been rapidly driven in an automobile, when I saw how his face was illumined by the sincere joy of hearing his guests' stormy greetings, how happily excited he was when the barber, bursting into tears, rushed to clasp his hands in admiration, when I heard his chuckle at the sight of the shoemaker presenting him with the shoes—one pair with unbelievably high heels and the other, lustrine ballet shoes with the thinnest possible soles—and his meaningful "good" at the sight of the red Tuscany wine in the traditional straw-covered bottle, I understood that until that moment I had not known Lenin.

Yes, my acquaintance with Lenin, before I had actually seen him, had revealed to me the lofty mind of a penetrating student of the most complicated processes of man's social life, his matchless ability to develop, from given prerequisites, consistent prospects in comparison with the set aims, and his unbending will in achieving his aims and in finding the appropriate tactics. And what I understood and learned about his life told me of his devotion to the ideal of socialism for which he was ready to sacrifice himself at any time. But what would have become of these great abilities, if they had not been reinforced, had not been combined with and multiplied hundreds of times by his sense of human perception which, breaking through for a single instant from the very depths, seemed to push into the background for this instant the immediate reality, his immeasurable duties of a head of the state and leader of a great

Party, in order that he might avail himself of a minute of association with ordinary people?

My first meeting with Lenin was a meeting with his great heart.

Although he knew that in a few days we should meet in an open political struggle, he cordially shook my hand and mentioned the speech which I had made in Livorno and with which he was familiar.

2. At the Congress of the Comintern

The second meeting took place in the Kremlin, in the sumptuous throne-room of the former imperial palace. Under a white gold-embroidered canopy stood the large table of the Presidium of the Third Congress of the Communist International. Next to it was the rostrum for the speakers. Just opposite and somewhat to the left, in the first three rows sat the Italian delegates, while the Bolshevik delegation was in the last rows on the right, at the end of the hall. We were seated in a place of honour. The stormy events, in the thick of which the Italian Communist Party was being formed, were watched with unflagging attention by the whole of the world's communist movement.

Besides, the same congress was attended by a small delegation sent there by the Italian Socialist Party; this delegation had to oppose the expulsion of this party from the Communist International and the recognition of the Communist Party as the only Italian section of the Comintern. The anticipated heated discussions of this case elicited fraternal sympathies with us on the part of all the delegations. But there was also another factor which at that impressive meeting imparted an especial significance to our delegation, although it did not contain any known leaders of the international socialist movement. Our delegation together with the German, Austrian and Hungarian delegations had suggested a number of amendments to the theses on tactics proposed to the congress by the Bolshevik delegation and edited, as was well known, by Lenin himself.

On behalf of all those who had suggested the amendments I had to defend them from the rostrum of the congress. And it was curious that a novice dared to come forward with the weapon of Marxist dialectics against the one who masterfully wielded this weapon.

Lenin on the Rostrum

Any Communist who has made even the most cursory study of the history of the communist movement, knows that the theses of the Third Congress of the Comintern on tactics proved to be a decisive turning-point. Instead of abstract agitation and propaganda, in which most Communist Parties had theretofore engaged, they were aimed at a consistent struggle, politically rooted in the concrete situation prevailing in each country, for the purpose of winning the majority of the proletariat, the *sine qua non* of a victorious struggle for power. But we, in Italy, were still too much under the spell of the passionate arguments against Serrati's Centrism to be able immediately to grasp the decisive significance of this new formulation of the question. And, as Lenin later put it, when referring to the amendments, we had somewhat transcended the limits beyond which the struggle against Centrism became sport, the limits beyond which we began to compromise revolutionary Marxism.

Lenin mounted the rostrum. I remember it was July 1, 1921. I remember it because I have read his speech time and again.* He spoke French in order that we might immediately understand him and react to his speech. His pronunciation was clear, and we grasped every nuance of his formulations. But my name, which each time appeared in his speech as an exclamation, he pronounced in Italian without accenting the last syllable and with a soft "ch".

Vigorous Attack

While introducing the amendments, I spoke calmly, although I could not help being somewhat nervous since it was the first time I had spoken from the rostrum of an international congress, addressing people who enjoyed enormous authority as Marxists and had made outstanding contributions to the revolutionary struggle. And I confess that for

* See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, pp. 468-78.—*Ed.*

some brief moment I was overcome by ambitious thoughts, when Lenin uttered the first words of his answer to me with a simplicity, which to people who did not know him may have sounded like submission: "Comrades, I deeply regret that I must confine myself to self-defence."

But immediately after these words he delivered a sharp, attacking speech, which grew sharper with each passing minute. It turned everything upside down, shattering all our short-lived constructions of formulas and conceptions. Self-defence? Not at all! On the contrary, a vigorous attack because, "if the congress is not going to wage a vigorous offensive against such errors, against such 'Leftist' stupidities, the whole movement is doomed.... We Russians are already sick and tired of these Leftist phrases".*

I sat in the first row, right before the rostrum, among my delegation comrades most of whom did not know any French and understood little of Lenin's speech except the dozen or so times they heard him repeat my name. They may even have thought he was encouraging and praising me. But somewhat to the rear of me there sat three representatives of the Italian Socialist Party—Maffi, Lazzari and Riboldi—who understood French very well. Blissfully grinning they hopefully expected this crushing accusatory speech to end in a censure of the Italian Communist Party and an acceptance of their demands.

While speaking, Lenin, as usual, did not stand still, but continuously moved about, his eyes scanning the large audience. But each time his eyes momentarily came to rest on me he recognised me. And for a fleeting second it even occurred to me that it would have been better if I had not gone to Gorki a few days before. But this feeling lasted for but one moment; immediately after that I felt that his glance, instead of embittering and humiliating, had inspired me and imbued me with new courage. And it dawned on me that his eyes had sought me out to tell me that the severe censure which I had heard a few minutes before was uttered by him in the name of the highest duty that fell to his lot. That duty was to save me, to save all of us from an error that may have proved irremediable and fatal not only to us, but

* See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 468.—*Ed.*

also to the very greatest and loftiest cause of social liberation, to our common cause.

This duty is agonising, but it is noble. It is similar to the duty of the surgeon who, to cure the patient, must sometimes cut up his body. I managed to suppress the inner excitement that had gripped me and, paying no more attention to the fact that sharp words were being said with reference to our amendments, I concentrated on the brilliantly argued and absolutely clear lesson of Marxism in practice, the reason and material for which had been supplied by my speech. And I knew that this lesson was to stand me in good stead in my subsequent 40 years of struggle as a Communist.

At the end of the session I found myself face to face with Lenin. "Comrade Terracini," he said to me in French with a friendly and calm smile, "we must be shrewd and wise." And on the staircase, while moving away with the crowd, he repeated, raising his hand: "Shrewd and wise!"

3. On Red Square

The last time I saw Lenin was when I was saying goodby to him for ever on Red Square in January 1924.* There was as yet no Mausoleum of dark polished marble near the red Kremlin walls. Just at the entrance to the square on a low wooden platform stood a dark-red coffin. It was still open and slightly inclined forward. Inside lay Lenin, his head resting on a red pillow.

He seemed to look through his closed lids at the endless crowd of people. Only giant bonfires crackled in the enormous icy stillness. Many thousands of people who had come from town and country to sob out their grief and bow before the coffin kept warm near those fires.

A guard of honour changed at the four ends of the coffin every ten minutes. Old Bolsheviks, scientists, working men and working women, members of the Central Committee of the Party, trade-union leaders and peasants with beards covered with hoarfrost took their turns in the guard

* V. I. Lenin's funeral took place in Moscow at 4:00 p.m., January 27, 1924.—*Ed.*

of honour. At last it was also the turn of the members of the Presidium of the Communist International who were in Moscow. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon, when the shadows of winter twilight had begun to fall over the vast square, I climbed together with Clara Zetkin, Foster and Katayama the few snow-covered steps and stood stock-still at the coffin to the right of Lenin's face.

His great dialogue with the world, with history and with the future had come to an end. From then on it was up to all those who had loved him and whom he had taught and instructed, whose consciousness and intellect he had formed, the Communists of all countries, to continue his work, to dedicate themselves to his cause.

Walking together with Katayama, Zetkin and Foster towards the small steps leading down off the platform, I looked at his broad white forehead. "Yes," I said to myself, "you, too, are a Communist."

Lenin

by Paul Vaillant-Couturier

The unforgettable minutes I spent with Lenin were all too short. Ever since his demise I have been racking my brains to recall the smallest details of those precious moments. And when I open his books and bury myself in his teaching, his ideas and words, I immediately see Lenin standing before me, smiling calmly. . . .

It was in 1921, one year after the French Communist Party had joined the Comintern. We had travelled through the ruins of Europe to ally ourselves with the constructive proletariat of the Soviet Union.

Although Yamburg, Kronstadt and Petrograd still gaped with thousands of open wounds, we were amazed by our meetings with those legions of brave workers, the pioneers of a new life, the soldiers of destruction and regeneration, war and construction.

No sooner did we set foot on Soviet territory than we felt a physical liberation from the oppression of West-European capitalism. We felt reborn and at the same time ideologically weak and helpless. The Russian Communist Party. That is really a Party! And we French are still bothering with working-class renegades. Because of these traitors to the working class our Party had for a long time been unable to educate the masses and had wallowed in the mire of the petty bourgeoisie.

I am not denying that through hatred for the Rights some of us, including myself, said and did many foolish things.

I remember how I approached Lenin during the session of the French section.

"Are you a Left? Well, it could be worse."

He saw through me at once and with a gentle hand put me in my place. I had never met such a person before. After that he and I talked during our accidental meetings about many things: peasants, the French Revolution, the Paris Commune.

Lenin always was the embodiment of continuous action and at the same time a true Marxist. Contact with him produced the impression of a whirlwind hitting a stuffy

room and completely refreshed one's mind overloaded with prejudices and formal doctrines.

So far it has been impossible to draw a picture of Lenin; his features were so intensely expressive that one cannot put them down on paper. He was broad-faced, had high cheek-bones, a thin, clipped beard, a large nose and a continuous cunning smile playing on his lips and in his eyes; his hands were often thrust deep into his pockets. Add to this an unfailing good nature, straightforwardness, calm, iron logic, culture and encyclopaedic knowledge and you have a picture of this great man.

This giant of thought and will was untroubled by emotional dramas. An utter conviction of the righteousness of his cause precluded any vacillations, any deviations from the goal he had set himself.

Lenin the intellectual could think like a worker. Lenin the speaker spoke without empty phrases or jabber. The man who shook the world, the man whose mind continuously digested all that this world lived by and breathed, this man retained till the very end of his conscious life a wonderful ability to feel and think like a Chinese coolie and like a Negro porter. An oppressed Annamite or Hindoo was as understandable and as much of an open book to him as a Leningrad metalworker, a Paris textile worker or a Virginia miner. In short, for us Lenin was a prototype of the perfect man of the future.

At Comintern Congresses*

by William Z. Foster

It has been my good fortune to be present at several world congresses and enlarged executive meetings of the Comintern. . . .These congresses and plenums were made up of the best Marxians in the world, militant revolutionary fighters who, for the past generation, have been in the heart of every great strike movement and revolutionary struggle from London to Shanghai and from Toronto to Buenos Aires. These international meetings constituted the most interesting and instructive experiences of my political life.

The first time I saw Lenin was at the Third World Congress of the Communist International, in Moscow, during 1921. As I caught sight of him, he was standing modestly near an entrance to the speakers' platform ... listening closely to a delegate's speech. It was one of the most inspiring moments of my life. There, indeed, was the great leader of the world's oppressed millions, the man who was averitable nightmare to exploiters in every corner of the earth. ... My interest in Lenin was all the more acute because at that time he was exercising a most profound effect upon my ideology and my life's work... I was, during the period of the Third Congress, engaged in reading deeply of his writings.

Over many years, I had read far and wide among socialist, anarchist and syndicalist writers, and had also much practical experience in their respective mass movements, but Lenin's masterly theoretical presentation was startlingly new and overwhelmingly convincing. I could not but agree with his brilliant analysis of imperialist capitalism, his devastating criticisms of revisionist socialism, syndicalism and anarchism, his conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and accept the general program of communism—backed up as they were by the living reality of the Russian revolution.... After more than twenty years of in-

* Excerpt from the book *Pages from a Worker's Life*, New York, 1939.—*Ed.*

tellectual groping about, I was at last, thanks to Lenin, getting my feet on firm revolutionary ground.

Lenin spoke at the congress ... I did not consider him an orator in the usual sense. Nevertheless he held the congress in breathless interest for the whole period of his speech. He was such a deep thinker and plain speaker that every time he wrote or spoke he bared the very heart of the question in hand.

1939

"Well, Comrade Heckert, Tell Us About Your Heroic Exploits in Central Germany!"

by Fritz Heckert

In 1908-12 I lived in Switzerland where I made a detailed study of Lenin's teaching and read widely about his struggle. One day during a funeral procession I met a young Russian, who had just come to Zurich after his escape from Siberian exile. I soon learned that this young comrade had neither money nor documents and I decided to offer him shelter. He lived together with us for several years until he left for Paris. This young Russian lad from Proskurov, named Alexei Furman (alias Naum Shats), was a convinced Bolshevik. Soon he began to busy himself with social work among the Zurich Russian émigrés and in 1908-09 actively participated in the widespread disputes against the "God-seekers" and others. Every time he came home he explained to me how very wrong he considered Bogdanov, Lunacharsky, Plekhanov and others and how right Lenin was.

One day Shats and I were in a small Russian library on University Street in Zurich where Shats acted as librarian. Suddenly he pointed to two passers-by on the other side of the street. In great excitement he said: "That short one there is our leader; it is Lenin." The two passers-by were followed by two other men. "And those two there," added Shats, "are our enemies—Martov and Martynov."

Thus I made Lenin's acquaintance at least from a distance, while from Shats I also learned that every honest worker must side with Lenin and that the Mensheviks were opportunists.

In the autumn of 1920 the German Independent Social-Democratic Party split. The Left wing, which was backed by the broad masses of workers, joined the Communist Party with the result that it became a mass party. That obliged us to act correspondingly. Moreover, many of the Lefts in the Independent Social-Democratic Party still believed that it was unnecessary for a real revolution to win over the majority of the proletariat and that it was enough to have an ut-

terly determined minority. No wonder, then, that in the German United Communist Party the opinion also prevailed that it was high time we retaliated to the bourgeoisie for our past defeats.

Our bourgeois foes took advantage of these moods and provoked a direct conflict in Central Germany, in Leine and Mansfeld. It ended, as is well known, in our utter defeat with the immediate result that a large number of members who had just joined the Party broke away from it.

We did not learn any lesson from that failure, did not appreciate its consequences. On the contrary, at first we thought that the defeat was only of secondary importance and that in the end it would even serve to consolidate the Party. This view was substantiated in a book of articles entitled *The Theory of Offensive*. It maintained that, since our Party was a truly mass Party of the German proletariat, "we had to seek encounters with the enemies everywhere and strike at them".

Inasmuch as I was in hiding again and was being sought by the police the Party sent me as its representative to Moscow. Upon my arrival there I immediately tried to arrange for a meeting with Lenin. I hoped Lenin would approve of the "theory of offensive". With unshakable faith in our Party and its essentially sound tactics, and, especially, the "theory of offensive", I expected to produce a good impression on Lenin.

*

Although I tried to see Lenin as soon as I arrived in Moscow, I had to wait eight days before he could receive me.* At last I was summoned and, still in very high spirits, went to the Kremlin. I climbed to the second floor, where Lenin lived, entered his flat and at once found myself before him. He was sitting in a wicker chair in his study. He addressed me in German, asking me to take a seat. Then with a shade of mild irony in his voice he said:

"Well, Comrade Heckert, tell us about your heroic exploits in Central Germany!"

He did not have to coax me, for I immediately unburdened my heart. In reply Lenin said:

* F. Heckert was received by V. I. Lenin not later than July 18, 1921.—*Ed.*

"But I hear you were defeated."

I tried to prove that we had not been and that after the Central German events our Party continued to grow and gather strength.

"Is that so?" said Lenin. "I wonder how you are going to prove it. You fell for a provocation, were given a sound thrashing and the Party will have to pay plenty for it. . . ."

In our conversation Lenin expressed the thoughts which he later set forth at the Third Congress (of the Comintern—*Ed.*). In Russia the Bolsheviks had won and had retained power because they had not only won over the majority of the working class, but had also been able to win over the army and the overwhelming majority of the peasantry. In order to win, you must have the masses behind you. A revolution must be thoroughly planned in advance, otherwise victory is impossible. In Germany they had merely talked about offensive, but in fact had never seriously prepared for it.

I left Lenin's office absolutely crushed. Now I knew that, if our German delegation produced any impression at all with its "theory of offensive", it would only be a bad one.

Soon other delegates to the Third Congress of the Comintern arrived from Germany. We all went to see Lenin together. He received us in the same study. We set forth our arguments again, although without our former confidence. Some authors of the "theory of offensive" already doubted a number of its clauses. Lenin gave us another dressing down, this time in a much sharper tone. He asked:

"What did you imagine the workers would think if you led them into battle and they got the kind of thrashing they did in Mansfeld?"

After Lenin had proved to us the erroneousness and danger of our position we left his study, completely dejected.

Later, at one of the meetings in the Kremlin, Lenin once more explained to the whole German delegation, which included comrades who did not approve of our actions in Central Germany, the absurdity of what we had done. He pointed out that we had even been joined by such elements as the secret service agent Ferry who had tried to blow up the Obelisk of Victory. Lenin added:

"The provocation was as clear as day. And instead of

mobilising the working masses for defence, for resisting the attacks of the bourgeoisie, and thus showing them that you were right, you invented a meaningless 'theory of offensive' which enables any police ruffians and any reactionary officials to picture you as trouble-makers, from whom they must presumably protect the people!"

As a result of this talk we immediately stopped our propaganda of the "theory of offensive".

At the sessions held in connection with the preparations for the congress in one of the halls of the Continental Hotel on Theatre Square Lenin once again pointed out all our weaknesses and errors. We were extremely annoyed because it was done in the presence of representatives of the Communist Parties of other countries. "Even if we must be criticised, why do it in the presence of so many foreign comrades?" we reasoned. Paul Frölich even said:

"I did not think Lenin was so petty-minded."

He was clearly disappointed and dissatisfied with this method of Bolshevik criticism.

During the congress there was an incident that vividly characterised Lenin as a person. Clara Zetkin bitterly attacked us. That was why we, especially I in my speech, retaliated in kind. But it happened that the day following these attacks Clara was celebrating her 64th birthday. Of course, at the congress it was necessary to hail the old revolutionary who was in the vanguard of our struggle. A large bouquet of roses was brought for her. But then the question arose as to who was to present the flowers to her. I was chosen. Of course, I tried to shun that assignment and used dozens of excuses, but Lenin took me firmly by the arm and said:

"Comrade Heckert, you pursued a wrong policy in Germany, for which you have good reason to be angry. Clara merely told you the truth about your policy; maybe not all her words were appropriate, but yesterday you, too, attacked her bitterly and unjustly. Make up for it with a bouquet of roses today."

I tried my best to do it. Clara accepted my bouquet with gratitude. When I left the rostrum Lenin said to me jokingly:

"Here you are, everything has turned out fine."

*

A small exhibition of the works of so-called "revolutionary" artists was organised at the Continental Hotel. A collection of old rags, fragments of earthenware, lengths of chimneys, etc., were fastened to canvas, paint smears were added, and the resulting mess was supposed to represent the new school of painting. I was simply flabbergasted. When I argued with one of the comrades who tried to make some sense out of those "paintings" (as far as I can remember it was an artist named Uitz) Lenin shook his head and said behind me:

"See, Comrade Heckert, such things happen here, too."

I was glad Lenin did not regard those "paintings" as cultural progress.

*

At the end of October 1921 my friends asked me to go with them to the Hall of Columns in the House of Trade Unions where Lenin was to make a report. The hall was crammed. Everybody was impatiently awaiting the speaker.

Lenin spoke on the necessity for a New Economic Policy and on the ensuing tasks.* To us Western Communists this problem was not very clear. Some comrades present in the hall considered the New Economic Policy alien to the revolution. Lenin said that it was high time Communists had learned to trade and that it was no longer possible to make progress by the methods of War Communism. He also said that, although the Bolsheviks were as yet incapable of trading, they would undoubtedly learn.

Some of those present in the hall took offence. It appeared they did not care to "suffer the indignity" of playing the role of "shopkeepers". One Russian comrade, whom I had met when he had been engaged in the work of releasing Russian prisoners of war in Germany, was a violent foe to the New Economic Policy. He had made a special journey to this meeting from Sverdlovsk where he was director of a munitions plant. This comrade could not possibly tolerate Lenin's demand that the Bolsheviks should learn to trade and immediately asked for the floor in order to attack

* V. I. Lenin's report and concluding remarks on the New Economic Policy to the Seventh Moscow Gubernia Conference of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (October 29, 1921).—*Ed.*

Lenin's "opportunism" in a purely partisan manner. One more such "hero" spoke against Lenin. But how powerfully and mercilessly Lenin smashed all their arguments!

Several days after that meeting Comrade Wilhelm Pieck and I had another chance to speak to Lenin on German party problems.

*

I saw Lenin for the last time, after the first attack of his illness, at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern.* That was when I began to realise how greatly not only the Bolsheviks, but also all the foreign comrades loved the founder of the Communist International.

When Lenin was unable to come to the sessions of the congress we often went to his flat and sang *Bandiera Rossa*** in the evenings after the sessions. The Italians always joined us in singing this revolutionary song and their sonorous voices usually drowned the rest of the voices. And when we saw Lenin's silhouette at the window we were very happy. At that time we were not at all aware of the fact that the noise we were making disturbed Lenin who was seriously ill.

Like everyone else, I also hoped, of course, that Lenin would soon completely recover and would again be able to take the leadership of the world Party (Comintern) into his own hands. I had long since ceased to doubt that he was the most outstanding revolutionary leader I had ever known.

I was thunderstruck by the news of Lenin's death. For a long time I simply could not believe that Lenin was really gone. Our enemies had frequently written: "Lenin is dead." Maybe this was another false alarm? But, alas, the sad news was not denied!

When, for the first time since Lenin's death, I saw a May Day demonstration before his Mausoleum on Red Square again. I felt with all my heart and soul that Lenin had not died, that he was alive and would continue to live in our hearts, in our struggle for the victory of communism throughout the world. He is living in the grand socialist construction in the Soviet Union and in the revolutionary struggle of Communists the world over.

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* November 5-December 5, 1922.—*Ed.*

** Italian revolutionary anthem.—*Ed.*

Lenin and the British Labour Movement

by Harry Pollitt

There can be no possible doubt as to the important part played in all the many-sided aspects of political life in Britain by the writings of Lenin.

This is especially so with the Labour movement, for those who have always opposed Lenin's teachings have never dared to pretend that they could neglect or ignore them. But it is a great tragedy of the British political scene that it was only towards the end of 1918 that many of the most important works of Lenin were made available. For example, it was only in that year that I first had the opportunity to study some of the writings of Lenin, although I have been active in the Labour movement since 1906.

Lenin had made himself immensely familiar with the situation in Britain from the day he arrived in London in 1902. We know also that after his period of exile was over he came to London on many other occasions. All the time he made it his business to get as closely acquainted as possible with what was going on among the working class and the various sections of the British Labour movement. He was not content with carrying out intensive studies and preparing materials for his great works in the British Museum: he was ceaseless in attending workers' meetings, listening to conversations in streets, clubs, pubs, in reading-rooms, churches, at Hyde Park Corner, and everywhere that workers could be found. It is said that as Lenin took his walks among the mean streets and slums of London, he could often be heard muttering "Two nations"—no doubt because of the contrast with the other London he had seen in the West End.

As he listened and talked to the workers, Lenin remarked that they "just oozed socialism", and this was one of the many things that helped him to gain a full understanding of so many façades of Britain and its Labour movement in particular, although, of course. Lenin never was one to idealise the working class, while at the same time he had a

tremendous faith in their capacity for leadership and action. But he never failed to detect and expose the opportunism of many of its alleged leaders.

It is apposite here to remind younger readers of how Lenin became such a serious student in the British Museum. He was introduced to the Museum by the late Isaac Mitchell, at that time the General Secretary of the General Federation of Trade Unions. To this day the archives of the reading-room of the British Museum retain the original letter of introduction which Isaac Mitchell gave to the Museum authorities. It reads as follows:

"I have pleasure in recommending Mr. Jacob Ritcher, L.L.D., St. Petersburg for admission to the reading-room. My friend's purpose in desiring admission is to study the land question. I trust you will be able to comply with this request."

(Signed) I. H. MITCHELL
Dated April 20th 1902

This request was granted and Mr. Jacob Ritcher received permission which enabled him to use the reading-room of the Museum for six months, and we are told that his principal reading matter was Political Economy, Sociology and Philosophy of History.

There is still standing in London the Public House called "The Crown & Woolpack" where the Russian émigré Socialists used to meet, and some of whose meetings Lenin attended. It is related that the police took a sudden interest in these meetings, and how a police detective hid himself in a large cupboard in the meeting room to listen and to take down notes. His report is very illuminating and not a little amusing, for he wrote to his superiors:

"The meeting was conducted all in Russian, and I know nothing of this language, so am unable to report the subjects they discussed." I think it was in 1918 that there was first published a work by Lenin entitled "Lessons of the Revolution",* and on the cover it was explained that this was

"Translated from the Russian original, with introduction

* V. I. Lenin's article "Lessons of the Revolution" was first printed in Russia (September 12 and 13, 1917) in the newspaper *Rabochy* (*Worker*).—*Ed.*

and appendix, and published by the Bureau of the International Revolutionary Propaganda attached to the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the Provisional Workmen's and Peasants' Government of the Russian Republic."

The date was given as January 1918, and the author "Vladimir Oulianov". This was the name under which Lenin wrote this work.

It was eagerly seized upon by the revolutionary workers in Britain, for it was available at a most opportune moment. There was a great war-weariness throughout the country. There were great stirrings in the factories. The Shop Stewards Movement was being eagerly discussed and spreading throughout the country. There was serious disillusionment at the policies of the dominant Right-wing leaders of the movement, and in all this work, which came at the best moment, was food for serious study and discussion.

From this time more of Lenin's writings began to appear in *The Call*, the organ of the British Socialist Party, *The Socialist*, the organ of the Socialist Labour Party and *The Workers' Dreadnought*, the organ of the Workers' Socialist Federation.

All too slowly other of Lenin's works began to appear, causing terrific discussions among both the revolutionary and reformist workers, for there could be no doubt about their political significance, and especially the new light which Lenin was shedding on various aspects of the writings of Karl Marx, and the exposure of Right-wing opportunism and the treacherous role of the leaders of Social-Democracy.

They also created in the minds of the revolutionary workers a new urge towards creating a united Communist Party, one that could bring together all the scattered revolutionary parties and groups associated with the working-class movement. I think that this was one of the greatest services which Lenin in the conditions of the time could have rendered to the British working-class movement. Certainly his efforts bore fruit with the birth of the Communist Party in 1920, a Party which with all its weaknesses and mistakes, has a splendid and selfless record of service to the working-class movement in Britain.

Lenin's polemics against sectarianism, anti-trade unionism, anti-parliamentarianism, and opportunism, all made themselves felt throughout the Labour movement. There

was not only an instinctive feeling that with the Great October Revolution an entirely new change had taken place in the international arena, but that it also had the most profound lessons for the workers of all other countries, and that a new workers' leader, teacher and guide had now taken his rightful place, not only in Soviet Russia, but in the international working-class movement.

When such works as *State and Revolution*, *"Left-Wing" Communism—an Infantile Disorder*, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, *The Collapse of the Second International*, *Bourgeois Democracy and Proletarian Dictatorship* began to be published, then indeed the workers knew that something new had taken place; that new searchlights were being cast on previously neglected political topics, new evaluations were being made, criticism and self-criticism were being given a new meaning. And later on all this was intensified with the first publication of Lenin's *Collected Works*.

Lenin's merciless exposures of the pernicious and treacherous reformist and opportunist doctrines of MacDonald in particular did much to open the eyes of many thoughtful British workers to the dangerous role this charlatan played in the British Labour movement and the Second International. It was an exposure fully confirmed by MacDonald's subsequent leadership, especially in the 1920s and 1930s.

Naturally one remembers certain outstanding things associated with Lenin and Britain, and one of these was his constant insistence on the need for a working-class daily newspaper that would be completely independent of capitalist or Right-wing Social-Democratic influence. His letter to the late Tom Bell on this question is sufficiently well known in all international circles to make unnecessary any further comment here, save to say that it had an enormous influence on the revolutionary workers in general and the young Communist Party in particular, even though it was impossible to realise this great project until 1930. I am very sure that it was Lenin's own experience with *Iskra & Pravda* which made him so keen on the British workers having a daily newspaper of their own.

Speaking of Lenin's interest in everything connected with Britain, I still recall with keen memory my first meeting with Lenin. I had gone to Moscow in June 1921 with Tom

Mann.* We were delegates to the First Congress of the Red International of Labour Unions, but we arrived in time to take part in the Third Congress of the Communist International in Moscow. The day that Lenin was to introduce his speech on the New Economic Policy,** Tom Mann and I were walking in the lobby of the great hall in the Kremlin, when Lenin came up. He knew intimately all about Tom Mann's work in Britain, and gave him a very warm, fraternal welcome, and then before you could get your breath, he was plying Tom with questions about this, that and the other in connection with Britain and its Labour movement. It revealed that despite the many preoccupations which Lenin had in Soviet Russia at that time his interest in Britain was as keen as ever and especially about what was going on in the Labour movement.

It was a proud day for us in Britain when the publishing firm of Martin Lawrence issued in 1934 a volume *Lenin on Britain*. At that time we did not have the same facilities for collecting materials that exist at the present time, but this volume created a very wide interest. With the resources then available this book published everything it could on what Lenin had written or said about the situation in Britain and the policies of its capitalist and Labour leaders.

The book was compiled under various headings of the questions that Lenin had been dealing with—Industrial Capitalism in England; Pre-War British Imperialism; The Working Class of Imperialist England; British Imperialism and the War of 1914-18; The Post-War Crisis of British Imperialism. The reader will see the vast scope of the ground covered by Lenin under these headings....

In 1941 Lawrence & Wishart published a new edition of *Lenin on Britain*, and again it received a warm welcome on the part of the new generation which had grown up. Now I am very pleased to say that in December 1959 a

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* T. Mann—one of the organisers and secretary of the British Independent Labour Party. One of the founders of the British Communist Party and leaders of the *Hands off Soviet Russia* movement. Delegate to the Third Congress of the Comintern from the British Bureau of the Red International Council of Trade Unions.—*Ed.*

** At the Second All-Russia Congress of Political Education Departments (V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, pp. 60-79).—*Ed.*

completely new edition of *Lenin on Britain* has been issued, containing many articles which were not available at the time of previous publications. What is also very important is that this new volume contains compendious Notes of explanation and clarification and a splendid index. It is only fitting that this new volume should be published when in the Soviet Union they are preparing to celebrate on a great scale the 90th anniversary of Lenin's birth.

I am certain that this new edition of *Lenin on Britain* is going to play an important part among the younger generations which have grown up in the last few years. There is a searching around for new policies, a desire to know "how it happened", "what is the way forward", a desire to comprehend fully the meaning and role of Social-Democracy, and this compilation of Lenin's writings on Britain will help all who read, study and learn.

Lenin's message shines out like a beacon of hope and faith in the working class to all who are really anxious to serve the cause of the workers, and in these days of "socialism being made possible by the consent of the capitalists" never let us forget what Lenin wrote in May 1917 in an article called "They Have Forgotten the Main Thing":

"The trouble is that once we forget the harsh and rigid conditions of capitalist domination, then all such platforms, all such lists of sweeping reforms are empty words, which in practice turn out to be either harmless 'pious wishes', or simple hoodwinking of the masses by ordinary bourgeois politicians."*

Everything that Lenin had to say about the situation in Britain is a storehouse and armoury of revolutionary analyses, knowledge, and a practical guide to action, and the more this is realised, the stronger the revolutionary movement will grow.

The British Communist Party has consistently tried to carry out Lenin's teachings because it recognises they are the rock upon which a genuine and lasting revolutionary movement can alone be built.

Today the whole world can see the mighty Soviet Union standing as the indestructible bastion of socialism and peace. Since Lenin's day it has been joined by many other socialist countries, but it is to the everlasting credit and glory of the Soviet Union that it successfully blazed the trail, and that it did so because it was ever loyal to the teachings of Lenin. The British workers can be proud that it was one of the world's greatest workers' leaders—Lenin—who paid so much attention to their problems, who so clearly analysed their problems, and who pointed the way forward.

The Communist Party in Britain will remain faithful to Lenin's teachings, and by continually working to strengthen the Party will prove worthy of the great heritage of knowledge, learning and example that Lenin gave to the British Labour movement.

1959

* V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 351.—*Ed.*

Lenin

by Tsui Tsu-Bo

The red light emanating from the Andreyevsky Hall is illumining the whole Earth; the speeches of the representatives of the working people of different countries are shaking the world—it is the Third Congress of the Communist International. Today the Kremlin has become a true symbol of an amazing combination of different cultures.

Lenin addressed the congress several times. He spoke French and German very fluently, calmly considering and weighing each word. In Lenin's demeanour on the rostrum there is nothing of a university professor. And the unassuming simplicity of his conduct shows a straightforward and steadfast political leader. One day I met Lenin in a corridor and we talked for several minutes. He told me about certain materials on problems of the East and then, busy with state affairs, he apologised and left.

Every time Lenin speaks in the Andreyevsky Hall it is impossible to get near the rostrum because the hall is crammed. When the lights in the hall are turned on, a huge shadow of Lenin is thrown on the posters and slogans: "Communist International", "Workers of All Countries, Unite!", "Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic". This powerful silhouette on the red cloth stirs our minds and hearts to even greater endeavours. The last words of Lenin's speech are always drowned in a storm of applause.

July 6, 1921

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Elektrosila (Electric Power) Works No. 3, former Dynamo Workshops.

Anniversary of the Great October Revolution. Many people have gathered at the works for this solemn meeting. The workers of this enterprise have seen and experienced a good deal in their lives—their meetings broken up by brutalised Cossacks, strikes of hurricane violence, and stubborn, life-and-death battles with their enemies. And today, on the anniversary of the October Revolution, they are being feted by so many people. Group after group of factory and office workers and their families make their way to the works.

Everybody rises to honour the memory of those who fell in battles for the revolution. As soon as the sounds of the dead march die down speakers, one after another, mount the rostrum and warmly congratulate those present.

Everybody is in unusually high spirits. Suddenly Lenin mounts the rostrum. There is a general rush forward. For several minutes it looks as though everybody is paralysed with astonishment. However, the silence lasts but a short time and the air is rent with cries of "hurrah" and applause, the ovation shaking heaven and earth.

All eyes are riveted on Lenin. Everyone is straining not to miss a single word. By very simple and most understandable examples Lenin convincingly shows that Soviet power is the workers' own power, that the workers are growing more conscious of this truth and the truth is becoming increasingly more understandable to them with each passing day.

"The man with a gun—who was the terror of the working people in the past," said Comrade Lenin, "is no longer a terror for he is now a representative of the Red Army, and is their protector."*

Lenin's last words are drowned in a stormy ovation. It seems the walls may give way under the storm of applause, the cries of "hurrah" and the solemn sounds of the *Internationale*; it is a great and mighty power that is awakening to life and growing.

The meeting has come to an end and most of those present go to the dining-room for a festive supper.

The celebration of the anniversary of Red October was really festal.

November 8, 1921

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* V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 120.—*Ed.*

Talk with Lenin in 1921

by Manuel Diaz Ramirez

In addition to the discussions held at the Third Congress of the Comintern, there were also arguments between delegates and delegations after the sessions. These arguments often lasted till the break of day.

It was in the course of such arguments that it occurred to some delegations to exchange opinions on a problem that was at the time a matter of great concern to certain workers' and trade-union circles in various European countries. The problem had to do with a number of anarchists from the gangs of Makhno* or his assistant and ideological adviser Volin who had been caught, arms in hand, in the Ukraine and kept under arrest in Moscow. All over the world anarchists and enemies of the October Revolution had made them their banner.

In Mexico we waged a very active struggle against anarchists and anarchistic elements who tried to interfere with our work of giving the workers a Marxist education and of developing our movement among them. Here workers' trade unions were established by "Homes of the Workers of the World" where anarchist or anarcho-syndicalist ideas dominated. Disturbed by this problem and wishing to settle it we held a number of meetings with the result that we decided to ask Lenin to intervene on behalf of the arrested anarchists in order to clear up this case, hand the culprits over to justice, punish those guilty of the uprising and set free those who were innocent. This, in our opinion, had to be done in order that the case of the Russian anarchists should not be utilised by the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists of other countries, as well as by various bourgeois circles hostile to the Russian revolution, as a banner against the Communist Parties and the revolutionary movement in general.

Delegations from seven countries asked Lenin to meet with them at any time and place he might find it convenient.

* N. Makhno—head of counter-revolutionary anarchist kulak bands in the Ukraine fighting against Soviet power in 1918-21.—*Ed.*

We did not have long to wait for the answer. Lenin invited us for 2:00 a.m., timing our reception for the end of a session of the Comintern Congress.

At the appointed time we came to the assigned place. It was one of the Kremlin dining-rooms with which we were familiar since we sometimes took our meals there. Lenin arrived exactly at 2:00 a.m. After an exchange of greetings he apologised for the late hour of the meeting, but he was very busy and we, too, had plenty to do.

Lenin was at once ready to hear the opinion of the delegations which had come to the meeting and remarked that our delegation was the only Latin-American delegation, while the others were from the Romanic countries of Europe.

The seven delegations numbered a total of some 30 people. When it was announced that one of the members of the French delegation, a trade-union worker, would speak on behalf of all the delegations, Lenin smiled, glanced at all of us and apparently thought that the Latin temperament had played a more important role in raising this question than political considerations. But even if Lenin had thought so, he undoubtedly realised that that was not the case after some of the delegates had spoken. Our arguments were, in certain measure, based on the situation prevailing in many countries.

After hearing out the main speaker and at least one speaker from each delegation very attentively Lenin answered: "I am greatly pleased with what I have just heard. Many of the things that were said sound just to me. We are being asked to settle a question whose consequences might harm the revolutionary movement in your countries by virtue of the wrong approach to it by the anarchists and, naturally, the bourgeoisie and elements hired by the bourgeoisie for the struggle against us.

"Well, then, comrades, although this is not my personal opinion and at the same time is neither a complete nor a partial solution of this problem, here is what I can say to you: we want you to help us solve it.

"The cases of the arrested anarchists, both the 'theoreticians', like Volin (I am told he is the 'theoretical' adviser of Makhno, the head of the terrorist gangs who derailed trains, devastated Ukrainian villages, robbed the people and

raped women), and those who were caught with arms in hand, will be reinvestigated as you desire. All those who constitute no danger to the revolution and its system will be set free."

But that did not bring our talk to an end. Lenin, as well as each of the delegations, wanted to take advantage of the favourable moment: Lenin—to become more closely acquainted with some of the problems of our countries, we—to get his authoritative opinion and wise advice on those problems.

Before recounting what was probably the most important thing for our delegation at that meeting with Lenin I want to emphasise one thing that occurred in the very beginning of our talk and attests the tactfulness of the great leader. Lenin knew we had come directly from a late session of the congress and had not as yet had supper. He immediately ordered tea and sandwiches and insisted that we partake of them during our talk.

After talking to individual members of the delegations Lenin spoke to us all in English since we had used that language before. He asked for our opinion on the question of anti-parliamentarism which was then being widely discussed in Europe and was due to the negative attitude of the German Workers' Communist Party to the parliament. The delegation of this party was present at the meeting and expounded its point of view which Lenin sharply criticised. The Canadian workers' delegation representing the "One Big Union"* which fully corresponded to the Canadian IWW and also took an anti-parliamentary stand had been criticised with similar sharpness earlier.

When the turn of our delegation came, we gave Comrade Lenin a general outline of the history of our young Mexican Communist Party and its activities and struggle during that period. We made a brief historical review of the 30-year period that had preceded the 1910 Revolution and had taken place under Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship which had deprived the people of all freedom, especially political. It was in this connection that we explained to Lenin the anti-parliamentary position of the Mexican Communist Party which

* "One Big Union"—trade-union association of Canadian workers founded in 1919.—*Ed.*

took into account the political illiteracy of the masses (in Mexico there were not even any of the traditional socialist parties which existed in other Latin-American countries). On the other hand, we also had to consider another unfavourable circumstance: the only widespread mass social movement was anarchist or anarcho-syndicalist. At first it had exerted an influence through anarchist literature coming from Cuba and Spain and through individual Spanish anarchist workers, who came to Mexico; some anarchist influence was also exerted by propaganda from the "Homes of the Workers of the World" in trade unions which were strongly affected by erroneous theories.

Against such influence exerted on the working people the Mexican Communist Party should have started a struggle as soon as it was organised. And, although the Party did not then openly and officially oppose participation in parliament, its anti-parliamentary stand was clear to the workers from the trend of its newspaper articles and from the fact that it abstained from participating in election campaigns. But most members of the Central Committee of the Mexican Communist Party held that that stand of the Party was temporary and that it was a tactic for the period during which the Party was gathering strength and its ranks were growing by the joining of the workers who were ridding themselves of the anarcho-syndicalist ideology toward which they were oriented by the leaders of the "Homes of the Workers of the World".

Lenin, in his turn, bombarded us with questions, as he usually did, in order to get a complete picture of the problems under discussion. After a broad exchange of mutual questions and answers, Lenin said with his typical modesty: "I know little about Mexico. But taking into consideration its position as a dependent and industrially less developed country with a small and ideologically weak proletariat, the given transient anti-parliamentary stand may be accepted only as a temporary tactical measure. But this stand would not be acceptable or permissible in such countries as Germany, Canada, etc."

Looking at the comrades from the German Workers' Communist Party and from the Canadian "One Big Union" and apparently addressing them Lenin emphasised that, whereas such anti-parliamentary stand was permissible for

Mexico because of the peculiarities of that country's internal situation, this stand was absolutely intolerable in Germany and Canada. It was a crime against the proletariat and the revolution and "we cannot but censure the comrades, groups and parties which take this stand. We expect the comrades to change it within the shortest possible time."

Lenin was extremely modest and humane and at the same time had an extraordinary ability to understand people.

Considering that we were expressing the opinion of the majority of our Party's leadership we stated there and then that the aforesaid temporary tactical stand would soon be revised. And it was. In April 1923 the Second Congress of the Mexican Communist Party rejected this incorrect stand.

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A new day was breaking. It was already about 6 o'clock in the morning when we said good-bye to the great Lenin. Leaving the Kremlin surrounded by its mighty walls we all walked together: Tom Mann, the old and experienced English trade-union worker and leader of many big strikes in England (some of them had only recently been waged), Comrade Cascaden* and others. Comrade Cascaden had upheld before Lenin the anti-parliamentary position of the Canadian "One Big Union" whose leader he was.

However, Cascaden appeared very gay and content. Taking a breath of the fresh morning air he started singing. Tom Mann asked him: "What's up, Cascaden, what makes you so happy? Maybe the dressing down Lenin gave you?"

Cascaden looked at Tom Mann and answered: "Yes, I'm very happy. You are anxiously pondering all that Lenin said to you, whereas I want to express my joy, my enormous satisfaction in a song because three of my life's big dreams have come true today. I wanted to see what the revolution had done, to meet Lenin and talk to him, and see the Moscow bell." We had just passed by the bell lying on the ground and noticed how curiously Cascaden examined it.

* Cascaden was a delegate with a deliberative vote from the Canadian Woodworkers Industrial Union.—*Ed.*

Cascaden was a plain worker and at that time was not yet a member of the Party. He joined it later. His feelings were quite natural: on that memorable day (for him, as well as for all of us) he spoke to the brilliant leader of the revolution and the Communist Party of Soviet Russia.

These lines and reminiscences have been called up by my deep admiration of the 40th anniversary of the glorious October Revolution. The eternal memory of our brilliant Lenin cherished by the working people of the world, the memory of the great creator of Soviet power, the founder of the Communist Party and its tried and tested leader, cannot be separated from this anniversary.

1957

Reminiscences of Lenin

by Wilhelm Pieck

Moscow, October 29, 1921. The hall in the House of Trade Unions, former club of the nobility. Moscow Regional Party Conference. Lenin is speaking on the New Economic Policy. One of my friends is interpreting his speech to me. In a simple manner, without raising his voice or making any superfluous gestures Lenin is explaining why this measure is necessary. The comrades are listening, afraid lest they miss a single word. True, here and there rejoinders are heard, but Lenin is paying no attention to them. Suddenly finishing his speech Lenin sits down at the Presidium table. Applause. Larin takes the floor. It's the opposition. Lenin replies in his concluding remarks. There is sarcasm in his words. The atmosphere of the meeting has entirely changed. The applause is louder and more prolonged. Lenin has won over the audience which had at first been hostile to the New Economic Policy.

November 10, 1921. Lenin's study in the Kremlin. Heckert and I are explaining to Lenin the situation in the German party, the danger of sinking in the morass of opportunism because of the adherents of Levi.* Ultra-Lefts. The impending crisis caused by Friesland's group. Growing, muddled ultra-Left opposition. We are telling Lenin about our apprehensions with regard to this. He is carefully listening without once interrupting us—an art at which he is a past master. As we finish, he encourages us with his smile of understanding. Much greater difficulties have already been surmounted in the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). He tells us all this with a cunning smile and a friendly sparkle in his eyes. An hour slips by. Meanwhile Lenin's secretary has been impatiently reminding him that it is time to go. Sincerely wishing our Party success Lenin shakes hands with us and says good-bye (little did I realise that it was for ever). We leave for Germany the same evening.

* P. Levi—German Social-Democrat, then Communist. Delegate to the Second Congress of the Comintern. Expelled from the German Communist Party (April 1921) for gross violation of Party discipline and publication of an anti-Party pamphlet.—*Ed.*

January 22, 1924, Moscow, a room at the Lux Hotel. 10:30 a.m. The telephone rings. It is one of our friends asking if it is true that Lenin is no longer alive, that he died last night. No, that could not be true. Only the day before that I heard that he felt better. Without much ado I call Clara Zetkin to make sure. Clara does not know anything yet. They are afraid to tell her, afraid of the consequences. Several minutes later Clara informs me in a voice choked with emotion that it is true. Lenin is dead. Soon the streets fill with people mourning the death of great Lenin. Workers, men and women, are streaming from plants and factories to the centre of the city. Silently they stand in crowds crushed by the heavy grief that has overtaken them.

*

January 23, 1924. House in Gorki where Lenin died. One and a half hour's ride by train from Moscow. The leaders and active members of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), the Comintern and its sections have assembled here early in the morning. The plain is covered with deep snow. It is a clear, cold winter day.

Lenin is in a coffin in the room where he died. His face is pale as wax, his features are drawn and there is hardly a wrinkle on his face. It is hard to believe that he is no more. Silently, with tears in their eyes, people hardened in the battles of the Civil War carry out his body. And the mournful crowd follows its dead leader along a narrow path, through snow-covered fields, to the station. Numerous people, young and old, stand along the railway tracks. The melody of the Russian dead march sounds tragic in the still air.

Moscow. Hundreds of thousands of people are moving in an endless procession to the House of Trade Unions in whose grand hall stands the coffin with Lenin's body. Old Bolsheviks, Lenin's closest friends and comrades in arms are the first to stand guard of honour. Among them are members of the Political Bureau. Comrade Krupskaya stands beside her deceased husband and lifelong friend. It is terribly cold, more than 30 below. Day and night immense crowds keep coming to the centre of the city and staying in the streets for hours on end. Flames from the many bon-

fires reach up into the sky and offer at least a modicum of warmth to the people shivering with cold. For four days and four nights hundreds of thousands of people march in endless columns past Lenin to pay their last respects. All this is very hard to bear.

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January 26, 1924. Mournful session of the Second All-Union Congress of Soviets. The Bolshoi Theatre with its vast parquet and four tiers is crammed with deputies. The members of the Central Executive Committee are seated on the wide stage. Comrade Krupskaya says a few very simple words, but they produce a terrific effect. Kalinin takes the floor and is followed by representatives of the Soviets—workers, peasants, men and women. Then the participants of the congress march past Lenin's coffin. They are griefstricken and apprehensive of the future.

January 27, 1924. Red Square. In the middle, near the Kremlin wall, there is a place where Lenin lies. 4:00 p.m. Salvoes are fired. Factory whistles shriek forth their last salute. All of Russia is holding its breath. It is Lenin's funeral. On the vast square, shoulder to shoulder stand workers, peasants and Red Army men who have come from every part of the country for the final tribute. The Russian dead march "You have fallen, a sacrifice" rolls in a mighty wave over the vast square. It continues to echo in my ears, even when I am already in the train on my way back to Germany.

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November 10, 1925. Lenin's Mausoleum on Red Square in Moscow. A long line waiting for the clock to strike five. The Mausoleum opens for one hour. Every day workers and peasants file past Lenin who is now asleep for ever. Since the people did not have enough skill and knowledge to preserve Lenin's life, they are now doing all they can to preserve his body. Under a glass dome Lenin is sleeping an eternal sleep. But his cause lives on and the great Communist Party created by him struggles victoriously.

Sacred Memory

by Balingiin Tserendorzh

In the autumn of 1921 a Mongolian delegation headed by Sukhe-Bator came to Moscow to conclude the first friendship treaty between Soviet Russia and the People's Republic of Mongolia. I had the good fortune to be a member of the delegation. After signing the treaty on November 5 our delegation was received by Lenin with whom we had a heart-to-heart talk.

I very well remember his saying that he was glad once more to hear that the Mongolian People's Republic had driven all its enemies out and was organising a new and better life. On behalf of the working people of Soviet Russia he wished the Mongolian people every success in the great cause initiated by the People's Revolutionary Party and the Mongolian Government.

"In order to consolidate the conquests of People's Mongolia for ever," Lenin emphasised, "it is necessary to strengthen the relations with the Soviet Government."

Lenin talked to our delegation for a long time. He listened very attentively to us, displayed a lively interest in the different aspects of life in People's Mongolia and gave us much useful advice. He called our attention, in particular, to the necessity of raising the Mongolian people's educational and cultural standards, simultaneously emphasising that it was necessary to develop the country's economy to the utmost in order to satisfy all the requirements of the people.

"When you accomplish these tasks," he said, "you will have risen to the level of developed European states."

Lenin said that the Soviet state would give Mongolia all possible help because the treaty we concluded was a treaty of friendship, equality and fraternity.

"We must forge ahead as brothers, always helping each other," he added.

This meeting with the great leader of the world's first proletarian revolution has for ever impressed itself upon my heart. It showed clearly that Lenin concerned himself with the interests of all the working people of the world.

1926

With Comrade Lenin

by Sen Katayama

I met Comrade Lenin three times; consequently, my reminiscences of him are scant and limited. The three meetings were as follows: first—at the session of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets held at the Bolshoi Theatre in the evening of December 23, 1921 when Comrade Lenin made his report to the congress;* second—in his study at the Kremlin in January 1922; third and last—in the Andreyevsky Hall of the Kremlin at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International on November 13, 1922.

The following are the impressions I gathered about Lenin during the three different meetings.

1

Before setting forth my impressions of Comrade Lenin I must give a brief account of my original picture of him. I had heard about the power with which he was able to convince his audience at the time the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty was being negotiated and in other instances when he prevailed with his speeches over his opponents. But for me the best way of making Lenin's acquaintance was to read his *State and Revolution*. This book gave the real programme of the October Revolution, the programme of "transition from capitalism to communism".

The period following the economic blockade, Civil War and famine was unbelievably hard. After driving out all the foreign enemies and adopting the New Economic Policy Soviet Russia sent a delegation to Genoa with Comrade Lenin's instructions. At the session of the Ninth Congress of Soviets Lenin spoke on the internal and foreign policies and gave a clear perspective. The world imperialist powers were struggling to emerge from the post-war crisis by means of the Washington Conference and then by means

* V. I. Lenin's report "On the Home and Foreign Policy of the Republic" to the Ninth All-Russia Congress of Soviets (see V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, pp. 142-77).—*Ed.*

of the Conference in Genoa to which they were forced to invite Soviet Russia. Soviet Russia was now in a much more favourable position than ever before.

It would be appropriate to say here how I happened to be at this session of the congress. Ever since 1916 I had been active in the Left-wing movement in America and had taken part in publishing the weekly *Revolutionary Age* and the monthly *Class Struggle* whose aim it was to explain the Russian revolutionary movement to the American workers. I had come to Moscow from Mexico, where I had then worked, to attend the Congress of the Toilers of the Far East.*

Before Comrade Lenin's arrival I said a few salutatory words. The Bolshoi Theatre was crammed. Everyone seemed extremely excited and tense in anticipation of Lenin's forthcoming speech.

When Lenin came into the hall everybody rose and applauded for several minutes. After the chairman had announced the speaker, Lenin mounted the rostrum and all those present rose once more and greeted him with loud and prolonged applause.

Since I knew no Russian my observations during that evening were limited. Lenin felt at ease. Everybody listened to Lenin with extraordinary attention, maintaining complete order and a deep silence.

Comrade Lenin spoke for about three hours, displaying no signs of fatigue, hardly changing his intonation, steadfastly developing his train of thought, proffering one argument after another, and the whole audience seemed to catch every one of his words with bated breath. Lenin did not resort to any rhetorical pomposity or gestures, but he possessed uncommon charm; when he started speaking a death-like silence reigned and all eyes were fixed on him. Lenin glanced at the audience and seemed to hypnotise it. I particularly noticed that not a single person moved or coughed throughout the three hours. Lenin had completely captured his audience. He was undoubtedly the greatest speaker I have ever heard. When he finished his speech, everybody rose again, began to applaud and then sang the

* The Congress of Revolutionary Organisations of the Far East was held in January 1922.—*Ed.*

Internationale; thus ended this session of the Ninth All-Russia Congress of Soviets.

After the session I was received by Lenin who cordially shook hands with me and pronounced my name as correctly and confidently as if he had known me for a long time.

2

The second time I met Comrade Lenin was at the First Congress of Revolutionary Organisations of the Far East in January 1922.

The congress was convoked in order to organise the revolutionary forces of the Far-Eastern countries and to demonstrate to the imperialist powers, which had concluded the Nine-Power Treaty at the Washington Conference, the revolutionary might of the countries of the Far East. The October Revolution had awakened the working people of the Far East and they soon demonstrated their strength to Japanese imperialism which tried to subjugate the Chinese by means of the insulting demands set forth in the 21 points; the Japanese workers showed their increased strength in the so-called "rice riots" (1918), and Korea in its movement for independence (1919).

The above congress was held in Moscow in January 1922 and was attended by representatives of China, Japan, Indonesia and Mongolia. There was a total of about 200 delegates. The congress asked Comrade Lenin to attend and give his advice. Unable to attend because of poor health, Lenin invited the congress representatives to the Kremlin.

I was one of the delegates chosen by the congress to go to the Kremlin. We went that evening and were taken to his study which was a large, modestly but tastefully furnished room. When we entered the room we saw several pictures on the right wall. One of them was a picture of a Russian revolutionary* whom Lenin esteemed very highly; on the left side were two large bookcases packed with books. In the middle of the room were a large table and a large comfortable armchair in which Lenin

* Bas-relief of S. N. Khalturin, Russian revolutionary worker, organiser of the Northern Union of Russian Workers (1878).—*Ed.*

usually sat. The table was surrounded by many chairs for visitors.

We waited a few minutes before Lenin came in. None of the delegates except me had ever seen Lenin. On entering the room he shook hands with everybody, sat down in the armchair and began to talk alternately to the delegates of the different countries; of course, everybody heard their questions and Lenin's interesting and useful answers.

With each delegation Comrade Lenin discussed the special problems of its country, as well as general problems concerning the whole of the Far East. More than anything else he emphasised the necessity of uniting the revolutionary forces of all countries represented at the congress. Of course, the talk included the question of the united front; Lenin persuaded us of the necessity of rallying the revolutionary workers of the Far-Eastern countries and, looking at me, said:

"You advocated the united front in the Far-Eastern countries."

He must have read my article in which I asserted that the Korean and Japanese workers must form a united front against Japanese imperialism which equally oppressed and exploited the workers of both countries.*

That evening Comrade Lenin was in an excellent mood and looked well. He spoke English very fluently and was extremely attentive to whoever talked to him; he was also a good listener and could always encourage those around him. With him we all felt confident and perfectly at home. He was a past master at conversation and whatever he was saying was always very interesting. In this short, but very important talk with the members of the congress Lenin gave every delegation useful instructions and a lot of good advice.

When it was time to go, Comrade Lenin took a step or two forward and shook hands with all of us. I was the last to say good-bye to Lenin and was therefore able to exchange a few words with him.

"I heard you were leaving Moscow and going to the country to take a rest?"

* Article "Japan and the Impending Revolution", *Communist International* No. 18, 1921.—*Ed.*

"Yes, I am."

"I wish you a good rest and hope you feel much better when you come back," I said.

Comrade Lenin answered:

"I must take a good rest for I must work; we all must work."

He spoke in a friendly tone. We shook hands cordially and I left.

3

I shook hands with Comrade Lenin for the third and last time during the Fourth Congress of the Comintern on November 13, 1922. As is well known, the subject of his report was: "Five Years of the Russian Revolution and the Prospects of the World Revolution".*

The vast Andreyevsky Hall was packed and everyone seemed to be straining to catch a glimpse of Lenin. When the leader of the Russian revolution and the world proletariat appeared in the hall he was received with prolonged and enthusiastic applause and cheers. All those present rose to greet him and sang the *Internationale*.

When Lenin had mounted the rostrum he shook hands with every member of the Presidium. I felt that his grip was not so firm as it used to be; I remembered that he had been ill for a long time and that he had to force himself to come and greet the congress.

When he started his speech he looked quite well and spoke almost as he had at the Bolshoi Theatre in December 1921. He spoke in German and looked at his watch several times, trying to finish his speech inside of an hour. It is useless to dwell on his speech here. I will only say that everybody in the hall listened to him with rapt attention and in complete silence.

When he finished he was loudly applauded. He sat down among leading comrades and for a few minutes carried on an ordinary conversation with them. Then he left. Everybody rose and stood until he left the hall.

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* See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, pp. 418-32.—*Ed.*

In conclusion I would like to say that I had very little contact with Comrade Lenin because I only met him three times, but I am exceedingly happy to have met him and to have shaken hands with him. Many comrades studied and even worked under his supervision; my experience is but a drop in the ocean, but even in the Soviet Union there were millions of people who would have liked to see him, hear him and speak to him, but who never had the chance. Anybody who met Lenin in his daily life must tell about it to others; that is a real duty to the Party and the revolution. It is with this in mind that I have written my reminiscences of Lenin.

Lenin—Friend of the German People

by Walter Ulbricht

The Great October Socialist Revolution whose 40th anniversary the working people of the world celebrated in 1957 is, according to the tremendous effects it has produced on the development of human society, one of the most outstanding events in the centuries-old history of the world. The Great October Socialist Revolution began the emancipation of the working masses and oppressed peoples from exploitation and colonial oppression and ushered in an era of true social, political and national freedom. The first socialist revolution completed, as Frederick Engels had predicted, the prehistory of human society. A new epoch had begun.

The life and work of V. I. Lenin, a great revolutionary and scientist, was indissolubly connected with this historical event.

There is hardly a corner anywhere on earth where people have not heard of Lenin. His name has become the symbol of struggle of hundreds of millions of plain people for freedom and happiness. New generations of staunch fighters for the cause of the working class, for socialism, are being continuously educated in the spirit of Lenin.

History has known many great people, but only the working class, the most progressive class of modern society, could have helped such a giant of revolutionary thought and revolutionary action as Lenin completely to unfold his genius.

Lenin developed the teaching of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels and showed the working class and the oppressed peoples how they could achieve victory in their struggle for freedom under the conditions of imperialism.

Lenin's first historical accomplishment was the elaboration of the theory of a new type of party. This party guided by Marxist theory must be a solid, efficient and hardened party capable of accomplishing the historical mission of the proletariat, i.e., of carrying the liberating struggle of the working people through to a victorious end. Towards the beginning of the 20th century the Russian Bolsheviks forged

under Lenin's leadership their revolutionary, militant party.*

Lenin regarded the publication of the Marxist newspaper *Iskra* as the main link in the development of such a party. The first issue of this newspaper appeared in Leipzig in December 1900. We note with pride that it was the German workers who helped Lenin to print and successfully distribute the first issues of *Iskra*. The publication of the newspaper was, indeed, the spark which kindled the flame of revolutionary struggle in Russia and later in other capitalist countries.

The flame kindled by *Iskra* stirred to action the Russian proletariat and working peasants who, under the leadership of their Bolshevik Party, carried out the Great October Socialist Revolution and wrought a radical change in the history of mankind. The world proletariat and all peace-loving, progressive people owe this to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, to brilliant Lenin. Today the working people are confidently building socialism over a vast territory—from the Pacific to the Atlantic.

The noblest ideas of internationalism with which Marx and Lenin have armed the world proletariat find their highest expression today in the fraternal friendship of the socialist states headed by the Soviet Union.

Lenin was always closely connected with the German working-class movement. As one of its leading experts he saw how very dangerous revisionism and opportunism were for the German Social-Democratic Party. Fearing exposure the Right leaders of German Social-Democracy hindered the German working class from becoming acquainted with Lenin's main theoretical works.

The first time I heard of Lenin was before the First World War when I was still a young worker. At that time German Social-Democracy was engaged in a discussion of the struggle against German militarism and imperialism. Noske's group then supported the colonial policy of the imperialists, Kautsky took a vague Centrist stand with regard to German imperialism and only the Lieb-

* The Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks) was founded at the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in London (July 30-August 10, 1903).—*Ed.*

knecht-Luxemburg group struggled against the annexationist plans of the big German bourgeoisie. It was in connection with this discussion, on the eve of the First World War, that I learned about the stand taken by Lenin at the Stuttgart Congress of the Second International. On Lenin's suggestion the delegation of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party introduced several amendments to the resolution. The amendment to the last paragraph of Bebel's resolution read that in the event a war broke out all Social-Democratic parties would struggle for its quickest possible termination and would do their utmost to utilise the economic and political crisis caused by the war for revolutionary work among the masses in order thereby to hasten the collapse of the capitalist rule. This resolution determined the tasks and role of the Social-Democratic parties in the struggle against imperialist war.

Although the Liebknecht-Luxemburg group in German Social-Democracy was completely in accord with Lenin's stand, it failed to draw any practical conclusions from it for party and organisational work. Later, Lenin justly noted that the greatest misfortune of the working-class movement in Germany was that it did not break with revisionism before the world war. The whole of the German working class suffered from this during the prolonged and agonising period of the German revolution after the war. We, who were in Liebknecht's group, made this break only under difficult conditions, during the First World Imperialist War.

Because of the absence of a revolutionary party of the working class, a new type of party, the German working class did not, at the time German imperialism collapsed, have such a truly Leninist leader. Although Lenin criticised the German Lefts for not breaking with revisionism organisationally, he, nevertheless, highly esteemed the fact that, during the First World War, the German Lefts held high the banner of proletarian internationalism and thereby saved the honour of the German working class.

Lenin was a friend and champion of the interests not only of the German proletariat, but also of the whole German people. After the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution in 1917 the Soviet Government headed by Lenin wanted to help the German people to drop out

of the war. When we learned about the appeal of the Council of People's Commissars of Soviet Russia for immediate establishment of peace, we felt a burst of new energy in the struggle against the Kaiser's politicians in Berlin. But when the great capitalist powers rejected Soviet Russia's peace proposals Lenin appealed directly to the German people with a proposal to conclude peace. Lenin's proposal corresponded to the interests of the German people who wanted the war to end immediately. Had Lenin's proposal been accepted, Germany supported by Soviet Russia would have arrived at a just peace, the power of the people would have forced Wilhelm II, Hindenburg and the war magnates from the stage and there would have been no humiliating Treaty of Versailles.*

When the revolution broke out in Germany in November 1918 Lenin proposed to the Ebert-Scheidemann Government, on behalf of the Soviet Government, to conclude a friendship pact between Soviet Russia and Germany and to help the starving German working people with deliveries of grain. Lenin said that under the circumstances Germany's only salvation was to form an alliance with Soviet Russia. Even after restoration of the rule of the big bourgeoisie in Germany, when the Western capitalist powers wanted to impede its development, the Soviet Government proposed, on Lenin's initiative, the conclusion of the Rapallo Treaty which guaranteed Germany its national independence. Owing to this treaty, signed in April 1922, Germany emerged from her state of isolation.** The treaty also paved the way to economic activity in the world markets. But at that time the working class did not as yet have enough strength to ensure, on the basis of the Rapallo Treaty, a new orientation in Germany's foreign policy. During the post-war crisis of German capitalism the chances of forming a workers' government were widely discussed by the German Communist Party and the German working-class movement, and on that score, too, we German Communists received valuable instructions and advice from Lenin.

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* Signed June 28, 1919.—*Ed.*

** Rapallo Treaty between Russia and Germany, concluded April 16, 1922, during the Genoa Conference.—*Ed.*

In 1922 I saw Lenin for the first time. At the Fourth Congress of the Communist International Lenin made a report on "Five Years of the Russian Revolution and the Prospects of the World Revolution". Although Lenin was ill and hardly able to stand the strain at that time, he spoke clearly and convincingly all the same.

The deepest impression I gathered from his report was his popular exposition of the Party's economic policy, which was plain to every worker and peasant. It was clear to everybody who heard that enormously important report that Lenin was a past master at fundamentally elucidating the problems of the day. To us foreign Communists Lenin then gave important advice on how to master "the organisation, structure, method and content of revolutionary work".

Lenin said that the resolution on the organisational structure of Communist Parties, the methods and content of their work adopted by the Third World Congress of the Communist International was excellent, but that the foreign comrades "cannot be content with hanging it in a corner like an icon and praying to it". It was necessary that they should gain this experience themselves.

During the congress the delegation of the German Communist Party asked Lenin to receive it for an interview. Lenin, who was always ready to help the international working-class movement, immediately consented. Our talk was about setting up a workers' government in Germany and the character of this government.* Lenin sat, one arm resting on his knee, carefully listened to our views and asked questions in order to learn the essential facts characterising the situation in Germany. After hearing us out patiently he explained how the German working class must wage, in union with the working peasants, the struggle for a workers' government. He pointed out to us that it was necessary to co-operate with the workers who were members of the Social-Democratic Party and to improve our work in the trade unions. He emphasised the importance of systematic organisational work among the broad masses of the working people and the necessity for observing strict

* V. I. Lenin's chat with the delegation of the German Communist Party at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern took place in November (later than the 13th) 1922.—*Ed.*

Lenin at a plenary meeting of the C.C. of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in the Kremlin. Moscow, October 5, 1922

discipline. He called our attention to the need for winning over the agricultural workers and working peasants. The latter instruction was particularly important because at that time we neglected our work among the peasants.

From that talk I remembered how Lenin at once grasped the essence of the matter. He refused to be distracted by questions of secondary importance and never left anything essential unnoticed. He talked to us with his characteristic gusto, but at the same time patiently and convincingly.

We were particularly surprised at his cordiality and ease in his dealings with all comrades. Our talk with Lenin gave us new strength and confidence and showed how to draw

conclusions for practical activity after thoroughly appraising the situation.

Only by guiding ourselves by Marx and Lenin's teaching and by strengthening the fighting power of the Party were we able to eradicate fascism in 1945 and to start building a new social system. Lenin's teaching on imperialism showed us that the liquidation of the rule of the industrial and banking magnates, as well as of the big landholders, was a vital prerequisite for building a new life. From Lenin's teaching on the state we learned that it was necessary to break the fascist state machinery and to establish the leading role of the working class in the state and the economy. From Lenin's instructions on the New Economic Policy we take the basic propositions for working out the problems of the transitional period from capitalism to socialism in the German Democratic Republic. On the basis of the teaching of Marx and Lenin, the great internationalists, we are strengthening our friendship with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist and Workers' Parties of the People's Democracies, thereby creating conditions for the victory of peace, democracy and socialism all over the world.

Today Lenin lives in the deeds of the peoples of the Soviet Union and all socialist countries, in the deeds of the working class and working people struggling against exploitation and oppression in the capitalist countries, and in the deeds of the peoples waging a national-liberation struggle against imperialism. The Great October Socialist Revolution was the beginning of a new era of freedom which, in its victorious struggle against the sinister forces of reaction, is now spreading all over the world.

Lenin and the French Trade-Union Movement

by Gaston Monmousseau

It was the end of 1922 when I first visited Moscow as a delegate of the C.G.T.U.* to the Second Congress of the Trade-Union International.**

The year before there had been a split in the French trade-union movement. The revolutionary trade-union minority, which during the war and until 1921 had succeeded in winning over the majority of the organised workers and the commanding heights in the reformist C.G.T.,*** was expelled by the leaders of the latter (1,300 trade unions, mostly railway trade unions, were expelled). But from the moment of its organisation the C.G.T.U., deprived of its revolutionary leadership, fell into the hands of anarchists who had organised themselves expressly for this purpose.

At the Constituent Congress of the C.G.T.U. in June 1922, seven months after the seizure of the leadership by the anarchists, the revolutionary elements who sympathised with the Comintern and the Trade-Union International left the anarchists in the minority and assumed the leadership of the revolutionary trade-union centre.

At that time the French Communist Party was under the influence of Social-Democratic elements, petty-bourgeois politicians, who guided the policy of the Party and secretly supported the anarchists against us. In a struggle against such back-stage manoeuvres of the Party leadership we won the C.G.T.U. and decided to affiliate ourselves with the Trade-Union International.

Three tendencies revealed themselves on the question of the terms for joining the Trade-Union International. The first tendency was defended by the friends of Frossard and his group; at that time Frossard was the General Secre-

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* Unitarian General Confederation of Labour.—*Ed.*

** November 19-December 2, 1922. The congress was opened in Petrograd, but continued its work in Moscow.—*Ed.*

*** General Confederation of Labour.—*Ed.*

tary of the Party and insisted on an organic connection between the Communist Party and the C.G.T.U. Considering the force of the anarcho-syndicalist traditions in the C.G.T.U. this tendency of Frossard's group did not issue from the aim of defending the principles of the Comintern and the Trade-Union International, but was intended to give the anarchists the best possible foothold for their struggle against the Comintern and the Trade-Union International and for frustrating any affiliation of the C.G.T.U. with the latter.

The second tendency agreed that the C.G.T.U. should join the Trade-Union International, provided that the Trade-Union International maintained complete independence from the Comintern and that the organic ties envisaged by the Constitution of the Trade-Union International were preliminarily broken both as regards the relations between the Comintern and the Trade-Union International and the relations between the French Communist Party and the C.G.T.U.

The third tendency was primarily in favour of immediately joining the Trade-Union International, but reserving the right to struggle at subsequent international congresses against these organic ties (Article X of the Constitution of the Trade-Union International). At the same time this tendency indicated its readiness to conclude temporary (according to circumstances) agreements between the Comintern and the Trade-Union International, between the trade unions and the Party.

This last tendency won the majority in the revolutionary faction of the C.G.T.U. The communist faction acquiesced in this decision.

I was elected for the Second Congress of the Trade-Union International as secretary of the C.G.T.U. and advocate of affiliation with the Trade-Union International. I was authorised officially to declare the affiliation of the C.G.T.U. with the Trade-Union International on the conditions set by the congress in Saint-Etienne.

The Second Congress of the Trade-Union International was preceded by the Fourth Congress of the Comintern. The French problem played an important part. The delegation of the C.G.T.U. was invited to a discussion during which the leaders of the French Communist Party systematically opposed the line of the Communist International on the question of trade-union factions and the united front. The support the Comintern needed to carry out its line inside the French party it found in the trade-union delegation of the C.G.T.U., particularly among the elements who were not members of the Communist Party. The rest, except Pierre Semard, were under the influence of Frossard and his friends. Frossard's group tried to blackmail the leaders of the International by speculating on the anarcho-syndicalist traditions of the C.G.T.U. and the conditions on which the latter would join the Trade-Union International.

It was then that Semard and I were asked one morning to call on Lenin.* Lenin's name was associated in my mind with the battles between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. I knew about Lenin only from newspaper reports and stories, but had instinctively watched him with ever-growing interest since February 1917.

To me Lenin was not only the leader of the Bolsheviks and the October Revolution, but also an exceptional person to whom the entire credit for the success of the October Revolution was due.

Since I saw Lenin in the light of my anarcho-syndicalist prejudices, he screened from my eyes his own creation —the Bolshevik Party. When I learned about Lenin's death a little more than a year later I actually gave way to despair. I thought that the revolution was now left without a leader, that it would be torn by internal contradictions, and that, surrounded by imperialist forces, it would be forced to retreat. Because of this view of Lenin I considered the Russian revolution and the successes of the proletarian dictatorship merely a result of exceptional conditions. When I thought of the corrupt leadership of the party of Frossard and Co. and opposed Frossard to Lenin, the idea of an organic connection between the French Communist Party and the C.G.T.U. appeared intolerable to me.

Even now, eleven years later, I become excited when I think of the time we were summoned to visit Lenin.

The French press never tired of picturing the leaders

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* The conversation took place on November 18, 1922.—*Ed.*

of the Russian revolution as heirs to bourgeois comforts and even luxury. Waging a bitter struggle against the slander spread by the press, I nevertheless felt that the people whose health had been undermined by many years of imprisonment, hard labour and mortal danger, now had a right to a certain minimum of comfort, rest and privileges in transport, working conditions, etc. I was therefore all the more surprised to see the modest rooms to which we were shown and their simple furnishings. I was still more impressed by Lenin himself sitting at his desk. He rose to greet us and received us simply, in a comradely manner and naturally, as would any active trade-union member of our own standing.

Before entering Lenin's room my throat felt parched. My heart was beating anxiously and yet I was not, under any circumstances, supposed to "yield to any influence". I was supposed to find all the necessary arguments, which we had so often repeated over and over again, if the notorious Article X of the Constitution of the Trade-Union International should crop up.

But the ice broke the moment we entered. Before us was a person with whom I at once felt at ease and who immediately inspired me with absolute confidence. Since then I have never visited Moscow without going to Lenin's Mausoleum and recalling that meeting in 1922.

Lenin came straight to the point:

"And so, Monmousseau, you are not a member of the Communist Party? And you, Semard? Are you in the Party? How then do you manage to agree in your work?"

"Comrade Lenin, in France a membership card of the French Communist Party does not serve as a patent for communism. Semard and I have different points of view, but we are both ready to defend communism against the doubtful elements of which there are so many in the French party and its leadership."

"What are your reasons for not joining the Party?"

"Precisely these doubtful elements, political careerists, lawyers and self-seekers who, in my opinion, are no better than the leaders of the Socialist Party."

"We, too, want to keep doubtful elements out of the Party," said Lenin, "but we cannot do it by outside means. To do this, it is necessary that the revolutionary

workers in the C.G.T.U. should help us by joining the Party."

Instead of an answer I made a negative gesture. Then Lenin asked me:

"What must we do in order that such active C.G.T.U. members as you and the revolutionary workers in the C.G.T.U. should join the Party?"

There was nothing I could do then, but give vent to my feelings.

"Comrade Lenin," I said, "we must throw the doors of the Party wide open to these workers by cancelling Article X which envisages organic ties between the Party and the trade unions."

"But are you sure this will lead to desirable results?" asked Lenin with a smile.

Semard and I answered that question in the affirmative.

"All right," said Lenin, "we will do as you wish, but remember that we are making a serious concession, we are making a breach in the Constitution of our Communist International. Such a measure may therefore be an exception only for France, considering the traditions of the French trade-union movement. You are assuming a heavy responsibility to the International. See to it that we never repent the concession we have made to you."

Then the conversation turned to other subjects, but, much to my regret, I cannot recount it. The reason for it is very simple: Lenin's words promising to "do away with the organic ties" were an enormous relief to me and I already imagined the masses of revolutionary workers surmounting all obstacles put up by the anarchists, uniting around the Comintern and the Trade-Union International, then joining the Party and remaking it in accordance with Lenin's ideas.

We could go back to France, deriving great strength from Lenin's words. The joy I experienced on that occasion was so intense that only this part of our talk impressed itself upon my memory. Moreover, at that time I was almost completely absorbed by the trade-union question. Other problems, for example the peasant problem, upon which Lenin had touched, were new to me; to my mind they were but remotely related to the class struggle and could be of interest, so it seemed to me, only to the Communist Party.

This talk with Lenin proved of decisive importance to

the development of the French trade-union movement as regards its orientation towards the theory and practice of communism. Lenin well understood the peculiarities of the mass movement in France, which freeing itself from the influence of the reformists and anarchists evolved towards communism despite the tremendous weaknesses and anarcho-syndicalist deviations of the C.G.T.U. leaders.

The measures taken by Lenin really exerted a tremendous influence on the section of revolutionary trade-union workers who, although sympathising with the Communist Party, were besieged by serious misgivings. As for me personally, since the talk with Lenin I considered myself completely aligned with the communist movement and the Comintern, although my reasoning and actions were still tinged with anarchist prejudices.

When we returned to France the anarchists made our line a target for bitter attacks. The political bloc which had arisen against the anarchists at the Saint-Etienne Congress immediately broke up, the executive committee and confederate secretariat splitting into two hostile groups. Despite these difficulties, at the 1923 Congress in Bourges the overwhelming majority of trade-union workers, non-party members, united around the Communist Party, which was treacherously abandoned by Frossard who had just deserted to the Social-Democrats, and the C.G.T.U. finally adopted the line of the Trade-Union International. At last the mass entry of the trade-union members into the Communist Party after Frossard's treachery made it possible to repulse all Trotskyist attacks and firmly set forth on the path of Bolshevisation.

1933

He Looked Way Ahead*

Lenin played an enormous role in my life. To be sure, I always steadfastly believed in the Bolshevik Party and from the very outset sided with the October Revolution, but did not consider myself a Communist. I owe it to Lenin

* Written in 1960.—*Ed.*

that he opened my eyes, for it was under his influence that I rid myself of the burden of petty-bourgeois and anarchist illusions, which had made me stumble at every step, and resolutely took the course that I have pursued ever since.

Now, when I come to Moscow, I go first of all to Red Square, to the Mausoleum, and there Lenin appears before me as I saw him in the Kremlin one year before his death.

From afar I imagined Lenin as a giant, an unusual person with a gaze that would make anybody flinch.

On entering his study we saw a man outwardly in no way differing from other people: baldheaded, with a small reddish beard and a kind smile in which there was not even a hint of superiority or condescension to those around him. The atmosphere in which this giant of thought, practice and organisational talent worked was surprisingly simple: a desk, an armchair in which he himself sat, two chairs in which he asked us to sit, and shelves with books that lined the walls. Lenin had a good command of French.

"How are things in France? Is it warmer there than it is in Moscow? How was your long journey? I am glad you have taken the trouble to come here and see for yourselves what the October Revolution has done.

"Our revolution," Lenin continued, "belongs to the proletariat of the whole world. We are building socialism not only for ourselves, but also for you, and you must understand how difficult it is to start building it in Russia ruined by the imperialist and civil wars. We need not only your support, but also perhaps your advice since the French proletariat has had a good deal of experience."

By the time Lenin switched from general conversation to the question which had brought us to Moscow we had already felt completely at ease.

*

This talk with Lenin was of decisive importance to the development of the French trade-union movement. Lenin well understood the peculiarities of the mass movement in France, which freeing itself from the influence of the reformists and anarchists had evolved towards communism despite the enormous weaknesses and anarcho-syndicalist deviations of the C.G.T.U. leaders.

The measures taken by Lenin really did exert a tremendous influence on the section of trade-union workers who, although sympathising with the Communist Party, were filled with doubts and apprehensions. As for me personally, since the talk with Lenin I considered myself for ever bound up with the communist movement.

In our days the French General Confederation of Labour unites working people of the most diverse political and philosophic views: Communists, Socialists, catholics and non-party people. Both Communists and non-Communists are democratically elected to the leadership of its various organisations. At industrial enterprises an average of 70 per cent of the workers vote for the General Confederation of Labour which is waging a struggle for trade-union unity and is successfully defeating the resistance of the owners, their agents and the authorities.

Nor should we fail to emphasise that the present-day mass trade-union movement, attesting the unshakable will of the working class in its struggle for emancipation, is developing and marching along the path blazed by Lenin.

Talk with Lenin During the Second Congress of the Trade-Union International

by Pierre Semard

In 1922, during the work of the Second Congress of the Trade-Union International, Lenin received Monmousseau and me in his Kremlin study for the purpose of discussing the situation in the French revolutionary movement and the conditions which the Unitarian Confederation of Labour had laid down in Saint-Etienne (in June 1922) for joining the Trade-Union International, and learning our opinion of the French Communist Party.

After we had asked Lenin how he felt and he answered that he was just convalescing, he started the talk by addressing himself to me:

"Are you, Semard, a member of the Party?"

"Yes, since the beginning of 1916; since the conferences in Zimmerwald and Kienthal which had opened my eyes; until then I was an Hervéist* in the ranks of the 'savages' who refused to affiliate themselves with the Socialist Party which we regarded as a purely parliamentary and bourgeois party."

"And you, Monmousseau, are you a member of the Party?"

Monmousseau answered in the negative and explained how he had gradually evolved from anarchism to communism. He recounted how difficult it was for him, a leader of the revolutionary trade-union movement steeped in anarcho-syndicalism and anti-parliamentarism, to join the Communist Party since, as a result of it, a considerable number of workers who were valuable to the trade-union movement and who might by patient work be won over would go against him and the leadership of the Unitarian Confederation of Labour.

"Why, then, do both of you think alike?"

Monmousseau answered:

* Hervéists—adherents of Gustave Hervé, French bourgeois anarchist and member of the Socialist Party.—*Ed.*

"We are both against Frossard, against the lawyers and intellectuals who know nothing about the working class, but lead the Party."

I joined in and added:

"We are like-minded in the struggle against reformism, against the leaders who are traitors in the matter of educating and leading the working class in the class struggle; herein lies the significance of the affiliation of the Unitarian Confederation of Labour with the Trade-Union International, which we are trying to bring about."

"The Party is still under the leadership of such people, but how are you going to drive them out? How can it be done if such active, class-conscious workers as you and Monmousseau are not in the Party?"

Monmousseau answered that his entry into the Party must not be individual and that after we explained to the French workers what the Trade-Union International stands for, what communism is and what it has achieved in Russia, his entry into the Party would be followed by that of thousands of revolutionary workers, members of the Unitarian Confederation of Labour.

"But," added Monmousseau, "it is necessary to facilitate this educational work, to help us overcome the anarcho-syndicalist traditions and to remove the obstacles put in our way by the Constitution."

"Then what do you and the best workers, trade-union members, need to join the Party?"

Monmousseau answered:

"We must be able to open the doors of the Unitarian Confederation of Labour to broad masses of workers and to organise in its ranks those who are still under reformist and bourgeois influences. But we think that the recognition of organic ties between the trade unions and the Party, between the Trade-Union International and the Comintern, is a hindrance to the French workers that causes great difficulties even to the revolutionary-minded trade-union members still imbued with the spirit of anarchism. We want you to repeal Article X which deals with the terms for affiliation with the Trade-Union International and incorporates these organic ties."

"And do you, Semard, agree with Monmousseau?"

"On this question we see eye to eye; it is a question of tactics for the present moment and it is aimed at winning the greatest possible number of workers whom we shall then be able to draw into joint work with the Party, provided, however, that it will pursue a better policy."

"You assert that, if we repeal this article, the workers and revolutionary-minded trade-union members will be more easily won over to the Party and will agree with its policy?"

We both answered this question in the affirmative.

"It is, of course, possible to repeal this article, but you must bear in mind that by consenting to this the Comintern will be making a big political concession. It is a sort of breach we shall make in the Constitution of the International. Such a measure can be applied only to the French revolutionary movement. It presupposes serious commitments on your part and you are assuming a heavy responsibility. See that we never have to regret it.

"You declare," Lenin continued, "that the Party is bad and that you do not trust Frossard, but what do you suggest? Is it not possible to create a real Communist Party with the aid of the revolutionary trade-union movement?"

I answered:

"Of course, by affiliating a large number of workers with the Party it is possible to infuse healthier revolutionary blood into it, and the Unitarian Confederation of Labour must be the breeding ground from which we can draw forces without depriving the Unitarian Confederation of Labour of its character of a mass organisation uniting all workers regardless of their views or party affiliations. By creating a real Communist Party you imply, of course, not the destruction of the already existing party, but its fundamental reorganisation by drawing into it revolutionary-minded working masses which have already demonstrated their fighting efficiency. Our task is to prepare for this. By continuing to struggle within the Party still more vigorously you will hasten its improvement and will the sooner impart a true communist orientation to it."

Monmousseau stated that he had already indicated the reasons that made him hesitate about joining the Party.

I confirmed that I considered it necessary to intensify the work in the Party regardless of our trade-union tasks.

"You say that you do not trust Frossard," said Lenin,

"but do you think that, for example, Jean Renaud is or could become a Communist?"

I answered:

"I do not know Jean Renaud's political views. I only know that he is closely connected with the peasants; he is familiar with their demands and can express their wishes. He is therefore useful to the Party and must be made use of."

"You hold that for these reasons he should be left in the Party?"

We replied that that was our opinion, but that the Party would have to be purged of all those elements who did not agree with the Communist International and said so.

That was the most important part of our talk.

Then Lenin asked us several questions about the situation in France and the living standards of the workers. He reminded us of his sojourn in Paris, of how he liked to roam through the suburbs and associate with the masses.

He also asked us what we had seen since our arrival in Russia and what our impressions were.

Since our answers clearly indicated our enthusiasm, Lenin hastened to moderate it, saying that it was necessary to have faith in final success, but that it was also necessary to work a good deal, to work as real revolutionaries, strenuously and persistently; he added that he had complete confidence in us and in the splendid revolutionary will of the French proletariat to help the Soviet proletariat in its hard and prodigious work of building socialism.

With that our talk came to an end; a talk which is indelibly engraved upon our memory.

I Saw Lenin

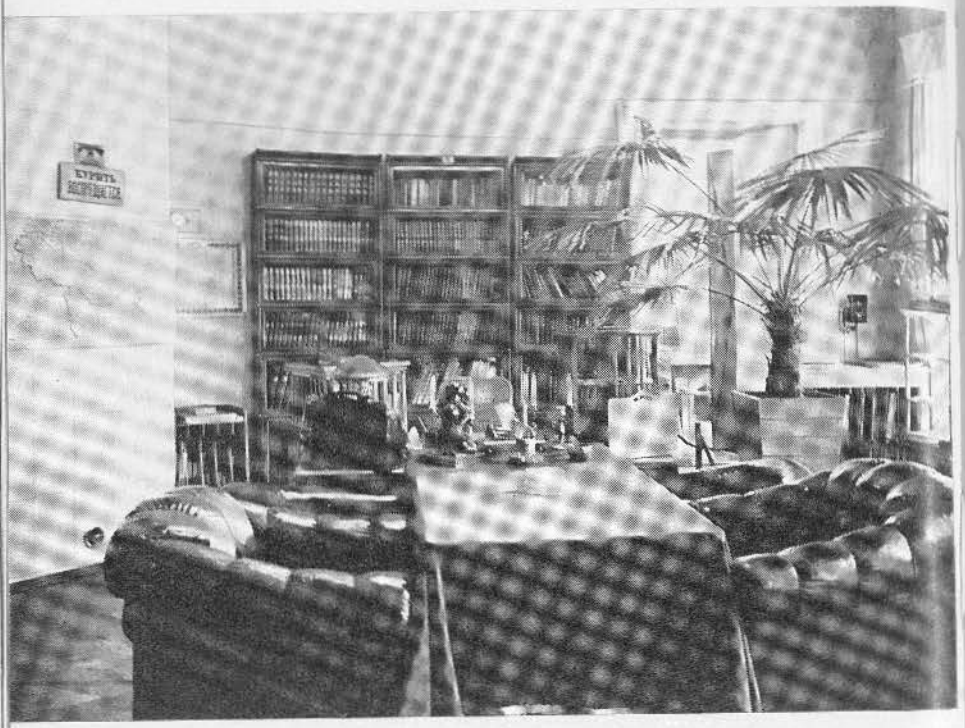
by Martin Andersen Nexö

I saw Lenin only once, in the Kremlin, during the Comintern Congress in the autumn of 1922.* At that time it was still impossible to understand the enormous scope of Lenin's work—the October Revolution; the old world was unpleasantly surprised at what had happened, but was not as yet so terror-stricken as it is today. It considered the revolution only a gigantic experiment which caused disturbances in capitalist production and a certain diminution in profits; it would probably be best to suppress it, but sooner or later it would collapse anyway. The leading capitalist powers were themselves hopelessly involved in contradictions resulting from their own competition. Of course, the new proletarian state interfered with their game, but they were still deaf to the knell sounding out for the old world. It did not even occur to the Second International that its existence was also at stake.

Lenin's cause has now grown and embraced the world. There is not one event, in any way significant to mankind, that is not connected with Lenin and the revolution. The world of today is in the throes of a mortal struggle; the future is being born in pangs of suffering. But who, except Lenin, foresaw it at that time? We, the participants of the congress, who assembled from all corners of the world—German and Scandinavian workers, Negroes, Egyptian fellahs and Indian coolies—all believed in the cause of the new world and in Lenin. But he himself knew with unshakable certainty that victory would come and clearly saw the way to it.

That was precisely what distinguished him from the vast and motley assembly of delegates among whom there were quite a few lucid minds. That could be felt in his simple appearance, entirely unlike that we usually associate with great thinkers; that was also reflected in his speech. Lenin's thought was clear and lucid even when he touched upon the greatest problems facing mankind and plainly showed

* Fourth Congress of the Comintern.—*Ed.*



Lenin's Kremlin study

that the future developed inevitably and firmly from the present. He seemed to live the lives of all people. He knew the situation in all countries, the fates of the poor and the methods of exploitation used in each country; and he showed us how those methods had developed down to the present day. It was a science, but a special and entirely new science: it did not savour of books, but was of life itself; it illumined the fate of the industrial worker, the coolie, the seamstress and the street cleaner alike. The history of mankind, the very history of human culture arose before us from Lenin's speech.

"There is a real man for you," a Norwegian worker

whispered to me. "And how very much like any of us he is, only a thousand times as sharp-sighted."

This Norwegian comrade had visited Lenin the day before and had acquainted him with the situation in Norway.

"But Lenin knew more than I about it: and about Denmark, too. He compared your small peasants with a Gypsy's dog hitched to a cart with a piece of meat suspended in front of him; the dog keeps reaching for the meat, but cannot for the life of him get it. Your peasants, their wives and children are similarly straining to their utmost, working for capital; they have been told that they are small landlords or, as Lenin put it, 'landlords in miniature'."

"How did you address him?" I asked the Norwegian.

"Of course, I spoke informally to him because I did not want to offend him."

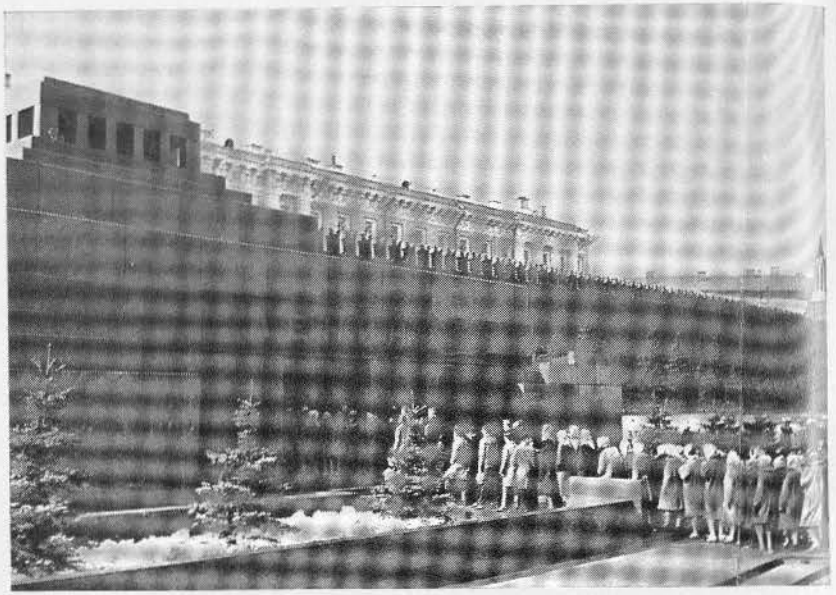
Lenin's appearance, his very simplicity showed him to be a man of the day. When talking to him, anybody, even the simplest person, felt that he was confronting one of those unusual people who are born once in a hundred or even a thousand years; and this great man then calmly shook hands with you and said: "Tell me something about yourself, about your life."

Lenin, undoubtedly the wisest of all men, lent a careful ear to the hopes and fears of small people, learned from them, elevated them and their affairs and showed that ordinary people and their work are the true basis of life. That alone was a reward for the thousands of years of mere vegetation; never before was there a man who knew the simple people and their life as did Lenin.

That is why Lenin always meant so much to the working people, and no badgering or slander could shake their faith in him. Even the most downtrodden and backward brighten up and their eyes shine when Lenin's name is mentioned.

Lenin's Influence on the Creative Forces of the West

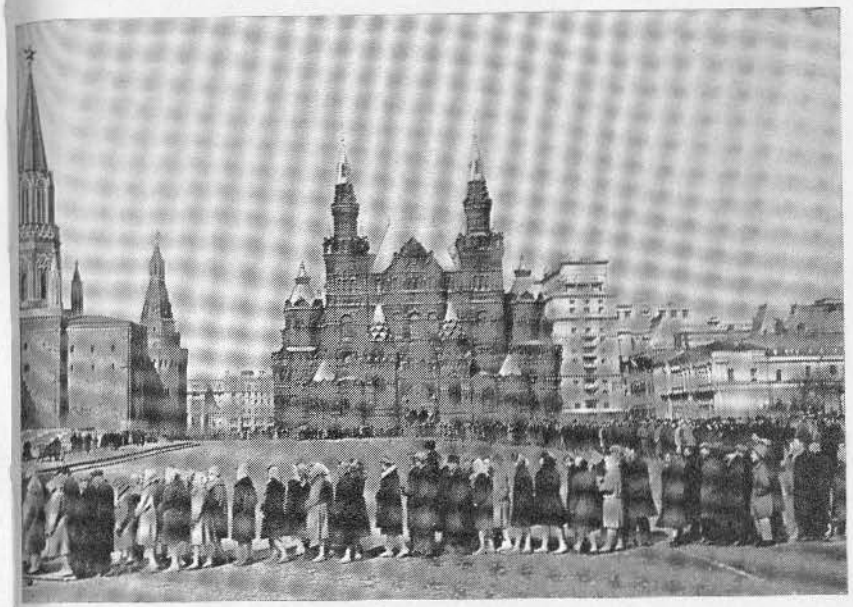
Never over the centuries has there been a man who could move the minds and hearts of people to such an extent as did Lenin. In the last two decades Lenin's name



Paying tribute to Lenin

has been on the lips of people all over the world. The plain people utter his name with love, the rulers and oppressors —with hatred. Here, too, the intelligentsia has, with but few exceptions, tried to stay on "no man's land". It has spoken of Lenin, but abstractly; it is partly still doing so now. Most of the creative minds of Western Europe, whether in the field of art, literature or science, are still unable to embrace the enormous importance of Lenin since he has no spiritual conceit, since he is all too human. They recognise his greatness, but it appears too simple to them since he does not put on airs of a high priest, but speaks about the greatest problems of mankind simply, in a way that everybody can understand. Moreover, he does not reason about these problems abstractly; he actually solves them. He carries his philosophic reasoning into life and thereby upsets the academic traditions.

To be sure, the situation has now changed for the better. The best workers of culture, especially those who have



grown up since the October Revolution, declare themselves admirers of Lenin and gradually become conscious fighters for a new social order. In Sweden a galaxy of young and highly-gifted writers and theoreticians in art are under the influence of Lenin's world outlook and actively participate in the struggle of the proletariat. In the United States of America advanced literature has entered a period of remarkable revival which cannot but be ascribed to Lenin's influence. In my country, Denmark, the best of the young workers of culture are also to a greater or lesser extent under the influence of Lenin's teaching.

But Lenin exerts a still greater influence on the ordinary worker who does not have to go through a complex process of re-education. The proletariat of the old world owes its growing power and activity wholly to Lenin, the greatest herald and creator, unparalleled in the history of mankind, and to Lenin's creation—the Soviet Union.

The foremost working people, whether mental or manual

workers, see in Lenin the embodiment of the best features of their movement and their class; the struggling proletariat finds in Lenin its most valuable qualities, its faith, its aspirations, its ideals; in him they are truly great and are illumined with a radiant light. And even those workers who have not yet awakened and those whom the rulers are again trying to lull to sleep instinctively feel that Lenin is their flesh and blood.

Lenin's importance to the international proletarian movement is unmeasurable. His brilliant image, which embodies the qualities of herald and executor, suggests to workers of culture new aims and leads them from passive contemplation to a world of action. The emancipatory struggle of the proletariat has new horizons before it. The working-class movement can no longer be turned back. Lenin has breathed life into the people who are struggling for the cause of progress.

1938

Brief Biographies of the Authors

Bell, T. (1882-1940)—Scotch foundry worker. One of founders of British Communist Party. Member of its Central Committee and Politbureau. Delegate to Third, Sixth and Seventh Congresses of Comintern. Chairman of Society of Friends of the Soviet Union and Britain (1930-31).

Bobinska, H. (b 1887)—Polish authoress, wife of Stanislaw Bobinski, prominent leader of Polish working-class movement.

Bryant, L. (1890-1936)—American journalist, John Reed's wife. First came to Russia in autumn 1917. Authoress of books *Six Red Months in Russia (An Observer's Account of Russia Before and During the Proletarian Dictatorship)* (1918), *Mirrors of Moscow* (1923). Talked to Lenin and received permission for trip to Central Asia (January 12, 1921).

Bujor, M.—veteran of Rumanian working-class and communist movement. Prominent leader of Rumanian Communist Party and Rumanian People's Republic. Received by Lenin (December 1917).

Cachin, M. (1869-1958)—oldest leader of French and international working-class movement; one of founders and leaders of French Communist Party. Participant of Second Congress of Comintern. Member of Central Committee and Politbureau of French Communist Party (1920); member of Presidium of Executive Committee of Comintern (1924). Many years director and publisher of *L'Humanité*. Untiring foe of reaction; champion of peace, democracy and socialism.

Egede-Nissen, A. J. (1868-1953)—prominent leader of Norwegian working-class movement; one of founders and leaders of Norwegian Communist Party. Came to Petrograd with workers' delegation (end of 1917). Received by Lenin (first half of January 1918). Guest of Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets.

Foster, W. Z. (1881-1961)—outstanding leader of American and international communist movement. Member U.S. Communist Party (1921), its Central Committee and Politbureau. Chairman of National Committee of American Communist Party (1938-44). Author of books *The Twilight of World Capitalism, Outline Political History of the Americans, History of the Three Internationals*, etc.

Gallacher, W. (1881-1965)—outstanding leader of British working-class and communist movement. Represented shop stewards' movement at Second Congress of Comintern. One of founders and leaders of British Communist Party. Repeatedly elected to Central Committee and Politbureau. Chairman of Executive Committee of Communist Party (1943-56). President of British Communist Party (1956-63). M.P. (1935-50).

Goode, W.—professor, progressive British public figure. Correspondent of *The Manchester Guardian*. Talked to Lenin (August 20, 1919).

After returning home came out against anti-Soviet slander; participated in *Hands off Soviet Russia* movement.

Grimlund, O. (b. 1893)—Swedish journalist. During First World War—Left-wing Social-Democrat. Delegate to First Congress of Comintern and signatory of the Manifesto to the Workers of the World.

Heckert, F. (1884-1936)—noted leader of German and international working-class movement. One of founders of Spartacus League and German Communist Party. Delegate to Third and Fourth Congresses of Comintern. Irreconcilable foe of fascism.

Katayama, Sen (1859-1933)—outstanding leader of Japanese and international working-class and communist movement. One of founders and leaders of Japanese Communist Party. Member of Executive Committee of Comintern (1921). Died in Moscow; buried on Red Square.

Kolarov, V. (1877-1950)—prominent leader of Bulgarian and international communist movement. Secretary of Central Committee of Bulgarian Communist Party (1919-23). Member of Presidium of Executive Committee of Comintern (1922-43). One of organisers of Resistance Movement during nazi occupation of Bulgaria. After liberation of the country, elected Chairman of Bulgarian Great People's Assembly. Chairman of Council of Ministers of Bulgarian People's Republic (1949-50).

McBride, I.—correspondent of *Christian Science Monitor*. Received by Lenin and given interview (September 1919) which was printed in *Christian Science Monitor* (December 17, 1919).

Minor, R. (1884-1952)—American journalist and artist. Joined Communist Party (1920) and became one of its leaders. Editor of *Daily Worker*, central organ of the Party.

Monmousseau, G. (1883-1960)—prominent leader of French working-class movement; Secretary of General Confederation of Labour. Participated in Second Congress of Trade-Union International Member of Central Committee and Politbureau of French Communist Party (1926-45). One of leaders of Resistance Movement during Hitlerite occupation.

Münzenberg, W. (1889-1940)—leader of working-class and youth movement in Switzerland and Germany. Leader of Swiss Social-Democratic youth organisation (1914-17). After return to Germany—member of Communist Party and its Central Committee. Secretary of Communist Youth International (1919-21).

Nexö, Martin Andersen (1869-1954)—progressive Danish writer. Communist. Opposed anti-Soviet slander. Imprisoned during Hitlerite occupation; escaped from prison. Lived in Sweden, U.S.S.R. and G.D.R. Delegate to Fourth Congress of Comintern. Member of World Peace Council.

Olbracht, I. (1882-1952)—outstanding Czechoslovak writer, one of organisers of Czechoslovak Communist Party, editor of *Rude Pravo*, its central organ. Delegate to Second Congress of Comintern. His books *Pictures of Modern Russia* (1920) and *In the End the People Will Win* (1952) are well known.

Pieck, W. (1876-1960)—outstanding leader of German and international working-class movement; one of founders and leaders of German Communist Party; Chairman of its Central Committee (1933); Chairman of German Socialist Unity Party (G.S.U.P.) (1946). President of German Democratic Republic from time of its foundation (1949). Tireless champion of united, peace-loving, democratic Germany. Repeatedly elected to Executive Committee of Comintern.

Platten, F. (1883-1942)—Swiss Communist. Secretary of Swiss Social-Democratic Party (1912-18). Participated in Zimmerwald and Kienthal Conferences. Organised Lenin's journey from Switzerland to Russia (April 1917). One of founders of Communist International (1919); member of Bureau of Comintern.

Pollitt, H. (1890-1960)—prominent leader of British and international working-class movement. Active participant of *Hands off Soviet Russia* movement. One of founders of British Communist Party; member of its Central Committee and Politbureau. General Secretary B.C.P. (1929). Member of Executive Committee of Comintern (1924-43).

Ramirez, M. D.—General Secretary of Mexican Communist Party (1921). Delegate to Third Congress of Comintern. Represented Mexican General Confederation of Labour at First (Constituent) Congress of Profintern.

Reed, J. (1887-1920)—prominent leader of American working-class movement, writer and publicist. Visited Russia (1917). Hailed October Socialist Revolution and depicted it in *Ten Days that Shook the World* (published in the U.S.A., 1919). Presented author's copy personally to V. I. Lenin during second visit to Russia (end of 1919). Lenin wrote preface to new American edition, but it was published only in 1926. One of founders of U.S. Communist Party. Elected member of Executive Committee of Comintern (1919). Participated in work of Second Congress of Comintern (1920). Died in Moscow (1920); buried on Red Square.

Rovio, K. (1887-1938)—Secretary of Central Committee of Finnish Social-Democratic Youth League; Bolshevik (1905). Actively participated in hiding Lenin (in Finland) from persecution by Kerensky's bourgeois government (August-September 1917). Active participant of Finnish workers' revolution.

Rudaš, L. (1885-1950)—leader of Hungarian working-class movement and participant of Hungarian proletarian revolution (1919). Editor in chief of *Vörös Ujság*, central organ of the Party. Delegate to First Congress of Comintern.

Semard, P. (1887-1942)— leader of French and international working-class movement. Delegate to Second Congress of Comintern, during which met with Lenin several times. Member of Central Committee of French Communist Party from time of its foundation. Member of Executive Committee of Comintern (1924-30). Given up to Hitlerite occupants by Petain's government (1940) and shot after brutal torture.

Sheridan, C. (b. 1885)—English sculptor. Came to Moscow and made

sculpture of Lenin (1920). Spent about two months in Moscow and kept *Moscow Diary*. After return from Russia shared her impressions of Moscow orally and in writing, first in London and then in the U.S.A.

Sillen, H.—veteran of Swedish working-class movement. Participated in meeting of Swedish Left-wing Social-Democrats with Lenin in Stockholm on the latter's way back to Russia (April 1917). Participant of Second Congress of Comintern.

Šmeral, B. (1880-1941)—prominent leader of Czechoslovak and international working-class movement. Publicist. One of founders of Czechoslovak Communist Party; member of its Central Committee. Actively participated in leadership of revolutionary and national-liberation movement of Czechoslovakia. Member of Executive Committee of Comintern (1921-29). Published book *Pravda o sovětovém Rusku* in Prague (1920).

Steinhardt (Gruber), K.—veteran of Austrian working-class movement; one of founders of Austrian Communist Party. Delegate to First, Second and Third Congresses of Comintern; signatory of Comintern Manifesto To the Workers of the World.

Terracini, U. (b. 1895)—leader of Italian working-class movement; one of founders of Italian Communist Party and member of its Central Committee and Executive Committee. Elected to Executive Committee of Comintern at its Third Congress. In fascist prisons and exile (1926-43). Active leader of anti-fascist movement (1943-45). Member of Central Committee of Italian Communist Party (1955).

Tserendorzh, B. (1867-1927)—member of Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (1921). After victory of People's Revolution in Mongolia, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mongolian People's Republic, Prime Minister (1924-27). Received by Lenin as member of Mongolian delegation (1921).

Tsui Tsu-bo. (1899-1935)—progressive writer, prominent leader of Chinese Communist Party. Participated in Third Congress of Comintern. Member and Secretary of Central Committee of Chinese Communist Party (1923-28). People's Commissar of Education of Central Workers' and Peasants' Democratic Government of China (1933). Shot by Kuomintangovites (1935).

Ulbricht, W. (b. 1893)—outstanding leader of German working-class and communist movement. Participant of *Free Germany* movement during Second World War. Elected to Executive Committee of Comintern by Third Congress of Comintern. After rout of fascism—one of founders of G.S.U.P. First Secretary of G.S.U.P. (1953). Chairman of G.D.R. State Council (1960).

Vaillant-Couturier, P. (1892-1937)—prominent leader of French working-class movement. Writer, poet, publicist. One of founders of French Communist Party. Permanent member of Central Committee and Politbureau (1921). Delegate to Third Congress of Comintern. Editor in chief of *L'Humanité* (1935-37).

Wells, H. G. (1866-1946)—outstanding English novelist, one of greatest fantastic-story writers, publicist. Talked to Lenin (1920) and soon afterwards published book *Russia in the Shadows*. During Second World War—anti-fascist. Shortly before death stated: "I am a London voter (Marylebone) and actively support the reviving Communist Party."

Williams, A. R. (1883-1962)—progressive American journalist. Active participant in October Revolution. Organiser of foreign detachment for defence of October gains. Met with Lenin several times. His books on Lenin and October Revolution won world renown.

Yaftali, M.—first Afghan Ambassador Plenipotentiary to Soviet Russia. Talked to Lenin (spring 1921). Afghan Ambassador to U.S.S.R. (1926-28). Member of Afghan delegation to Moscow (1927).

Zápotocký, A. (1884-1957)—prominent leader of Czechoslovak and international working-class and communist movement. Member of Czechoslovak Communist Party from time of its foundation (1921.) Secretary of Central Committee (1922-29). General Secretary of Red Trade Unions (1929-39). Persecuted during fascist occupation of Czechoslovakia. President of Czechoslovak Republic (1953-57).

Zetkin, C. (1857-1933)—outstanding leader of German and international working-class movement, talented authoress, ardent orator and tribune. One of founders of German Communist Party; member of its Central Committee. During First World War advocated revolutionary internationalism. Participant of Congresses of Comintern and member of its leading bodies. Headed International Women's Secretariat of Executive Committee of Comintern.

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