

# THE LIVING AGE

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## LENINE AND HIS PROGRAMME

### A CONSERVATIVE VIEW

BY HENRI CROISIER

It is not my intention to summon this man of hate, who lived only for civil war and for the joy of shedding blood, before the bar of justice. The future will do this, if, indeed, it is not already done before these lines appear. His deeds of blood rise before him and shape themselves into the most crushing indictment which ever could be brought against a man.

It is difficult to judge him with impartiality. Lenine has done too much harm, he has wakened the instincts of anger and hatred of even those who accepted his régime of 'justice and social equality' with resignation. If I undertake the criticism of his work, I shall try to write objectively, to forget the days I spent at Petrograd, those ten months of arbitrary dealing and outrageous vexations; I shall lay aside all that might reveal my hate for this egalitarian ruffian; I shall try, however, to show the limits of that 'liberal spirit' which our ideologues are conferring upon him, and to expose the pretended messiah and infatuated pontiff of those without a country or a belief.

Moreover, if I am to believe the echoes that I hear, I shall only be following in the footsteps of those moderate Socialists who see in Lenine 'only a grotesque destroyer, a doctrinaire hostile to orderly evolution, the bitter and brutal fanatic who has done his best to discredit that communism to which even the wisest of democratic minds were turning.'

I shall hold to this definition in my study of his work.

I know nothing more striking than his life history, nothing more human and tragic. Marked as if by destiny from childhood, he pursues alone, hidden behind pseudonyms, a bloody, grandiloquent and impossible dream. His thought has but one aim, the letting loose of universal uproar. But this irreducible enemy of society, this bigoted defender of the proletariat, knows nothing whatsoever of that life which he aims to rebuild upon new foundations, his journeys to foreign lands have taught him nothing about the mentality of those peoples whom

he pretends to understand; he has had no comprehension of their ideals. His famous *Letter to American Workingmen*, his *Counsels and Instructions for Swiss Comrades*, are better fitted to rouse indignation than the masses; his science is a purely bookish affair with all the gaps which this fact connotes; his brain, imperfectly furnished, is but a kind of chaotic and intellectual hostility. He takes illusion for reality. Lenine is a man of one idea and one dream.

His biography helps us to a better understanding of him. Unlike the majority of Russian revolutionists, Vladimir Oulianof (N. Lenine) was born in the Orthodox faith. He saw the light of day on the 23d of April, 1870, at Simbirsk, in which his father held the post of director general of primary schools.

According to the testimony of his comrades at the *lycée*, Oulianof was a model pupil, the upholder of the honor of the class. Little, sickly, awkward, red-haired and with gimlet eyes, already unsociable, he ransomed his physical defects by solid moral and intellectual qualities. A solitary and a dreamer, they knew that he burned with a hidden flame, but no one foresaw that this flame would one day set fire to Russia and the world. His love of discussion had already marked him out as an able debater; he mastered the professor every time the latter wandered into a digression. Not to be beaten on any point, first in all things, he proved, nevertheless, dead to art; a fact which is quite sufficient to explain the vulgarity of his ideas and of the total absence of æsthetic feeling in them; he pretends to replace form with formulas.

A graduate, he goes to Kazan to begin his law studies. His dream goes with him. He soon becomes the most famous and perhaps the most listened-to propagandist in the University. In

1887 his brother is hanged for having plotted against the person of Alexander III. The proceedings include our hero who is unconditionally expelled. All his life long, he will cherish the hatred born of this experience and spit it in the face of the world.

Forced from his work, he enters upon his real vocation, he begins a commentary of Karl Marx's *Capital* and Lasalle's works. His cult for Karl Marx has something psychically strange about it; he does not make himself his defender or his intellectual son, but his bulldog. For him *Das Kapital* is no longer the work of an economist; the political testament of a closet philosopher, it is the 'Political Gospel of the Future' all in capital letters. A false aphorism 'Workingmen have no country,' gives him an excuse for discussing his theory of internationalism. On the pretext that Marx recommended 'the union of instruction with production,' he speaks imperturbably, of 'free, obligatory, general instruction of the polytechnique type,' this to be dealt out to children of both sexes up to seventeen years.

Five years later we find him at Petersburg establishing contact with the labor groups. Soon he becomes the very soul of the 'Federation of the Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class,' which he founds in 1895. His activity is feverish: propagandist, agitator, lecturer, publicist, clandestine printer, one finds him everywhere, under assumed names. He dwells in his communist Nirvana, and sows those aphorisms and notions which are later to be a part of the credo of Bolshevism. Under the name of Toumine, he fights against the conciliating and bourgeois tendencies of the Socialists of the time. Then he is arrested, and sent to Siberia. And away he goes, with his dream and his fury of bitterness. It is from a jail that he de-

velops party tactics, following what he calls the 'principles of international Socialism.

Released, he goes abroad, prepared for his rôle on the world stage. We find him at the head of the journal *Iskra* (*The Spark*) and the review *Zaria* (*The Dawn*) in both of which he thunders against the 'soft opportunism' of the economists of the Russian revolutionary party. The year 1903 marks a stage in his life; he is consecrated high chief. At the second conference of the party, he declaims against the conciliatory policy of Plekhanof, representative of the minority (in Russian, *menchenstvo*) and after the division which followed, he became a leader of the majority (*bolchenstvo*), hence Bolsheviki.

The attempted revolution of 1905 finds him once more in Russia. It is he who engineers the elections to the second imperial Douma, and to the Socialist congress of London. But soon he is pointed out to Stolypine, victorious Tsarism forces him once more into exile; he goes to a foreign land, and as a member of the Central Committee, becomes one of the standard bearers of world Socialism.

Till 1914, he guides from afar the political lines of the Petersburg journals *Pravda* and *Prosviêchénie*.

The great revolution finds him in Switzerland. We all know how, as an ambassador of Wilhelm's, he had the honor of a special carriage in which to cross Germany. His last words at Selémont to the comrades Grimm and Platten have the insolence of a defiance.

'I am going to prove to you how a man can make history.'

Although there was as yet no question of Bolshevism, Petrograd acclaimed with music, Lenine and his aids; a proof, this, of the mental aberration into which those revolutionaries had strayed who are to-day washing

their hands free of all guilt. Moreover, by this we know that it was not Lenine who destroyed the internal structure of the Russian State. Such a belief is false. He only trampled on what had already been broken down, the army had been for a long time disorganized, and Prikase No. 1 was soon to destroy it utterly; more than 10,000 officers had already paid with their lives for their devotion to duty; the propaganda of Lenine simply converted this force into a band of pillaging brigands. The Fleet — it soon became of use only as an illustration that boats will float; the depots of the Baltic, Kronstadt itself, were but empty walls, the lust for pillage had done its work, the officers, drowned by hundreds under the ice of the Gulf of Finland were no longer by to call the men to their duty; from the beginning Lenine was closely bound to these sailor mutineers who, decked like loose women, stinking of cheap brandy and blood, made themselves the champions of the fouler work of Bolshevism. The Ministry? The Agrarian Question? There, too, the hour of the hunt had sounded; Lenine, lacking hounds, was soon to unleash his wolves and hyenas.

The programme applied by Lenine in Russia was not the work of a day; it is the result of many international social democratic conferences. It is in truth a kind of reversal to primitive times, a general earthquake whose results it is impossible to predict. I hasten to add that this programme is based on false principles and outworn aphorisms. Lenine, a Russian and a former subject of the Tsars, was to introduce into this programme an extreme element, a class despotism of the most brutal type.

Here are the leading ideas of this famous programme.

Bourgeois capitalism is exploiting more and more the mass of the pro-

letariat. Industrial superproduction, far from benefiting the workingman, tends rather to his enslavement.

If we would remedy these evils, we must bear in mind:

In replacing private property intended for the production and the circulation of products by common property, and in introducing an organized social system of production intended to secure the well-being of society, the social revolution of the proletariat will suppress the division of society by classes, and by so doing will liberate all oppressed humanity; this will be the end of all exploitation of one class by another.

The condition governing such a social revolution is the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is to say, the conquest of political power by the proletariat, a thing which will permit it to overcome the resistance of all its exploiters. In taking upon itself the task of making the proletariat capable of accomplishing its great historic mission, international Socialism organizes the proletariat into an independent political party opposed to all bourgeois parties, guides all the manifestations of the class struggle, teaches the proletariat the irreconcilable contradiction between its interests and those of its exploiters, and illumines the masses concerning the historic importance and the necessary conditions of the coming social revolution.

The accomplishment of this task first requires:

'An immediate break with the bourgeois process of paralyzing Socialism which has turned the higher parties of official Socialism from their duty. This process of paralyzing is sustained on the one hand by social-chauvinism, word-socialism, which, by its rallying cry, "the defense of the home land," protects the interest of its own bourgeois brigands; on the other hand by the *soi-*

*disant* "centre" groups which are allied with the social patriots, etc. . . .'

Secondly:

'The proletariat party cannot be satisfied with the parliamentary and bourgeois republic, which, the world over, preserves and strives to preserve the monarchic instruments for the oppression of the masses—*viz.*, the police: the army and the privileged bureaucracy.'

Finally:

'The party struggles for the republic of the proletariat and the peasantry in which the police and the army will be suppressed and replaced by the general arming of the people. All persons occupying a public post shall be liable to removal at any instant at the demand of a majority of their electors, the salaries paid to these people, without a single exception, shall not exceed the salary of a good workingman.'

This is but the general, the universal programme, the canvas on which each country, each State, according to its existing constitution, will draw in the lines necessary to the application of the social programme in its entirety.

It is here that Lenine begins to go astray; we are led to doubt his intelligence. Russia, mediæval and feudal, half Byzantine, half Asiatic, but represented in the ranks of the social democracy by the most irreconcilable of extremists, now pretends to catch up with the world by the elaboration of a programme, of maximum claims which will leave far behind, in the audacity of its conceptions, those programmes developed by the most cultivated nations. Of such a nature is the table of commandments which stands to-day in Moscow, base of the actual Russian confusion. If that body of law has served as a base for the reputation of Lenine, let us hasten to say that never was a reputation more unstable, more usurped. One asks one's self how a

man of talent could so mistake the distance that lay between the *ci-devant* Russia and the ideal of his dreams. Lenine has shown a kind of lack of appreciation of realities, a certain aberration of common sense which would shame the last of the titular counselors of the ex-empire of the Tsars! He is muddling along in a Utopia; only Lenine could have the courage to find, all at once and with one stroke of the pen, a definite solution of the troubles of Russia and of all the world, a remedy for those most complex social and economic disorders which for three hundred years have troubled a nation of a hundred and twenty-four million souls. His brain must be closed to the knowledge of evolution to give birth to such an absurd notion of the State; and take note, that he appears to be the last to doubt of the success and the realization of his dream. 'We are invincible even as the world-wide proletarian revolution itself is invincible!'<sup>\*</sup> Nevertheless, his failure is to-day seen everywhere. Like all tyrants, Lenine is deceived by his acolytes; his empire exists no longer; prince of a band of light-fingered illuminati, he is hardly the chief of several oases bound together by telegraph wires and specks of mud and blood!

Here are some extracts from the programme of the Bolsheviki, or, more properly the *Social-Democrat Worker's Party of Russia*. I cannot, unhappily, give them *in extenso*; such a proceeding would require too much space. I shall hold to the important matters.

The Constitution of the democratic Republic of Russia should guarantee among other things:

1. The autocracy of the people.
2. The general electoral right, equal and direct for all men and women citizens who have reached the age of eighteen years. The ballot to be secret.

<sup>\*</sup> *Letters to American Workmen.*

3. Proportional representation at all elections.

4. Both delegates and elected candidates of office to be liable to instant removal at the demand of a majority of their electors.

5. Local self-governments to be instituted, self-government for all regions presenting special conditions of life or whose population is of a special nature.

6. Suppression of all local or regional authorities named by the State.

7. Unlimited liberty (*sic.*) of conscience, speech, the press, etc.

8. Acknowledgment of all local languages, suppression of any obligatory national language.

9. Acknowledgment of the right of all the nations which form the Russian Empire to separate themselves and form their own States. The Russian Peoples Republic should draw to itself other peoples and nationalities not by violence but by the spontaneous expression of a common will towards the creation of a common State.

10. Separation of the Church from the State and of the School from the Church, complete laicization of the school system.

11. As a fundamental necessity to the democratization of the national budget, the party demands the suppression of all indirect taxes and the introduction of a progressive tax on all incomes and inheritances; moreover, the development of capitalism and the disorder created by the imperialist war leads the party to demand the nationalization of banks, capitalist syndicates, etc.

In the hope of suppressing the 'slavery' which still weighs upon the peasant, and of developing freely the class war in rural districts (*sic.*) the party desires

1. The immediate confiscation of lands belonging to the upper landholding class — thus the lands of the Crown, the Church, etc.

2. The immediate transmission of all lands to the hands of Peasants' Councils.

3. The further nationalization of all lands in the State: this nationalization to mean the transmission of the property right of these lands to the State which shall have the authority to divide these lands among democratic elements.

4. That the initiative of the peasants who have in certain localities gathered to-

gether the instruments of production — ploughs, agricultural machines, etc. — and have handed them over to a central committee, should be sustained.

5. That the proletarians and demi-proletarians of the rural regions should be encouraged to demand the transformation of the farms of the gentlemen landholders into model farms run for the public by councils of rural workmen.

Such is the famous programme. It is not necessary to study it long in order to discover its omissions. But let us first put them aside and try rather to arrive at a well-knit idea of the *ensemble* of the Bolshevik programme. Once you have grasped it, you will be struck by its purely Utopian character; note how it reeks of hatred; it is the hatred of Lenine which is at work, not that of the Russian masses whom he has massacred by the thousand just to harden his Red Guards; the programme scarcely hides that spirit of vengeance bred from a sickly sentimentalism and devout commiseration for the martyrdom of a people, a martyrdom far more illusory than real, yet savagely held to by generations of dreamers who invented the 'religion of suffering.'

Let us now try to get at the heart of the system.

It reveals a new conception of the State which one may call the Bolshevik idea, a narrow, unilateral, inhuman system which may be thus expressed. 'If the State has been the means by which the bourgeoisie oppresses the proletariat, the proletariat, arrived at political power, will use the State to oppress the bourgeoisie.'

Intransigent and intolerant in its

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false simplicity, this conception of the State admits no mediating idea, no notion of equilibrium or compromise. Speak not of democracy or even of classic Socialism — these ideas, no matter how wide or how generous they may be, will mean to Lenine and his friends only enslavement by the bourgeoisie. No; for the bourgeois State, source of all evil, shall be substituted the proletariat State, the source of all that is beautiful and good, and that State shall be given maximum powers.

There is in this notion a filtered cynicism which I do not relish.

I know that Lenine adds that the Socialist State shall have such a rôle only during the period of transition, that is, during the dictatorship of the proletariat, and that the State will once more become the regulator of the political and economic life of the country once the difference between classes no longer exists. And this, to my mind, is only another proof of the legislator's *naïveté*; he believes in the possibility of dissolving such a difference. Must we tell him that the bourgeoisie, though financially ruined, will not abdicate its moral and intellectual superiority? I offer as testimony many examples observed in Soviet Russia in which the middle classes, turned into bootblacks, errand runners, porters, and trench diggers, have from the very first overwhelmed their professional rivals, while the proletarians, transmogrified into public officials and factory managers, have pitifully failed, betrayed by their incapacity and the accusation of their conscience.



# MY IDEA OF BOLSHEVISM

BY ROSA LUXEMBURG

THE revolution of the proletariat now-occurring-can-have-no-other purpose and no other result than to bring about Socialism. To this end the working class must concentrate all political authority in its own hands. Political authority is only a means to an end with us Socialists. The end for which we must employ that authority is the radical overturn of our whole economic system.

To-day all the wealth of the country, the largest and the best tracts of land, the mines and the shops and the factories belong to a few junkers and private capitalists. The great mass of workingmen receive from these junkers and capitalists a bare subsistence in return for their laborious toil. The purpose of the present economic organization is to enrich a small number of idlers.

This condition must be abolished. All the wealth of society, the land and the soil with all the treasures which they contain in their bosom or on their surface, all the factories and shops, must be taken out of the hands of exploiters and made the common property of the nation. The primary duty of a real labor government is to make the principal agencies of production national property by a series of decrees, and to place these agencies directly under public control. This is the first real step and the most difficult step in reconstructing our system of production upon a new basis.

To-day the production in each individual establishment is controlled by individual capitalists at their own

discretion. These owners determine what shall be produced, how it shall be produced, and where, when, and how the goods manufactured shall be sold. The workers have nothing to say in these matters. They are only living machines for performing special processes.

Under a Socialist organization of society all this must be changed. The private owner vanishes. The primary purpose of production is no longer to enrich individuals but to provide for the community the means of satisfying its wants. For this purpose factories, shops, and farms must be reorganized in accord with this new point of view.

First, if the real purpose of production is to provide a respectable standard of life for everyone, with adequate food, clothing, and an opportunity to satisfy higher cravings, then in that case the productivity of labor must be much greater than it is to-day. The fields must produce larger crops, the factories must adopt the most efficient processes and machinery; our coal and ore mines must be developed to attain the greatest possible results. It follows that socialization must extend first of all to our greatest industrial and agricultural enterprises. We do not need and do not desire to take away the property of the small farmer and the small mechanic, who employ their independent labor upon a piece of ground or in a workshop. As time goes on they will voluntarily join us when they perceive the advantage that Socialism presents over private ownership.