

# Stalin: On Lenin



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We are reprinting Stalin's speeches and articles on Lenin to mark the hundredth anniversary of Lenin's birth. Three of the items deal with Lenin's life as founder and leader of the Bolshevik Party. The fourth is the speech on the death of Lenin.

After Lenin's death there was a serious danger of the Bolshevik leadership becoming aimless and fragmented, and of the working class being swamped by the

remnants of the old Russia that existed all around. The most eminent Bolshevik leaders, such as Trotsky and Zinoviev, fostered elegant and sophisticated moods of despair. On hearing of Lenin's death, Trotsky sought for literary phrases with which to express his refined feelings. He searched for a posture which would impress on history Trotsky's reaction to Lenin's death.

Stalin cut through the elegant, posturing despair of the intelligentsia with a declaration of revolutionary intent, in what is certainly the most remarkable funeral speech ever delivered. The death of a great working class revolutionary, at a time when the first proletarian revolution was facing enormous difficulties, was marked with a speech appropriate to the event, at once a lament and a manifesto, and it was followed by the realisation in practice of the declared intention.

IRISH COMMUNIST ORGANISATION, MARCH 1970.

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## THE ORGANIZER AND LEADER OF THE RUSSIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

*(On the Fiftieth Anniversary of Lenin's Birth)*

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There are two groups of Marxists. Both are working under the flag of Marxism and consider themselves 'genuine Marxists'. Nevertheless, they are far from being identical. More than that. A complete gulf divides them, for their respective methods of work are diametrically opposed to each other.

The first group usually confines itself to the superficial recognition of Marxism, to solemnly proclaiming it. Unable, or unwilling to study the essence of Marxism, unable, or unwilling to apply it in practical life, it transforms the living revolutionary propositions, of Marxism into dead, meaningless formulæ. It bases its activities, not on experience, not on the results of practical work, but on quotations from Marx. It takes its guiding lines and directives, not from an analysis of living reality, but from analogies and historical parallels. Discrepancy between word and deed—such is the principal disease from which this group suffers. Hence its disappointment and its constant discontent with its fate, which often misleads it and leaves it 'fooled'. The name of this group is Menshevism (in Russia), opportunism (in Europe). At the London Congress, Comrade Tyshko (Yogisches) rather aptly characterized this group by saying that it does not stand, but *lies* on the Marxian point of view.

The second group, on the contrary, shifts the centre of gravity of the question from the superficial recognition of Marxism to its realization, to its practical application. Indicating the ways and means of realizing Marxism in accordance with the given situation, changing the ways and means when the situation changes—this is what this group concentrates its attention upon mainly. It takes its directives and guiding lines not from historical analogies and parallels, but from the study of surrounding conditions. In its activities it relies, not on quotations and aphorisms but on practical experience, testing every step it takes by experience, learning from its mistakes and teaching others to build a new life. This, properly

speaking, explains why in the activities of this group there is no discrepancy between word and deed, and why the teachings of Marx fully preserve their living, revolutionary force. To this group fully apply the words of Marx that: Marxists cannot rest content with explaining the world, they must go farther, and change it. The name of this group is Bolshevism, Communism.

The organizer and leader of this group is V. I. Lenin.

## I. LENIN AS THE ORGANIZER OF THE RUSSIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

The formation of the proletarian party in Russia proceeded in special conditions, which differed from the conditions prevailing in the West at the time the workers' parties were organized there. Whereas in the West, in France, in Germany, the workers' party emerged from the trade unions, in conditions in which the trade unions and the parties existed legally, in the conditions that prevailed after a bourgeois revolution, when the bourgeois parliament existed, when the bourgeoisie, having got into power, stood confronting the proletariat, in Russia, on the contrary, the formation of the proletarian party proceeded under the rule of the cruelest absolutism, in the expectation of a bourgeois-democratic revolution; when, on the one hand, the Party organizations were filled to overflowing with bourgeois 'legal Marxist'<sup>1</sup> elements who were thirsting to utilize the working-class for the bourgeois revolution, and when, on the other hand, the best Party workers were being torn out of the ranks of the Party by the Tsarist gendarmerie at a time when the growing spontaneous revolutionary movement called for the existence of a steadfast, solid and sufficiently secret fighting corps of revolutionaries, that would be able to lead the movement to the overthrow of absolutism.

The task was to separate the sheep from the goats, to separate from alien elements, to organize cadres of experienced revolutionaries in the localities, to give them a clear programme and firm

<sup>1</sup> The name given to a group of self-styled 'Marxists' at the beginning of the twentieth century, of whom Peter Struve was the most prominent, who by cutting out the very core of Marxism, the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, managed to publish their views in the legal press.

tactics, and finally to gather these cadres into a single militant organization of professional revolutionaries sufficiently secret to be able to withstand the raids of the gendarmes, but at the same time sufficiently connected with the masses to be able to lead them into the struggle at the required moment.

The Mensheviks, i.e., those who 'lie' on the Marxian point of view, solved this problem very simply; they argued as follows: in view of the fact that in the West the workers' party emerged from non-party trade unions which fight for the improvement of the economic conditions of the working-class, then, as far as possible, the same thing should be done in Russia, i.e., for the time being to keep strictly to the 'economic struggle of the workers against the employers and the government' in the localities without creating an all-Russian militant organization and later . . . later, if trade unions do not arise by that time, to convene a non-party workers' congress and declare that to be the party.

The fact that this 'Marxian plan' of the Mensheviks, which was utopian in Russian conditions, nevertheless pre-supposed extensive agitational work directed towards degrading the idea of a party, towards destroying the Party cadres, towards leaving the proletariat without a party and surrendering the working class to the mercy of the liberals—the Mensheviks, and perhaps even many Bolsheviks, hardly suspected at that time.

The great service Lenin rendered to the Russian proletariat and its Party was that he revealed the danger of the Menshevik organization 'plan' even at the time when this 'plan' was as yet in its embryonic stage, when even the authors of this 'plan' were able to perceive its outlines only with difficulty, and that, having revealed this danger, he commenced a furious attack against the organizational slovenliness of the Mensheviks and concentrated all the attention of the practical workers on this question. For this was a matter that affected the very existence of the Party, the life or death of the Party.

To establish an all-Russian political newspaper, which was to serve as the centre of attraction of Party forces, to organize steadfast Party cadres in the localities as 'regular units' of the Party, to gather these cadres into a single whole through the medium of a newspaper, and to unite them into an all-Russian

militant party with sharply defined limits, with a clear programme, firm tactics and a single will—this was the plan that Lenin developed in his well-known pamphlets: *What is to be Done?* and *One Step Forward Two Steps Back*.<sup>1</sup> The merit of this plan was that it fully answered the requirements of Russian conditions, and skilfully generalized the organizational experience of the best practical workers. In the struggle for this plan, the majority of the Russian practical workers resolutely followed Lenin and were not dismayed by the prospect of a split. The victory of this plan laid the foundation for the solid and steered Communist Party, which has no equal in the world.

Very often our comrades (not only the Mensheviks!) accused Lenin of having an excessive inclination for polemics and splits, for relentless struggle against conciliators, etc. Undoubtedly, both the one and the other was the case at one time. It is not difficult to understand, however, that our Party could not have rid itself of internal weakness and diffusiveness, it could not have reached its intrinsic power and strength had it not expelled the non-proletarian opportunist elements from its midst. In the epoch of bourgeois rule the proletarian party can grow and become strong only to the extent that it wages a struggle against the opportunist, anti-revolutionary and anti-Party elements in its own midst, as well as in the midst of the working class. Lassalle was right when he said: 'A party strengthens itself by purging itself'. The accusers usually referred to the German Party in which 'unity' flourished at that time. But in the first place, not all unity is a symptom of strength, and secondly, it is sufficient to glance now at the late German Party, which is now torn into three parties, to realize that the 'unity' between Scheidemann and Noske on the one hand and Liebknecht and Luxemburg on the other was false and a sham. Who knows, perhaps it would have been better for the German proletariat had the revolutionary elements of the

<sup>1</sup> These are two of the most important works in which Lenin developed his conception of the kind of revolutionary party that was necessary in order to lead the proletarian revolution. Originally published in 1902 and 1904 respectively, they are now both obtainable in English (published by Lawrence & Wishart Ltd.). The reader who wishes to find them summarized should consult the *Short History of the C.P.S.U. (B)*, pp. 34-38 and pp. 46-52.

German Party split from the anti-revolutionary elements in time. . . . No, Lenin was a thousand times right in leading the Party along the path of relentless struggle against the anti-Party and anti-revolutionary elements. For it was only as a result of such an organizational policy that our Party was able to create that internal unity and astonishing solidarity with which it was able painlessly to emerge from the July crisis<sup>1</sup> under Kerensky, carry through on its own shoulders the October uprising, to pass through the crisis of the Brest-Litovsk period<sup>2</sup> without shocks, organize the victory over the Entente<sup>3</sup> and finally acquire that unprecedented flexibility thanks to which it is able at any moment to reform its ranks and concentrate hundreds of thousands of its members on any great work that has to be undertaken, without causing confusion in its midst.

## 2. LENIN AS THE LEADER OF THE RUSSIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

But the organizational merits of the Russian Communist Party represent only one aspect of the matter. The Party could not have grown and become strong so quickly had not the political content of its work and its programme and tactics corresponded to Russian conditions, had not its slogans inflamed the masses of the workers and pushed forward the revolutionary movement. We will now pass to this aspect of the matter.

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the crisis that occurred in July 1917, when the growing demand from the workers for the transfer of power from Kerensky's Provisional Government to the Soviets almost led to an armed clash. This was avoided by the Bolsheviks, who realized that the moment for an armed uprising against the Provisional Government had not yet arrived, but the suppression of the militant workers by the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries which resulted, meant that the peaceful period of the revolution had now ended. See *Short History of the C.P.S.U. (B)*, pp. 191-195.

<sup>2</sup> The treaty of Brest-Litovsk, by which peace was concluded by the Bolsheviks with the Germans, was signed on 23rd February, 1918. Negotiations had been proceeding since December, but the opposition of Trotsky, Bukharin, Radek and others, who first of all delayed the negotiations and then broke them off, resulted in much more onerous terms being imposed by the German Government. See *Short History of the C.P.S.U. (B)*, pp. 214-219.

<sup>3</sup> From 1918 to 1920, after the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, the Soviet power was confronted by the interventionist armies of the Entente powers, Britain, France, Japan and U.S.A., who supported the White Armies of Denikin, Wrangel, etc., in the Civil War.

The Russian bourgeois-democratic revolution (1905) proceeded under conditions that differed from those prevailing in the West during revolutionary upheavals, for example, in France and Germany. Whereas the revolution in the West developed in the conditions of the period of manufacture<sup>1</sup> and of undeveloped class struggle, when the proletariat was weak and numerically small and did not have its own Party able to formulate its demands, and when the bourgeoisie was sufficiently revolutionary for the purpose of imbuing the workers and peasants with confidence in itself and to lead them in the struggle against the aristocracy—in Russia, on the contrary, the revolution began (1905) in the conditions of the machine period and developed class struggle; when the Russian proletariat, relatively numerous and solidified by capitalism, had already waged a number of battles against the bourgeoisie, had its own Party, which was more solid than the bourgeois Party, had its own class demands, and when the Russian bourgeoisie, which, moreover, was living on the contracts it received from the Government, was sufficiently frightened by the revolutionary temper of the proletariat to seek an alliance with the Government and the landlords against the workers and peasants. The fact that the Russian revolution flared up as a result of the military defeats suffered on the fields of Manchuria,<sup>2</sup> merely accelerated events without, however, changing the nature of things.

The situation demanded that the proletariat should take the leadership of the revolution, rally around itself the revolutionary peasants and conduct a determined fight simultaneously against Tsarism and the bourgeoisie with a view to the complete democratization of the country and the protection of its class interests.

The Mensheviks, however, those very Mensheviks who 'lay' on the Marxian point of view, solved the problem in their own way; they argued as follows: as the Russian revolution is a bourgeois revolution, and as in bourgeois revolutions the representatives of the bourgeoisie lead (*see* the history of the French and German revolutions), the proletariat cannot win the hegemony in the Russian revolution; leadership must be left to the Russian bourgeoisie (the very bourgeoisie which betrays the revolution),

<sup>1</sup> That is to say before the 'industrial revolution'.

<sup>2</sup> In the Russo-Japanese war, which began in 1904.

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the peasantry also should be left to the care of the bourgeoisie, while the proletariat should remain in the position of an extreme left opposition.

And these vulgar refrains from bad liberal songs were presented by the Mensheviks as the last word of 'genuine' Marxism! . . .

The great service Lenin rendered to the Russian revolution was that he exposed the very roots of the futility of the historical parallels which the Mensheviks drew, and exposed the danger of the Menshevik 'scheme of the revolution' which surrendered the cause of the workers to the mercy of the bourgeoisie. The revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, instead of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie; boycott of the Bulygin Duma<sup>1</sup> and armed insurrection, instead of going into the Duma and participating in its work; the idea of forming a 'Left bloc' when the Duma was after all convened, and the utilization of the Duma tribune for the purpose of carrying on the struggle outside of the Duma, instead of a Cadet Ministry and the reactionary 'saving' of the Duma; the fight against the Cadet Party<sup>2</sup> as a counter-revolutionary force, instead of entering into a bloc with it—such was the tactical plan that Lenin developed in his celebrated pamphlets: *Two Tactics*<sup>3</sup> and *The Victory of the Cadets*.

The merit of this plan was that it frankly and resolutely formulated the class demands of the proletariat in the epoch of the *bourgeois-democratic revolution* in Russia, facilitated the transition to the socialist revolution, and bore within itself the embryo of the idea of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. In the struggle for this tactical plan the majority of the Russian practical workers resolutely and irrevocably followed Lenin. The victory of this

<sup>1</sup> In a futile attempt to stem the revolutionary wave in 1905, the Tsar instructed Bulygin to convene a Duma, for deliberative purposes only, not legislative. As a result of the Bolshevik boycott this measure proved hopelessly ineffective. When later another Duma was convened, the Bolsheviks supported it, since by that time the revolution was on the defensive.

<sup>2</sup> Cadet is an abbreviation of Constitutional Democrats, the party of the liberal bourgeoisie.

<sup>3</sup> Written in 1905, this pamphlet is available in English in the *Little Lenin Library* (No. 17). Selected chapters are also published in the *Selected Works* (Vol. III), and a summary is given in the *Short History of the C.P.S.U. (B)*, pp. 65-76.

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plan laid the foundation for the revolutionary tactics by which our Party is now shaking the foundations of world imperialism.

The subsequent development of events, the four years of imperialist war and the shatterings of the whole of national economy, the February Revolution and the celebrated diarchy<sup>1</sup>, the Provisional Government as the hotbed of bourgeois counter-revolution and the Petrograd Soviet as the form of the nascent proletarian dictatorship, the October insurrection and the dispersion of the Constituent Assembly, the abolition of bourgeois parliamentarism and the proclamation of the Republic of Soviets, the transformation of the imperialist war into civil war and the attack of world imperialism in conjunction with the 'Marxists'-in-words against the proletarian revolution, and finally, the wretched position of the Mensheviks who clung to the 'Constituent' and who were thrown overboard by the proletariat and washed by the waves of the revolution to the shores of capitalism—all this merely confirmed the correctness of the principle of the revolutionary tactics formulated by Lenin in his *Two Tactics*. The party which possessed such a heritage could boldly sail forth without fearing the rocks.

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In our time of proletarian revolution, when every Party slogan and every sentence uttered by a leader is tested by deeds, the proletariat makes special demands of its leaders. History knows proletarian leaders, leaders in stormy times, practical leaders, leaders who are self-sacrificing and bold, but who are weak in theory. The masses do not soon forget the names of such leaders. Such, for example, are Lassalle in Germany, Blanqui in France. But the movement as a whole cannot live merely on reminiscences: it must have a clear goal (programme), a firm line (tactics).

There is also another type of leader: peace time leaders who are strong in theory, but weak in matters of organization and practical work. Such leaders are popular only among the upper stratum of

<sup>1</sup> Stalin refers to the period of 'dual power', between the February and October Revolutions; on the one hand, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, represented by the Provisional Government, on the other the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, represented by the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

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the proletariat, and then only for a certain time; when the revolutionary epoch is ushered in, when revolutionary, practical slogans are demanded from leaders, the theoreticians leave the stage and give way to new men. Such, for example, were Plekhanov in Russia and Kautsky in Germany.

In order to retain the post of leader of the proletarian revolution and of the proletarian party, one must combine within oneself theoretical power with practical organizational experience of the proletarian movement. P. Axelrod, when he was a Marxist, wrote about Lenin that he 'happily combined within himself the experience of a good practical worker, a theoretical education and a wide political outlook.' What Mr. Axelrod, the ideologist of 'cultured' capitalism, would now say about Lenin, it is not difficult to guess. But for us who know Lenin intimately, and who are able to look at the matter objectively, there can be no doubt that Lenin has fully retained these old qualities. Incidentally, it is in this that one must seek an explanation for the fact that it is Lenin, and precisely Lenin, who is to-day the leader of the most powerful and most steed proletarian Party in the world.

(*Pravda*, No. 86, 23 April, 1920.)

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I do not think we ought to write about 'Comrade Lenin's Convalescence' now that his period of convalescence is drawing to a close and Comrade Lenin is soon returning to work. Moreover, my impressions are so numerous and so precious that it is not altogether expedient to write about them in a short newspaper article such as the editors of *Pravda* have asked for. Nevertheless, since the editors insist, I must write.

At the front I had occasion to meet old fighters who, after spending several days and nights 'on end' in continuous battles, without rest or sleep, returned from battle looking like shadows, utterly washed out. But after sleeping '18 hours on end' they rose refreshed for new battles without which they 'could not live'. When I first visited him, at the end of July, after six weeks' interval, Comrade Lenin made precisely this impression upon me, of an old fighter who had managed to recuperate after exhausting continuous battles, and was refreshed after his rest. Refreshed and recuperated, but with traces of fatigue, of over-tiredness.

'I must not read newspapers,' remarked Comrade Lenin ironically, 'I must not talk about politics, I carefully avoid every scrap of paper lying on the table for fear that it may be a newspaper and that a breach of discipline may result.'

I laughed and praised Comrade Lenin's discipline to the skies. And then we laughed at the doctors because they cannot understand that professional politicians cannot avoid talking about politics when they visit each other.

What is astonishing is Comrade Lenin's thirst for information, and his eagerness, his unrestrainable eagerness, to get back to work. It is evident that he is starved for work. The trial of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, Genoa and the Hague, the prospects of the harvest, industry and finance—all these questions come tripping

<sup>1</sup> First published in the illustrated supplement to *Pravda* No. 215, 24 September, 1922. The supplement was entitled 'Comrade Lenin's Convalescence.'

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one after the other. He is in no hurry to express his opinion, complaining that he is out of touch with what's happening. Mainly he asks questions and lets the replies sink in. He brightened up very much when he learned that the prospects of the harvest were good.

I found an altogether different picture a month later. This time Comrade Lenin was surrounded by heaps of books and newspapers (he was permitted to read and to talk about politics without limit). No traces of fatigue, of over-tiredness, were visible. There were no signs of that nervous eagerness for work—the starvation for work had passed. Calmness and confidence had fully returned to him. It is our old Lenin, slyly looking at his visitor, screwing up his eye. . . .

And so our conversation this time was of a more animated character.

The internal situation . . . the harvest . . . the condition of industry . . . the rate of the ruble . . . the Budget. . . .

'The situation is serious. But the worst days are over. The harvest will radically improve things. An improvement in industry and finance must set in after the harvest. The thing now is to relieve the state of unnecessary expenditure by reducing the staffs of government offices and enterprises and improving their quality. In this, special firmness is needed; and if we display it we shall get out of our difficulties, get out of them for certain.'

The foreign situation . . . the Entente . . . the behaviour of France . . . Great Britain and Germany . . . the role of America. . . .

'They are greedy and hate each other profoundly. They will come to blows. There is no need for us to hurry. Our path is the right one: we are for peace and agreement, but we are opposed to bondage and to agreements on terms of bondage. We must hold fast to the tiller and pursue our course, yielding neither to flattery nor to threats.'

The Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks; their furious agitation against Soviet Russia. . . .

'Yes, they have set themselves the aim of discrediting Soviet Russia. They are helping the imperialists in their fight against Soviet Russia. They have fallen into the mire of capitalism and



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are rolling towards the precipice. Let them roll. They have been dead a long time as far as the working class is concerned.'

The White press . . the émigrés . . . the incredible legends spread about Lenin's death, giving the minutest details. . . .

Comrade Lenin smiles and remarks: 'Let them lie and console themselves; we must not deprive the dying of their last consolation.'

## ON THE DEATH OF LENIN

*Speech delivered at the Second Congress of Soviets of the U.S.S.R.*

*26 January, 1924*

Comrades, we Communists are people of a special mould. We are made of special material. We are those who form the army of the great proletarian strategist, the army of Comrade Lenin. There is nothing higher than the honour to belong to this army. There is nothing higher than the title of member of the Party founded and led by Comrade Lenin. It is not given to all to be members of such a Party. It is not given to all to withstand the stress and storm that accompanies membership of such a Party. Sons of the working-class, sons of poverty and struggle, sons of incredible privation and heroic effort—such are the ones who must first of all be members of such a Party. That is why the Leninist Party, the Communist Party, at the same time calls itself the Party of the working-class.

*In departing from us, Comrade Lenin bequeathed to us the duty of holding aloft and guarding the purity of the great title of member of the Party. We vow to you, Comrade Lenin, that we will fulfil your behest with honour!*

For twenty-five years, Comrade Lenin reared our Party and finally made it into the strongest and most steeled workers' Party in the world.

The blows of Tsarism and its henchmen, the fury of the bourgeoisie and the landlords, the armed attacks of Kolchak and Denikin, the armed intervention of England and France, the lies and slander of the hundred-mouthed bourgeois press, all these scorpions persistently hurled themselves at our Party during the course of a quarter of a century. But our Party stood firm as a rock, repelled the innumerable blows of its enemies and led the working-class forward to victory. In the midst of fierce battles our Party forged the unity and solidarity of its ranks. And by its unity and solidarity it achieved victory over the enemies of the working-class.

*In departing from us, Comrade Lenin bequeathed to us the duty of guarding the unity of our Party like the apple of our eye. We vow to you, Comrade Lenin, that we will also fulfil this behest of yours with honour!*

Hard and unbearable is the lot of the working-class. Painful and burdensome are the sufferings of the toilers. Slaves and slave-owners, serfs and feudal lords, peasants and landlords, workers and capitalists, oppressed and oppressors—such has been the structure of the world for ages, and such it remains to-day in the overwhelming majority of countries. Scores and hundreds of times in the course of centuries have the toilers tried to throw their oppressors off their backs and become masters of their own fate. But every time, defeated and disgraced, they were compelled to retreat, their hearts burning with a sense of wrong and humiliation, anger and despair, and they turned their eyes to the unknown heavens, where they hoped to find salvation. The chains of slavery remained intact, or else the old chains were exchanged for new ones equally burdensome and humiliating. Only in our country have the oppressed and suppressed masses of toilers succeeded in throwing off the rule of the landlords and capitalists and in putting in its place the rule of the workers and peasants. You know, comrades, and now the whole world admits this, that this gigantic struggle was led by Comrade Lenin and his Party. The greatness of Lenin lies first of all in the fact that he, by creating the Republic of Soviets, showed by deeds to the oppressed masses of the whole world that hope of salvation is not lost, that the rule of the landlords and capitalists is not everlasting, that the kingdom of labour *can be* created by the efforts of the toilers themselves, that the kingdom of labour must be created *on earth* and not in heaven. By that he inflamed the hearts of the workers and peasants of the whole world with the hope of liberation. This explains why the name of Lenin has become the most beloved name to the toiling and exploited masses.

*In departing from us, Comrade Lenin bequeathed to us the duty of guarding and strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat. We vow to you, Comrade Lenin, that we will spare no effort to fulfil also this behest of yours with honour!*

The dictatorship of the proletariat was created in our country on the basis of the alliance between the workers and the peasants. This is the first and fundamental basis of the Republic of Soviets. The workers and peasants could not have vanquished the capitalists and the landlords without such an alliance. The workers could not have routed the capitalists without the support of the peasants. The peasants could not have routed the landlords without the leadership of the workers. This is shown by the whole history of the civil war in our country. But the struggle to strengthen the Republic of Soviets is far from ended yet—it has merely assumed a new form. Before, the alliance between the workers and peasants bore the form of a military alliance; for it was directed against Kolchak and Denikin. Now the alliance between the workers and peasants must assume the form of economic collaboration between town and country, between the workers and peasants; for it is directed against the merchant and the kulak; for its object is to secure that the peasants and workers mutually supply each other with all they need. You know that nobody pursued this task so persistently as Comrade Lenin did.

*In departing from us, Comrade Lenin bequeathed to us the duty of strengthening with all our might the alliance between the workers and the peasants. We vow to you, Comrade Lenin, that we will fulfil also this behest of yours with honour!*

The second foundation of the Republic of Soviets is the alliance of the toiling nationalities of our country. Russians and Ukrainians, Bashkirs and Byelorussians, Georgians and Azerbaijanians, Armenians and Daghestans, Tartars and Kirghiz, Uzbeks and Turkomans—all are equally interested in strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat. Not only does the dictatorship of the proletariat release these peoples from their chains and oppression, but these peoples, by their unbounded loyalty to the Republic of Soviets and their readiness to make sacrifices for it, release our Republic of Soviets from the designs and sorties of the enemies of the working-class. That is why Comrade Lenin tirelessly urged upon us the necessity for establishing a voluntary alliance of the peoples of our country, the necessity for their fraternal collaboration within the framework of a Union of Republics.

*In departing from us, Comrade Lenin bequeathed to us the duty of strengthening and expanding the Union of Republics. We vow to you, Comrade Lenin, that we will carry out also this behest of yours with honour!*

The third foundation of the dictatorship of the proletariat is our Red Army and our Red Navy. Lenin told us more than once that the respite we have gained from the capitalist States may be a short one. More than once Lenin pointed out to us that the strengthening of the Red Army and the improvement of its condition is one of the most important tasks of our Party. The events connected with Curzon's ultimatum and the crisis in Germany once again confirmed the fact that Lenin, as always, was right. Let us vow then, comrades, that we will spare no effort to strengthen our Red Army and our Red Navy.

Our country stands like a huge rock surrounded by the ocean of bourgeois states. Wave after wave hurls itself against it, threatening to submerge it and sweep it away. But the rock stands unshakable. Wherein lies its strength? Not only in the fact that our country is based on the alliance between the workers and peasants, that it is the personification of the alliance of free nationalities, that it is protected by the strong arm of the Red Army and the Red Navy. The strength of our country, its firmness, its durability lies in the fact that it finds profound sympathy and unshakable support in the hearts of the workers and peasants of the whole world. The workers and peasants of the whole world want to preserve the Republic of Soviets as an arrow shot by the sure hand of Comrade Lenin into the camp of the enemy, as a bulwark of their hope for emancipation from oppression and exploitation, as an unfailing lighthouse showing them their path to liberation. They want to preserve it and they will not permit the landlords and the capitalists to destroy it. Herein lies our strength. Herein lies the strength of the toilers of all countries. And herein lies the weakness of the bourgeoisie of the whole world.

Lenin never regarded the Republic of Soviets as an end in itself. He always regarded it as a necessary link for strengthening the revolutionary movements in the lands of the West and the East, as a necessary link for facilitating the victory of the toilers of the whole world over capital. Lenin knew that only such an interpretation is

the correct one, not only from the international point of view, but also from the point of view of preserving the Republic of Soviets itself. Lenin knew that only in this way is it possible to inflame the hearts of the toilers of all countries for the decisive battles for emancipation. That is why this genius among the great leaders of the proletariat, on the very morrow of the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship, laid the foundation of the workers' International. That is why he never tired of expanding and strengthening the league of the toilers of the whole world, the Communist International.

You have seen during the past few days the pilgrimage of tens and hundreds of thousands of toilers to Comrade Lenin's coffin. Very soon you will see the pilgrimage of representatives of millions of toilers to Comrade Lenin's tomb. You need have no doubt that later on these representatives of millions will be followed by representatives of tens and hundreds of millions from all corners of the earth, in order to testify that Comrade Lenin was the leader not only of the Russian proletariat, not only of the European workers, not only of the Colonial East, but of all the toilers of the globe.

*In departing from us, Comrade Lenin bequeathed to us the duty of remaining loyal to the principles of the Communist International. We vow to you, Comrade Lenin, that we will not spare our lives to strengthen and expand the league of the toilers of the whole world—the Communist International!*

(Pravda, No. 23, 30 January, 1924)

*A letter published in Rabochaya Gazeta on the first anniversary of Lenin's death*

'Remember, love and study Ilyich,<sup>1</sup> our teacher and our leader.

Fight and conquer our enemies—internal and external—as Ilyich did.

Build a new life, new social conditions and a new culture—as Ilyich did.

Never refuse to do small things in the course of your work, for out of small things great things are built—this is one of the most important of Ilyich's behests.—J. STALIN.'

<sup>1</sup> Lenin—Ed. Eng. ed.

## ON LENIN<sup>1</sup>

Comrades, I was told that you here have arranged an evening of reminiscences of Lenin, and that I have been invited as one of the speakers. I assume that there is no need to deliver a set speech on Lenin's activities. I think it would be better for me to confine myself to communicating a few facts which indicate certain of Lenin's traits as a man and public worker. Perhaps these facts will not be inter-connected, but this will not seriously prevent you from attaining a general idea of Lenin. At all events, I am unable at present to do more than what I have just promised.

### *The Mountain Eagle*

I first made Lenin's acquaintance in 1903. It is true that this was not a personal acquaintance, it was an acquaintance established by correspondence. But it left an indelible impression upon me which has remained with me all the time I have been working in the Party. At that time I was in exile in Siberia. My introduction to Lenin's revolutionary activities at the end of the 'nineties, and especially after 1901, after the publication of 'Iskra',<sup>2</sup> convinced me that Lenin was a man out of the ordinary. At that time I did not regard him merely as a leader of the Party, but as, practically, its creator, because he alone understood the intrinsic nature and the urgent needs of the Party. Whenever I compared him with the other leaders of our Party it always seemed to me that Lenin's comrades-in-arms—Plekhanov, Martov, Axelrod and others—were a head shorter than Lenin, that compared with them Lenin was not merely one of the leaders, but a leader of a superior type, a mountain eagle, who knew no fear in the struggle, and who boldly led the Party forward along the unexplored paths of the Russian revolutionary movement. This impression was so deeply ingrained

<sup>1</sup> Speech delivered at a Memorial Evening of Kremlin Military Students, 28 January, 1924.

<sup>2</sup> The first issue was published abroad in December 1900. On the front page appeared the reply of the Decemberists to the poet Pushkin, who had sent greetings to them in Siberia. 'The spark will kindle a flame'. *Iskra* is Russian for spark.

## ON LENIN

in my mind that I felt that I must write about him to one of my intimate friends who was then in exile abroad, and to ask him to give me his opinion of Lenin. After a short time, when I was already in exile in Siberia (this was at the end of 1903), I received an enthusiastic letter from my friend and a simple, but very profound letter from Lenin, to whom it appears my friend had communicated my letter. Lenin's letter was relatively a short one, but it contained a bold, fearless criticism of the practical work of our Party, and a remarkably clear and concise outline of a whole plan of work for the Party for the immediate period. Lenin alone was able to write about the most complicated things so simply and clearly, so concisely and boldly, that every sentence seems, not to speak, but to ring out like a shot. The simple and bold letter still more strengthened me in my opinion that in Lenin we had the mountain eagle of our Party. I cannot forgive myself for having, according to my habit as an old underground worker, burnt Lenin's letter as I did many others.

From that time my acquaintance with Lenin began.

### *Modesty*

I met Lenin for the first time in December 1905 at a conference of Bolsheviks in Tammerfors (Finland). I was looking forward to seeing the mountain eagle of our Party, the great man—great, not only politically, but if you will, physically—because in my imagination I pictured Lenin as a giant, well-built and imposing. Imagine my disappointment when I saw an ordinary man, below average height, in no way, literally in no way, to be distinguished from ordinary mortals. . . .

It is the accepted thing for a 'great man' to come late to meetings so that the other people gathered at the meeting should wait on tenterhooks in expectation of his appearance; and just before the appearance of the great man, the people at the meeting say 'Sh—Silence—He is coming'. This rite seemed to me not to be superfluous because it makes an impression, it imbues one with respect. Imagine my disappointment when I learned that Lenin had arrived at the meeting before the delegates, and having ensconced himself in a corner was conversing, holding an ordinary conversation, with the ordinary delegates to the conference. I will not

conceal from you that at that time this seemed to me to be somewhat of a violation of certain necessary rules.

Only later on did I realize that this simplicity and modesty of Lenin, this striving to remain unobserved, or at all events not to make himself prominent, not to emphasize his high position, this feature was one of Lenin's strongest traits as a new leader of new masses, of simple and ordinary masses, of the very 'rank and file' of humanity.

### *Strength of Logic*

The two speeches that Lenin delivered at this conference, on the current situation, and on the agrarian question, were remarkable. Unfortunately, the reports of them have not been preserved. These were inspired speeches, which roused the whole conference to an outburst of enthusiasm. Extraordinary power of conviction, simplicity and clarity in argumentation, short sentences intelligible to all, an absence of posing, an absence of violent gesticulations and high-sounding phrases, playing for effect—all this favourably distinguished Lenin's speeches from the speeches of ordinary, 'parliamentary' orators.

But it was not this aspect of Lenin's speeches that captivated me at the time. I was captivated by the invincible power of logic in Lenin's speeches which, though somewhat dry, nevertheless completely held the audience, gradually electrified it, and then captured it, body and soul, as they say. I remember many of the delegates saying: 'The logic in Lenin's speeches can be compared to all-powerful tentacles which seize one in their grip on all sides and from the embrace of which it is impossible to release oneself: surrender or submit to utter annihilation.'

I think that this peculiar feature of Lenin's speeches was the strongest side of his oratorical art.

### *No Snivelling*

I met Lenin the second time in 1906, at the Stockholm Congress of our Party. It is well known that at this Congress the Bolsheviks were in the minority, they were defeated. This was the first time I saw Lenin in the rôle of vanquished. He did not in the least look like those leaders who snivel and become despondent after defeat.

On the contrary, defeat transformed Lenin into a coil of energy, inspiring his adherents with courage for fresh battle and for future victory. I said that Lenin was defeated. But what sort of a defeat was it? You should have seen Lenin's opponents, the victors of Stockholm—Plekhanov, Axelrod, Martov and the others; they did not in the least look like real victors, because, in his ruthless criticism of Menshevism, Lenin left them, so to speak, without a rag to their name. I remember the Bolshevik delegates gathering together in a small crowd, gazing at Lenin and asking him for advice. In the conversation of some of the delegates one detected a note of weariness and despondency. I remember Lenin, in reply to this kind of talk, sharply saying through his clenched teeth: 'No snivelling, comrades, we shall certainly win, because we are right'. Hatred for snivelling intellectuals, confidence in one's own strength, confidence in victory—this is what Lenin talked to us about at that time. One felt that the defeat of the Bolsheviks was a temporary one, that the Bolsheviks must be victorious in the near future.

'No snivelling over defeat.' This is the peculiar feature in the activities of Lenin that helped him to rally around himself an army that was faithful to the last and had confidence in its strength.

### *No Boasting*

At the next Congress, in 1907, in London, the Bolsheviks were the victors. I then saw Lenin for the first time in the rôle of victor. Usually, victory turns the heads of some leaders, makes them proud and boastful. Most frequently, in such cases, they begin to celebrate their victory and rest on their laurels. But Lenin was not in the least like such leaders. On the contrary, it was precisely after victory that he became particularly vigilant, on the alert. I remember Lenin at that time earnestly impressing upon the delegates: 'The first thing is, not to be carried away by victory and not to boast; the second thing is, consolidate the victory; the third thing is, crush your opponent, because he is only defeated, but far from being crushed yet'. He heaped withering scorn on those delegates who frivolously declared that 'from now on the Mensheviks are finished'. It was not difficult for him to prove that the Mensheviks still had roots in the labour movement, that they had to be fought

skilfully, and that over-estimation of one's own strength, and particularly underestimation of the strength of the enemy, was to be avoided.

'No boasting of victory'—this is the peculiar trait in Lenin's character that helped him soberly to weigh up the forces of the enemy and to insure the Party against possible surprises.

### *Principle*

Party leaders cannot but value the opinion of the majority of their party. The majority is a power, which a leader cannot but take into account. Lenin understood this no less than any other party leader. But Lenin never allowed himself to become the captive of the majority, especially when that majority did not have a basis of principle. There have been moments in the history of our Party when the opinion of the majority, or the transient interests of the Party, came into conflict with the fundamental interests of the proletariat. In such cases, Lenin without hesitation resolutely took his stand on the side of principle against the majority of the Party. Moreover, in such cases, he did not fear to come out literally alone against all, calculating, as he often said, that 'a policy based on principle is the only correct policy'.

The two following facts are particularly characteristic in this respect.

*First fact.* The period of 1900–11, when the party, defeated by the counter-revolution, was undergoing complete disintegration. This was the period of lack of faith in the Party, the period of wholesale desertion from the Party, not only by the intellectuals, but partly also by the workers, the period when underground work was repudiated, the period of liquidationism and collapse. Not only Mensheviks, but also Bolsheviks, at that time constituted a number of factions and trends, for the most part divorced from the labour movement. It is well known that it was precisely at this time that the idea arose of completely liquidating the underground organization and of organizing the workers in a legal, liberal, Stolypin Party. At that time Lenin was the only one who did not give way to the general mood and who held aloft the manner of Party principle, rallied the scattered and defeated forces of the Party with astonishing patience and unprecedented persistence,

fought against all and sundry anti-Party trends in the labour movement and defended the Party principle with unparalleled courage and unprecedented persistence.

It is well known that in this fight for the Party principle Lenin later proved victorious.

*Second fact.* The period of 1914–17, the period when the imperialist war was at its height, when all, or nearly all, the Social-Democratic and Socialist Parties, giving way to the universal patriotic intoxication, went over to the service of imperialism in their respective countries. This was the period when the Second International lowered its flag to capital, when even people like Plekhanov, Kautsky, Guesde and others failed to withstand the wave of chauvinism. Lenin was then the only one, or almost the only one, who started a determined struggle against social-chauvinism and social-pacifism, who exposed the treachery of the Guesdes and Kautskys and condemned the half-heartedness of nondescript 'revolutionaries'. Lenin realized that he had an insignificant minority behind him; but he did not regard this as a matter of decisive importance, for he knew that the only correct policy which had a future before it was the policy of consistent internationalism, for he knew that a policy based on principle was the only correct policy.

It is well known that in this struggle for a new International Lenin also turned out to be the victor.

'A policy based on principle is the only correct policy'—this is the formula with which Lenin stormed new 'impregnable' positions and won over the best elements of the proletariat to the side of revolutionary Marxism.

### *Confidence in the Masses*

Theoreticians and leaders of parties who know the history of nations, who have studied the history of revolutions from beginning to end, are sometimes afflicted with an unpleasant disease. This disease is known as fear of the masses, lack of confidence in the creative ability of the masses. Sometimes on this ground leaders adopt a certain aristocratic pose towards the masses, who, although not versed in the history of revolutions, are destined to break up the old and build the new. The fear that the elements

may break forth, that the masses may 'break up too much', the desire to play the rôle of nurses who try to teach the masses from books but who refuse to learn from the masses—such is the basis of this sort of aristocratic attitude.

Lenin represented the very opposite of such leaders. I do not know another revolutionary who had such profound confidence in the creative strength of the proletariat and in the revolutionary expediency of its class instincts as Lenin did. I do not know another revolutionary who was so able ruthlessly to castigate the smug critics of the 'chaos of revolution' and the 'bacchanalia of irresponsible actions of the masses' as Lenin was. I remember during a conversation, in reply to a remark made by a comrade that 'after revolution normal order must be established', Lenin sarcastically remarked: 'It is a pity that people who want to be revolutionaries forget that the most normal kind of order in history is revolutionary order'.

Hence Lenin's contempt for all those who tried superciliously to look down upon the masses and to teach them from books. Hence Lenin's constant exhortation to us to learn from the masses, to try to understand their actions and carefully to study the practical experience of the struggle of the masses.

Confidence in the creative power of the masses—this is the peculiar feature in the activities of Lenin which enabled him to understand the spontaneous movement and direct it into the channels of the proletarian revolution.

### *The Genius of Revolution*

Lenin was born for revolution. He was, in truth, the genius of revolutionary uprisings, and a great master in the art of revolutionary leadership. Never did he feel so free and happy as in the epoch of revolutionary upheavals. By that I do not want to say that Lenin equally approved of all revolutionary upheavals, or that he advocated revolutionary outbursts at all times and under all conditions. Not in the least. I merely want to say that never was Lenin's deep foresight revealed so fully and distinctly as during a revolutionary crisis. In the days of revolutionary insurrections he blossomed out, as it were, became a seer, foresaw the movement of classes and the probable zigzags of the revolution,

saw them like the lines on the palm of his hand. It was not for nothing that it used to be said in our Party circles that 'Ilyich is able to swim in the waves of revolution like a fish in water'.

Hence the 'astonishing' clarity of Lenin's tactical slogans, and the 'dizzying' audacity of his revolutionary designs.

I remember two particularly characteristic facts which revealed this peculiar trait of Lenin's.

*First fact.* The period before the October insurrection, when millions of workers, peasants, and soldiers, lashed by the crisis in the rear and at the front, demanded peace and liberty; when the militarists and the bourgeoisie were preparing for a military dictatorship in order to pursue the 'war to the bitter end'; when the whole of so-called 'public opinion', all the so-called 'socialist parties' were opposed to the Bolsheviks, charged them with being 'German spies'; when Kerensky tried, and to some extent succeeded, in driving the Bolshevik Party underground; when the still powerful, disciplined army of the Austro-German coalition stood confronting our weary and disintegrating armies; and when the West European 'socialists' lived in happy alliance with their governments for the purpose of pursuing the 'war to final victory'...

What did raising rebellion mean at that time? Raising rebellion under such circumstances meant staking everything on this one card. But Lenin did not fear to take the risk, because he knew, he saw with his prophetic eye, that rebellion was inevitable, that rebellion would be victorious, that rebellion in Russia would prepare for the end of the imperialist war, that rebellion in Russia would rouse the tortured masses of the West, that rebellion in Russia would transform the imperialist war into civil war, that rebellion would give rise to the Republic of Soviets, that the Republic of Soviets would serve as a bulwark for the revolutionary movement of the whole world.

It is well known that Lenin's revolutionary foresight was afterwards confirmed with unprecedented precision.

*Second fact.* During the first days after the October Revolution, when the Council of People's Commissars tried to compel the mutinous general, Commander-in-Chief Dukhonin, to cease military operations and open negotiations for a truce with the

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Germans. I remember that Lenin, Krylenko (the future Commander-in-Chief) and I went to General Military Headquarters in Petrograd to speak by direct wire to Dukhonin. The situation was very tense. Dukhonin and the General Staff categorically refused to carry out the orders of the Council of People's Commissars. The army officers were entirely in the hands of the General Staff. As for the soldiers, it was impossible to foretell what the twelve-million army, under the so-called army organizations which were hostile to the Soviet Government, would say. In Petrograd itself, as is well known, the mutiny of the Junkers was maturing. Moreover, Kerensky was marching on Petrograd. I remember that after a slight pause at the telegraph apparatus Lenin's face lit up with an extraordinary light. It was evident that he had come to some decision. 'Come to the radio station,' he said, 'it will render us a service: we will issue a special order dismissing General Dukhonin and appoint Krylenko in his place as Commander-in-Chief and appeal to the soldiers over the heads of the officers—to surround the generals, stop military operations, establish contact with the Austro-German soldiers and take the cause of peace into their own hands'.

This was a 'leap into the unknown'. But Lenin was not afraid to take this 'leap'; on the contrary, he went out to meet it, for he knew that the army wanted peace, that it would win peace and sweep every obstacle from its path to peace; for he knew that such a method of establishing peace must have an effect upon the Austro-German soldiers, that it would release the desire for peace on all fronts without exception.

It is well known that Lenin's revolutionary foresight on this occasion was subsequently also confirmed with the utmost precision.

Brilliant foresight, the ability rapidly to catch and appreciate the inner sense of impending events—this is the trait that enabled Lenin to draw up the correct strategy and a clear line of conduct at the turning points of the revolutionary movement.

(*Pravda*, No. 34, 12 February, 1924)

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