

N. Lenin: His Life and Work

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N. LENIN

His Life and Work

By

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P R E F A C E

The present booklet is the shorthand report of a speech delivered by me on the 6th of September, 1918, at a meeting of the Petrograd Soviet. The comrades have persistently demanded from me the publication of this speech in a separate booklet in order that the widest possible circles of workers and peasants might have an opportunity of acquainting themselves with the biography of Comrade Lenin.

My speech, naturally, gives only the most cursory sketch of the life and work of Comrade Lenin. It was my intention to revise and enlarge it, but pressure of work, to my deep regret, has not even allowed me attentively to read through the shorthand notes. I feel that I have not said even the tenth part of that which I might and ought to have said of the life and work of Comrade Lenin.

The present booklet presents only a feeble beginning of a biography of Comrade Lenin, which is yet to be written. To more this booklet does not pretend.

The Petrograd Soviet decided to publish it simultaneously in French, German, and English.

Nothing now remains but to beg Comrade Lenin's forgiveness for having taken this decision to relate publicly some part of what which Comrade Lenin would certainly have preferred to remain unknown to the general public. The working class ought to know something of the biography of their acknowledged leader.

G. Z.

Nicolia Lenin : His Life and Work.

By G. ZINOVIEFF.

Comrades! Last week may be called Lenin's week. I think I shall not in any way exaggerate if I say that every honest worker in Petrograd, in the whole of Europe, indeed, even in the whole world, so far as he may have heard the news of the attempt on Comrade Lenin, had in the course of these anxious days no other thought than the one question, will the wounded leader of International Communism recover? And I, comrades, am happy to share with you the good news: to-day we may—at last—count the recovery of Comrade Lenin as entirely assured. (Thunderous applause).

Comrades, I have in my hands a telegram, written already by Comrade Lenin himself. (Thunderous applause).

This telegram was handed in to-day at 1.10 a.m., from the Kremlin. This is, apparently, the first telegram of Comrade Lenin since he began to recover. Comrade Lenin gives us certain official instructions and finishes the telegram with the following words: "Affairs at the front are going well; I have no doubt that they will go still better." (Applause). Therefore, comrades, one thing is clear, that Comrade Lenin will live (applause, ovation) to the terror of the enemies of Communism and to the joy of the proletarian Communists.

Comrades! It goes without saying, that in this hall there is not one single man who does not know, in general and as a whole, who Lenin is. Every working man has heard of Lenin, knows that this is a gigantic figure in the history of the Labour movement of the whole world. Everyone is so much accustomed to the word "Lenin," that he does not stop to think what, after all, he has done for the international and Russian Labour

movement. Every proletarian knows that Lenin is the leader, Lenin is the apostle of world Communism (Applause). But I think, comrades, that we cannot pay a greater honour to our teacher and leader to-day than if I, who am acquainted with the biography of Comrade Lenin somewhat intimately—I have had the good fortune to work side by side with Comrade Lenin in the closest collaboration for more than ten years—if I take advantage of the present occasion in order to share, though it be only in brief, with younger friends and older comrades, who have never had the opportunity of observing so closely the work of Comrade Lenin, my authentic knowledge of the life of Comrade Lenin. (Numerous voices, Please do!)

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Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin-Ulianoff is now 48 years old. He was born in the year 1870, on the 10th of April, at Simbirsk. And out of the 48 years of his life, Comrade Lenin has devoted nearly 30 years work to the cause of freedom.

The father of Comrade Lenin, by birth a peasant, was director of the elementary schools in the Volga provinces, and enjoyed great popularity among the teachers of the town and village schools in his district.

The mother of Comrade Lenin I knew personally. She died in the year 1913. Alexander III had executed her eldest son, Alexander Ulianoff. From that time she concentrated her maternal tenderness on Vladimir Ilyitch. And Comrade Lenin, in his turn, tenderly loved his broken-hearted little mother.

Living in exile, hunted by the Tsar's Government, Comrade Lenin would tear himself away from the most urgent work in order to make a special journey to Sweden to pay a visit to his mother and to brighten for her the last days of her life.

After leaving the classical "gymnasium," Lenin

entered the faculty of Laws at Kazan University. The universities of the capitals were closed to him as the brother of an executed terrorist. A student, however, Vladimir Ilyitch remained but a very short while. At the end of a month they ejected him for taking part in the students' revolutionary movement. Only after lapse of four years was it possible for him to take his final examinations.

The legal career, however, had no attractions for Comrade Lenin. Vladimir Ilyitch always spoke in very humorous terms of his few days of "practice" at the bar. Comrade Lenin's predilections lay in an entirely different direction. He yearned after revolutionary activities.

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Comrade Lenin stands, as it were, on the borderland between the old school of populist revolutionaries and the new school of revolutionary Marxists. Comrade Lenin himself took part in the student populist associations, but already, even at that time, he stood with one foot in the camp of the Marxists.

Vladimir Ilyitch, however, was bound by ties of blood with the early generation of revolutionary terrorists; those glorious fighters, whose names to this day shine like dazzling stars—because they laid low not the friends of the people, like the wretched Right Socialist Revolutionaries, but the tyrants and oppressors of the people. Vladimir Ilyitch is related by blood to this race of fighters. He is connected with them through his brother Alexander Ilyitch Ulianoff, who was one of the chief promoters of the **Narodnaya Volya**, (People's Will), and who was on that account hanged by the Tsar's Government in the year 1887.

Comrade Lenin himself was never a member of that party. But he has always inculcated upon us the most

ardent respect for this cluster of brilliant revolutionary workers, the first generation of Populist revolutionaries. Lenin, since the time when he awakened to a conscious political life, has never shared the Populist theories. He first became prominent when he began to fight against revolutionary Populism. He was the very antipodes of Mikhailovsky. He gained his first laurels as a Socialist precisely through the struggle against Populism. But nobody had so great a respect, no one ever taught the workers to respect these first fighters against Tsarism, as Vladimir Ilyitch.

In the eyes of Comrade Lenin, such workers as Zhelyaboff and Sophie Perovskaya stood transcendently high—people who raised the flag of revolt and went forward with bomb and revolver against the Tsar at the end of the 'seventies and in the beginning of the 'eighties, when Russia was a prison-house of nations, when every friend of freedom drew breath in pain, when the workers of Russia were still only beginning to form themselves into a class. Vladimir Ilyitch well understood how great and immeasurable were the services of the first heralds of the Russian revolution.

And Comrade Lenin did not reject this heritage. He said: This heritage belongs to us, and to us only. Our task is to carry further that work which was begun by Zhelyaboff. Zhelyaboff, by placing himself on the side of the working class and first raising the question of the Socialist revolution, was, in fact, a Bolshevik, a Communist. In order to do the work of Zhelyaboff under new social conditions we must become revolutionary Marxists, our hearts must beat as one with the working class, the only revolutionary class of our time, that class which is not able to win freedom for itself without freeing the whole world.

Vladimir Ilyitch specially loved and was proud of the figure of the first great working-class leader, the car-

penter Stepan Khalturin. Lenin did not know him personally, he knew him by hearsay and books, as we know him ourselves. You know the biography of this extraordinary proletarian of genius, who not only blew up the Winter Palace, but achieved something greater—he was the first to hoist the flag of political struggle against Tsardom in the name of the working class. Comrade Lenin used to say: When we have hundreds of such proletarians as Khalturin, when they are no longer solitary figures, going with bomb or revolver against this or that individual monster, when they rise at the head of teeming multitudes of workers—then we shall be invincible; then will come an end to Tsardom, and with it an end also to the rule of the bourgeoisie.

Comrade Lenin's affection for proletarians who in any way show capacity is especially striking. A fighter whom Lenin always valued and loved was the workman Ivan Vasilyevitch Babushkin, with whom Comrade Lenin here, in Petrograd, began his work in the 'nineties, together starting the first working-class organizations, together leading the first workers' strikes, together taking their part in the organization of the "Iskra." This comrade played a prominent part in the revolution of 1905, and it was only by accident that in 1907 Vladimir Ilyitch learned from friends among the Siberian exiles that Babushkin had been shot by General Rennenkampf in Siberia.

I. V. Babushkin and Shelgunoff, who is still living, and who is known to the Petrograd proletarians (he has now grown blind)—these renowned fighters, coming out of the working class, Comrade Lenin loved like brothers, placed them before us as an example, saw in them the real forerunners, the true leaders of the dawning workers' revolution.

The first period of activity of Comrade Lenin, as of many other revolutionaries who sprang from among the ranks of the intelligentsia, was passed in student circles. When Comrade Lenin was expelled from Kazan University he went to Petrograd. And he used to tell us how, having already caught the Marxixist infection in Samara, he walked about Petrograd searching for a Marxist. **Vivos voco!** But the "tribè" of Marxists was at that time extremely few. There were no Marxists in Petrograd, even if he searched for them in daylight with a torch. The Populists monopolised the minds of all the intellectuals, and the working class were only stretching themselves out of slumber to political life.

And now there comes this young Comrade Lenin, builds up, after a year or two, in Petrograd, the first working-class organizations and rallies around himself the first Marxist intellectuals. Very soon Lenin is already in the literary arena crossing swords with the old leader of the Populists, N. K. Mikhailovsky.

Lenin (under the pseudonym of Ilyin) comes forward with a series of brilliant economic articles which at once win for him a name. And immediately in the ranks of the Populist intelligentsia there could be observed a certain alarm. Somebody powerful and strong has disturbed the petty bourgeois pool. The movement of the water begins. On the horizon a new figure has appeared. Someone is stirring up the stagnant air, and there is a breath of newness, freshness. In Petrograd, Comrade Lenin, together with some other followers of Marx and the working men of whom I have spoken, builds up the "Union of the Struggle for the Emancipation of Labour." He was entrusted by this organization with the conduct of the first working-class strikes, and wrote the first simple, unassuming, hectographed leaflets, in which were formulated the econo-

mic demands of the Petrograd workers. It was at this time that Lenin published his first illegal pamphlet "On Fines"—a pamphlet already forgotten, but which for lucid and popular exposition is a classic example of the popularisation of Marxism.

At that time this was the most profitable soil for propaganda; to agitate against the system of fines, to excite economic conflicts, to raise every economic strike to the level of a political event. And Vladimir Ilyitch, with all his passionate nature, gave himself up to the work. He spends his days and nights in the working-class quarters. He is hunted by the police. He has only a small circle of friends. Nearly all so-called revolutionary intellectuals of that time meet him with hostility. The time was not far distant when the Populists burned the first Marxist writings of Plekhanoff, on which Lenin himself was brought up.

Comrade Lenin opened up here a new path. Throughout the whole activity of Comrade Lenin one can notice that he is always an innovator, that he goes against the current, that he ploughs a new furrow in the political and social life. In the 'nineties, too, at Petrograd, it fell to his share to trace out a new path, to form, to rally the first detachments of workers, the first detachments of a genuine working-class intelligentsia, from which more than one leader of the present workers' revolution has come.

It happens very often at the present time that from somewhere out of far Siberia or the Urals there come to the Council of People's Commissaries, or to the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, workers who are at present presidents of local Soviets or leaders of the local movement. They go up to Comrade Lenin and begin to call up old memories: "Do you remember in the early 'nineties, at such and such a place, how we stirred up an agitation for the supply of hot water for tea with a

