Angelica Balabanoff

Impressions of Lenin

Introduction by Bertram D. Wolfe

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Translated by Isotta Cesari

In her eightieth year Angelica Balabanoff sat down to write her memoirs of Lenin and of her own role in the Russian Revolution. Although never a Bolshevik, Miss Balabanoff was one of the early leaders of Soviet Russia and international socialism. Her enthusiasm as well as her idealism has not diminished with age, although her belief in the future of the Soviet Union has been sadly shaken.

Miss Balabanoff first met Lenin in Switzerland, where he was an obscure Russian refugee laying the foundation for his future rise to power. As secretary of the Zimmerwald movement, an international socialist organization, and later as secretary of the Third Communist International, she continued to work closely with Lenin and became one of his few friends and confidants. She was also given strategic assignments in the Ukraine, Sweden, and Italy. But, Miss Balabanoff could not accept the ruthless and brutal principles of the Lenin regime. Eventually breaking with it, she became the first militant socialist to leave Russia without suffering persecution.

This book presents Angelica Balabanoff's impressions of Lenin—her memories of the man and the revolution he led. She discusses his ideas and attitudes about Russia, religion, history, capital punishment, and international communism. She also presents sketches of Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Stalin, and other Soviet leaders, helping us to understand their roles in the revolution and their relationship to Lenin.

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Foreword

This book, like a magnet, has two poles, with lines of attraction and repulsion running between them. The one pole is Angelica Balabanoff, the other V. I. Lenin. They are more to each other than just author and subject. They are as unlike as any two persons in the international socialist movement of the first quarter of the century could possibly be. Yet for several years, with the world in flames and Russia ploughed up by revolution, this disparate and unlikely pair worked together in close collaboration. In the end, neither succeeded in altering the other in the slightest, so they parted company for good, each retaining a decent respect for the other. In this little book, Angelica Balabanoff, striving to understand and portray Lenin as she knew him, cannot help but portray herself also. The combination of attraction and repulsion gives the book its charge of energy and gives life to the double portrait. It seems to me—and I know the author well and have read possibly every book and pamphlet she has written —that this is the best of them. Most of her published works are highly personal, containing considerable autobiographical material. But this time with Lenin for foil, unconsciously she has painted the best and truest portrait of herself along with that of her subject. And, having read most of what Lenin has written and of the innumerable works written about him, it seems to me that—with the possible exception of Nikolai Valentinov's *Vstrechi s Leninym* ("Meetings with Lenin"), which unfortunately has not yet been translated into English —this is the best portrait, at once admiring and critical, of the ambivalent spirit of the founder of Russian Bolshevism.

Angelica Balabanoff was born into a wealthy family on the outskirts of Chernigov, near Kiev, in the Ukraine, in 1878. Her father was a landowner and businessman absorbed in his affairs, rarely intervening in the training of his numerous children. She was the youngest of sixteen children, only nine of whom grew to maturity. When she was born, all her older sisters were already married. Her mother was determined to make a "fine lady" of her last daughter. Surrounded by governesses who taught her many languages and the graces considered proper to a fine lady, she was kept away from school and playmates, taught good manners, music, dancing, embroidery, and the propriety of charitable deeds.

It was the exercises in dispensing charity which started the lonely child on her way to socialism. She watched her mother commanding the servants and asked herself *why some commanded and others obeyed.* At the age of five she was taken to the poorhouse to dispense gifts and got the shock of having her hand kissed by a kneeling and grateful recipient; she responded at the first opportunity by kneeling and kissing the hand of the next to whom she gave alms. *Why,* asked her second question, *are some poor and some rich, some grateful to receive alms and some proud to give them?* Since neither mother nor governesses would or could answer these two questions, she rebelled, demanding to be permitted to go to school like other children and find out, or so she fancied, the answers to the questions that were troubling her. This concern with the "poorest and most numerous class," to use the words of Saint-Simon, was always the real core of her socialism. To this concern with the poor and their privations, she added a love of liberty the first roots of which were nourished by her need to rebel against her mother—to get contact with the world and humanity and make of herself what she wanted.

When the girl reached eleven, her mother gave up the battle of keeping her from school. Her daughter had been taught only foreign languages, but in secret was teaching herself to speak the language of the poor around her, so she passed her

examination in Russian also. Trips with her mother to Switzerland, a proper thing for one who was to become a "fine lady," gave her her first glimpse of Russian students in exile. At the age of nineteen, after many stormy scenes and hysterics, she won the right to go to a university in Brussels, of which she had heard but vaguely, and to accept from her father's fortune only enough to travel third-class and to "live like a working girl." She had to go without a blessing or a farewell from her thwarted mother. ("My last memory was to be her curse upon me.")

Angelica has spoken with nostalgia to her intimates about her girlhood home with its twenty-two rooms, its beautiful garden and orchard, the quiet provincial town, and the lovely river flowing by, but all her life she has lived "like a working girl" in a tiny, barely furnished room, with a little table, a few shelves for her beloved books, a one-burner primus stove to make tea, a cozy to cover the teapot, a jar of jam to sweeten it, and on the table two or three of her beloved "ikons," a portrait of August Bebel, or Rosa Luxemburg, or Jean Jaurès, or Antonio Labriola, or of as many of the men and women she admired as the little table of the moment might hold without interfering with the possibility of some guest and herself taking tea on it.

When Victor Serge met her in the middle 1920's, he wrote:

> She lived now sometimes in Vienna, sometimes in its outskirts, carting her possessions, those of the eternal poor student, from one furnished room to another: the spirit-stove for tea, the small pan for omelettes, and three cups for her guests; together with the huge picture of Filippo Turati, the manly, glowing portrait of [the martyred] Matteotti, files of *Avanti!*, the correspondence of the Italian Maximalist Party, and notebooks full of poems. Small, dark, and beginning to age, Angelica still led her eager militant's life which, with its romantic fire, was about three-quarters of a century too late . . .

When I visited her in her little furnished room in a run-down hotel on the west side of New York City, the scene was the same: the modest furnishings, the warm hospitality, the zeal and unflagging hopes, the notebooks of poems, the pictures of the fighters for her cause whom she had known and admired, a little bewildered by the interest of "the American masses" in the World Series, a little unhappy that New York did not give her the same opportunity for activity as Rome or Vienna or Moscow, but all else unchanged. As soon as the war was over and Mussolini had fallen, she hastened back to Italy, living in Rome in the same kind of room, with the same furnishings and pictures and poems, but with spirit revived because of the opportunity to work for the Democratic Socialist Party of Italy. And so today, at the age of eighty-six, she lives the same identical active life, a little slowed up, surrounded by the same favorite objects in the same unchanging room of a poor student.

When the nineteen-year-old Angelica left home and family to study in Western Europe, she picked, on the basis of vague report, the Université Nouvelle of Brussels, not to be confused with the more solidly based Université Libre. The University had been built around the personality of Élisée Reclus, the noted geographer who was an exile from France because of his anarchism and his participation in the Paris Commune. At the University and at the People's House of the Belgian Socialist and Labor movement all her teachers were either socialists or anarchists. She heard the greats of the Belgian Socialist Party, she attended debates on labor history and tactics, she foregathered with poor Italian and Russian emigrés. From them and from books she sought to find the answers to the two questions she had asked her mother and to which her mother had had no answers. Her innate rebelliousness became libertarianism, her innate compassion for the poor and suffering, equalitarianism. These moral positions were already implicit in her spirit when she

left home; what she sought now was a "scientific" underpinning for her moral attitudes, a proof that the nature of history and of society was such that it must bring to pass the kind of world of which she dreamed.

From Brussels, to Leipzig, to Berlin, to Rome, she pursued her quest, acquiring her doctorate by the way, still seeking the "scientific proof" that the poor must not only be exalted and granted full human stature, but were predestined by their very privations and plight to prove the saviors of all mankind and the architects of a more humane society. That faith is the religious side of socialism, a faith which she acquired in the course of her studies and activities and which, as the present work shows, possesses her still—that is what she means when in the present work she uses the word "science." To her that is the science of "scientific socialism," the sum and substance of her Marxism. The greatest of her teachers was Antonio Labriola, who was giving courses in philosophy and ethics at the University of Rome at the turn of the century. Her favorite maxim is neither from Marx nor Engels but from Labriola: "To put knowledge at the service of the proletariat."

Thus, from an ethical creed her beliefs grew into what she calls in this book a "scientific conviction," and in 1900 she was ready to join the Socialist Party.

But which party? Angelica was a native of the Ukraine, by citizenship a Russian. Yet the Russian movement, with its underground stratagems and deceits, its bitter factional quarrels, its factional self-righteousness and unscrupulousness in battle with a rival faction, was not for her. Her moral makeup was too simple and straightforward. Her talents, which soon became evident, lay in open meetings, in addressing a moving word to multitudes. A gifted linguist—she has written poetry in five languages and can speak eloquently as I know by experience, in six—she could have functioned in any one of a half dozen continental socialist parties. She was at home

with French, Belgians, Swiss, Germans, Russians. Her demands were so modest, her eagerness to serve so palpable and touching, that she would have been welcome even in the most exclusivist of them. After all, did they not all think of themselves as "internationalist"? And was not she in her diminutive self a kind of International?

The warm spirit of the Italian people and the dismal and unprotected state of Italian unskilled labor in Switzerland combined to make her decision. She became a member of the Italian Socialist Party. Then she went to St. Gall, in German-speaking Switzerland, where the majority of the poorest laborers in the textile mills were Italian immigrants, at a disadvantage both in relation to their employers and their fellow unionists because they spoke no German. She asked for a "job" in the Swiss Trade Union Headquarters, an office, a desk, and no salary. It was the pattern of party work she was to follow all her life. How she managed to live even those of us who knew her best could never find out. Until the war she got a small stipend from her family, making up the rest of her needs by giving lessons in the many languages she knew. Later, she rose to such posts in the Socialist movement that a salary was assigned to her in spite of herself. But when I visited her in Rome in the early 1960's, once more she had a little desk, an office, and no salary, in the headquarters of the Democratic Socialist Party of Italy, in charge of its work with women. Someone around the headquarters ran an occasional errand for her or drove her in one of the organization's cars to meetings and to her eternal little "student's" furnished room. If a friend remonstrated with her, her answer was invariably to tell "how privileged my life has been, to have had opportunity to work unceasingly for the cause in which I believe."

Clearly then, to speak of Angelica Balabanoff and of V. I. Lenin is to speak of two opposing poles of the Socialist movement. Her ideal was to serve the masses, his to manipulate them—both for the sake of socialism.

She was ill at ease with posts and honors and perquisites such as go with being an official of any organization, trade union, political party, or corporation. He was a believer in the professional revolutionary, the full-time paid party worker, the importance of the official post, the Central Committee, the *Troika* or Triumvirate, the Party Leader, the infallible interpreter of an infallible doctrine. He fought for every delegate to a convention, used illicit means if necessary to get funds to bring his unconditional followers to pack a Party Congress, tabulated the votes on every resolution, fought for hours and days to determine the makeup of the credentials committee, the exact order of business, the phrasing of every clause in every resolution. He served the faction first, she "the Cause." She prized unity; he wrote to his followers: "Split, split, and again split"—until he had winnowed out the faction that would follow his views, which he was always so sure were right.

The Italian Socialist Party, the party Angelica Balabanoff knew and loved best, carried on a brave fight against Italy's involvement in World War I, and then against the isolation of the Russian Revolution. But Lenin felt that the party was too large, not homogeneous, or monolithic and pliable enough to obey him unconditionally, hence he decided to split it. Without that split it is quite likely that Mussolini would never have been able to take power in Italy. Zinoviev, himself an unscrupulous tool of Lenin's, sent his most unscrupulous agents to attack its best leader, Serrati, politically from the right and the left, and personally with slander. Serrati's crime was the same one Angelica would have committed: he refused to slander and expel old and well-loved moderate leaders of the Socialist Party such as Turati and Modigliani, as long as they did not violate the decisions of the party majority. When Angelica Balabanoff protested to Lenin and Zinoviev, she was told: "We have fought and slandered him because of his great merits. It would have been impossible to alienate the masses [from him] without resorting to these

means." When Serrati died, the same Zinoviev who had directed the campaign against him, wrote a long obituary emphasizing his incomparable services to the Soviet Union and the world Socialist movement. As a corpse who obeyed the precept which the Germans call *Kadavergehorsam* ("the obedience of a corpse"), he was usable once more.

In a word, Angelica Balabanoff's approach to socialism was primarily ethical: she loved the downtrodden, the poor and suffering, and wished to alleviate their lot. She longed to believe in—and make them feel the dignity that came with their believing in—"their mission."

But Lenin's approach was partisan, factional, dogmatic, authoritarian, manipulative, organizational. He believed in *the Party*'s "mission" and his own. He sought to use the masses as the force behind the Party battering ram. It was the dictatorship of the Party that he meant when he said "Dictatorship of the Proletariat." Wherever Lenin with two or three unconditional followers were gathered together, there was the Party. The Party, given strength by the masses, would throw down the old, take possession of the ruins, and, still manipulating the masses, still dictating over society, would build the new. Even with the world in flames, even, as this book describes, in the midst of war and revolution, Lenin never for a moment ceased contemplating the world as his chessboard, never forgot to plan his next chess move.

His natural habitat was the underground, the factional group, the world of calculation and maneuver for the destruction of the reputation of whoever stood in his way. Her natural habitat was the open party, the mass meeting, the undifferentiated movement for a better world, the cause. No matter to which land Lenin was driven by circumstance, he neither learned its language nor its problems, nor participated in its life. Wherever he went, he carried with him an invisible envelope of the Russian underground. Angelica Balabanoff spoke a half dozen languages or more, wrote poetry in five of them, was active in the Russian, the German,

the Austrian, the Swiss, and the Italian labor and socialist movements, and, to a lesser extent—for its ways were stranger to her and her stay here briefer—in the American socialist movement and the Italian-American trade unions. Both she and Lenin in time came to be elected members of the International Socialist Bureau of the Second International, and attended some of the same congresses. There Lenin worked behind the scenes, trying to influence more popular and better-known figures to put some of his points into resolutions, trying to form an international faction akin to his faction in Russia. And there, on the stage, diminutive Angelica Balabanoff served selflessly as translator and seemed to grow in height as she spoke, rendering perfectly in all the languages of the congress the eloquence of its famous orators, translating successively into French, German, Italian, until the applause was no longer for the eloquence and ideas of the man she was translating but for the perfection of her conveying of it in so many tongues. Where Lenin felt contempt for so many of the "Greats" of the Socialist International, she felt the profoundest admiration and gratitude. With so many and such deep differences between these two opposite poles of socialism at the turn of the century, the problem obtrudes itself: how did these two ever get together? How did they ever manage to work together in a single organization and a single cause from 1915 to 1921? The answer is to be found in two overwhelming events: World War I and the Russian Revolution of 1917.

In late August 1914, the Socialist Parties of the World were to hold a congress in Vienna. It would have marked the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Second International. But in the first days of August, Austria declared war on Serbia, Germany on Russia, France, and neutral Belgium, Russia on Germany and Austria, England on Germany. The congress was never held. The new age had begun: the age of total wars and totalitarian revolutions.

For fifty years socialist orators had been assuring their audiences—and themselves—that the workers of all lands had a common cause, that they would never take up arms against their class brothers on the other side of the frontier, that their only enemy was within their own land, that socialist internationalism would prevent national war among civilized peoples. How many times had Angelica Balabanoff made such speeches herself and translated such sacred pledges for other orators! Now the German socialists voted the war credits and a *Burgfrieden* ("civil peace") for the duration. The French socialists, more given to the poetic phrase, formed a *sacred union,* and entered into the government of their country. The Belgian leaders declared that they would never meet with a German socialist as long as there were German troops on Belgian soil. In land after land, the socialists showed that they were Frenchmen, Germans, Englishmen, Belgians, before they were socialists. With red cards in their pockets, uniforms on their backs, and guns in their hands, stunned or stirred up workingmen of France and Germany faced each other on the frontier. The leaders were as much taken by surprise, as much swept off their feet, as much stunned and grief stricken as their followers. Many of them more so, for their whole lives had been lived under the sign and the pledge of international socialist solidarity.

But in every land there was some little handful who were not swept away by the overwhelming tide, or, being carried down stream, still sought to swim against the current. "We must redeem the pledge we have so solemnly made, and redeeming it, redeem the honor of the International and restore across the frontiers the ties of brotherhood," they said.

In countries that were still neutral the socialist parties had time to bethink themselves and issue the new call. From all the warring lands, first women, then the youth, then men of military age, undertook the perilous journeys to pledge themselves to struggle for peace and the renewal of international ties. Angelica Balabanoff was one of the leaders among them.

And so, in his own way, was V. I. Lenin—but he thought that to struggle for peace was shameful and treasonable ("social pacifism" was the name he found for the "deviation"). The thing to do was to oppose the national wars, to smash the old International as worthless, and to build a new, "Third" or "Communist" International, which would turn the imperialist war into universal civil war. Angelica Balabanoff was attracted to Lenin by the vigor of his opposition to the war between the nations and the shameful betrayal of socialist internationalism. It would take years before she would understand the differences that divided them.

In September 1914 the Italian and Swiss Socialist parties, neutral countries both, sought to draw together the remnants of the shattered International. Angelica went to Lugano on behalf of the Italian Party.

In March 1915 a Conference of Socialist Women was held in Berne, Switzerland. Seven women came from Germany, including Klara Zetkin, four from England, including Margaret Bondfield, one from France, three from Holland, two from Switzerland, Angelica Balabanoff from Italy, one from Poland-Lithuania, and four Bolshevik and two Menshevik women from the Russian exile colonies living in Switzerland. The Bolshevik women included Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, Lilina, Zinoviev's wife, Inessa Armand,* and Lydia Stahl. Lenin came personally to a nearby tea room to run his faction by remote control and put across a special Bolshevik resolution. Inessa Armand was his spokesman for the purpose.

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* It is typical of the reticence or "Victorian" prudery of Angelica Balabanoff that, although she several times refers to the person of Inessa Armand, who was living with Lenin and Krupskaya in a *menage à trois*, she never mentions her by name in the present work. When she writes "I saw Lenin at the funeral of some one particularly dear to him . . . I never saw any human being so completely absorbed by sorrow," the reader will have to read this writer's "Lenin and Inessa Armand," in the *Slavic Review*, March 1963, pp. 96–114, to get the roots and full force of his sorrow.

This was the first conference to make a show of international socialist unity against war and for peace, and here Lenin and his mouthpieces were insisting on demonstrating disunity: a vote of 6 against 21, in favor of disrupting the International, against peace and for prolonging the War into universal civil war. Klara Zetkin pleaded with Lenin, but he was obdurate. During the course of several days of argument and plea, she suffered a heart attack. At last a compromise was reached. The general resolution would be voted unanimously, provided the record of the proceedings included the text of the special Bolshevik Revolution. For the first time Angelica glimpsed for a moment that even world conflagration and misery did not make Lenin forget to regard the human beings at war as pawns on his great chessboard.

A week later there was an International Youth Conference. Lenin was in the tea room again, and Inessa Armand once more his spokesman, a little old for it, but with a youth credential.

On the initiative of the Italian and Swiss parties, with Angelica Balabanoff as the permanent representative of the Italians in Switzerland, an international socialist conference of neutral parties and antiwar minorities from the warring countries was called in the little village of Zimmerwald, near Berne, on September 5–8, 1915. Once more Lenin's representatives on the organizing committee tried to limit the conference to those who held to his view of opposing peace in favor of civil war, and of forming a new leftist international, but the Italian Party voted, as did the organizing committee, to invite "all socialist parties *or their sections,* and all labor organizations which are *against any civil peace,* which adhere to *the basis of the class struggle,* and which are willing, *through simultaneous international action, to struggle for immediate peace,* which envisages neither forced annexations nor changes of state boundaries against the will of the peoples."

Lenin hastened to try to pack the conference with delegates adhering to his "left" view: "All this is *vertraulich* ['con-

fidential']"—he wrote to Radek—"Promise not to speak of it to Grimm or Balabanoff or Trotsky or anybody!"

From those who could not come, he demanded proxies, which he made good use of. Across the shell-torn frontiers, through sentry lines, over mountain chains and through rivers, somehow thirty-eight delegates arrived from eleven countries. Most of them were from neutral lands, or, in various disguises, as Poles, Letts, Latvians, etc., Russian emigrés. But there were ten from Germany, and two French trade unionists. Lenin managed to form a "Left Zimmerwald Group" of eight delegates. Quite naturally, the Russian from Italy, Angelica Balabanoff, who spoke so many languages and did all the translating as well as much of the preparing of the conference, became the secretary of the meeting and then of the International Socialist Bureau of the Zimmerwald Conference which issued out of it. Both Lenin and the "Social Pacifists" regarded her as the best and most trustworthy secretary they could get. There was the usual squabble between the Leninists and the others, the usual compromise, the majority resolution adopted unanimously, with Lenin recording his own "chess move" for the record. The German and French delegates adopted a special resolution declaring *"This War Is Not Our War!"*

Would the Zimmerwald Conference succeed in reconstituting a broad International on the basis of the struggle for peace? The question promised to be answered in the affirmative until, in March 1917, the tsar of Russia fell, after conspiracies against him even in the royal family and the general staff, and a sudden mutiny of the reserve troops in Petrograd. This is not the place to tell the story of how Lenin got home across Germany with the aid of the German general staff.* For our purposes it is sufficient to know that neither the

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* It has been told, among other places, in Z. A. B. Zeman, *Germany and the Revolution in Russia, Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry* (London, 1958).

Allies of Russia nor the new democratic Provisional Government was willing to recognize that, the power apparatus of old Russia having broken down, the peasants in uniform could no longer be kept at the front. But Lenin, with his intense concentration on the chance of seizing power, was willing now to be for peace, if necessary for a separate peace with Germany. His turn to immediate peace brought the pacifist Angelica Balabanoff, thrilled by the liberation of Russia, to his side. And Lenin's awareness of the value of continuity in his chess moves, made him claim, even as he split the Zimmerwald Movement, that the new International he was forming was the continuation of Zimmerwald. He made the secretary of the Zimmerwald Bureau, Angelica Balabanoff, the secretary of his new Communist International.

For the first time, day in and day out, she was forced to observe the men he chose, the agents he used, and the chess moves he made, at first hand. Thus it was that she got "The Closeup of Lenin" (*Lenin Visto da Vicino*) which provides the Italian title of the present work.

Lenin tried in vain to make his secretary of the Comintern into a Leninist and a Bolshevik. He tried to accustom her to unscrupulous agents and unscrupulous methods, he sent her abroad with the instruction of "spend millions, many, many millions." She did not know how to spend more than tiny, modest sums and could not dream that she was to use millions to corrupt leaders and to destroy those who could not be won. When she understood, her whole being revolted at the idea that this had been expected of her, or that this could serve to bring about the better world she dreamed of. He and his agents sought to accustom her to the privileges of a new privileged class, the elite that held power. They did not know their Angelica. (For that matter, Lenin, too, found privilege repulsive while all Russia was starving; he would use it as a means of corruption and as a *raison d'état,* but he would not take such privilege for himself; in his heart, he

could not help but respect Angelica's incorruptibility even if it made her a poor instrument for his purposes.) He tried in vain to accustom her to his single moral, or amoral, principle, that the means justifies the end, the end for the moment being the seizing, holding, and extension of power in width and depth. She watched with horror old socialists who had given their lives for "the cause," slandered, put back into the same jails the tsar had used, censored more ruthlessly and efficiently, silenced, destroyed. Then she saw the Bolsheviks lead an army of Asiatic recruits against the sailors and workers of Kronstadt, when the Kronstadt communists demanded that the revolution live up to the promises it had made before Lenin took power. Finally, she had to watch Lenin splitting and destroying her beloved Italian Communist Party to extract from it a more pliable, if weaker, remnant.

Unconsciously, the first secretary of the Communist International began to go on strike. She refused to sanction unscrupulous agents and unscrupulous maneuvers. More and more, the chairman of the International, Zinoviev, had to do things behind her back. She began to find the false and demagogic speeches made to the Russian masses repulsive to her, and suddenly ceased functioning as translator for official oratory. Subterfuges were used to get this troublesome moralist out of the way, into a sanatorium ("When all sick and weary women in Russia can go to a sanatorium, I will go"); to Turkestan where cholera was raging and there were no workingmen to speak to; to the Ukraine as a deputy foreign minister of a Foreign Ministry without any powers. At last she went to Lenin and handed in all her documents, credentials, mandates, and asked for a simple permission to leave Russia with an identification paper which would get her past the sealed frontier.

In that last dialogue between two people who still had personal respect for each other there was deep sadness on both sides:

"Perhaps Russia does not need people like me. . . ."

"She needs them but she does not have them. . . ."

Angelica Balabanoff was probably the first communist in high place to break with the Communist International, go out in safety, and without a campaign of personal slander. When, years later, Lenin being dead and his corpse the object of a cult, the Comintern began a slander campaign against her, at the same time the Marx-Lenin Institute sent an emissary to beg from her the identity document Lenin had given her. She agreed, with one proviso: whenever they published the next slander, they must publish with it Lenin's last words concerning her. His identity document had asked "all institutions and individuals to give Comrade Angelica Balabanoff *every assistance required,*" and it had called her "an old party member and the most outstanding militant representative of the Communist International." That proviso ended the campaign of slander! And that last interview makes clear why this little book is a revealing closeup not of one person but of two, two morally opposite poles of the Socialist movement of the first quarter of our century: V. I. Lenin and Angelica Balabanoff. And, for good measure, a vivid closeup of that Socialist movement in its hour of crisis.

Bertram D. Wolfe

Contents

Impressions of Lenin

The end of our actions is willed in full awareness, but their consequences are not; even if they appear to correspond to the aim, they end by generating results quite different from those intended.

FRIEDRICH ENGELS

I

The Character of Lenin

There are countless biographies of Lenin now available which examine even the most minute details of his extraordinary life. Equally well known among students and scholars are his basic theoretical works. Almost nothing is known, however, of those underlying motivations which inspired his thought and determined his actions.

What I have written here is neither a biography of Lenin nor a review of his entire activity, but merely the recollection of some events to which I have been witness and my reflections upon those events. I intend only to shed light on some of Lenin's actions whose psychological motivations I have been able to discern. Having said this, I know I must ask myself to what extent my writing will be free of that subjectivity and bias against which I shall warn the reader. Ultimately, I am anything but detached from or indifferent to the men and events that form the subject of this writing.

I never belonged to either group of the Russian Social Democracy; I am, therefore, free from any partisan spirit, particularly so because I have never had cause for any personal resentment against the Soviet regime. On the contrary, in the "Workers' Republic" I was surrounded by courtesy, affection, and even veneration, which I felt I did not deserve. I was the first and perhaps only militant Socialist who, without suffering any persecution whatsoever, left the fatherland of the revolution for reasons of principle only.

In such a position, I was able to observe Lenin in the most diverse phases of his life. I was close to him in Switzerland

when he was merely an obscure Russian emigrant, hardly known in Russia itself and considered of no account by Western Socialists. He enjoyed no favor among them because of his ruthless and by no means objective criticism of men and things. I am referring here, primarily, to the period in which he represented the small and insignificant Bolshevist group in the Executive Committee of the Socialist International, of which I too was a member. Later on, during his active collaboration in the Zimmerwald Movement, whose cofounder and secretary I was, I had further occasion to observe him closely. Finally, I came to know him even better through a close and prolonged collaboration after he had taken office in Moscow as president of the People's Commissars.

Those who approved of Lenin's aims often attributed to him qualities and virtues he did not possess; those who considered his ideas harmful and wild and his actions criminal—as well as those whose interests he had injured—held and spread opinions about him which were utterly negative, gloomy, and contemptuous. It must be emphasized that however vast the number of crimes against humanity for which Bolshevism is responsible, however many the victims and enemies of the regime Lenin founded, no one has ever doubted Lenin's own complete unselfishness and abnegation. This quality reflects the immeasurable distance between Lenin the dictator, conscious of his calling as executor of the final verdict of history, and other dictators imbued with and guided by their own petty egos.

Friends and foes, disciples and adversaries often identify Lenin's intention with the outcome of his action. True, Lenin was a man all of one piece; his mind and temperament made him embrace a specific cause and conceive a particular plan. Through his will, he was able to subject to this plan all men and all things. But under careful scrutiny the outcome, abject and disastrous as it was, shows that a man's will, even when guided by uncommon intelligence, firmness of purpose, and exceptional courage cannot triumph in defiance of the basic

laws of social development. From this point of view, Lenin's life is an immense tragedy. In Goethe's phrase, it can be said of Lenin that "he desired the good and created evil," and both in unsurpassable measure.

Lenin was, from the beginning, fired by an inextinguishable hatred of the tsarist regime and its supporters. In time, this more or less instinctive attitude was reinforced by objective, theoretical motives: he became a Marxist on scientific grounds. Those biographers who trace his political attitude to the execution of his brother, who was involved in the attempt on the tsar's life, have been—to put it mildly—naive. What of those many Russian revolutionists who—before, during, and after Lenin's time—have followed the same road toward the supreme sacrifice of freedom and life itself to break the chains which enthralled the disinherited classes? For them, there was imprisonment, Siberian exile, even execution; there were also the inner struggles, the victories over the self, that preceded and accompanied the political upheavals. This generation can hardly grasp the dimensions of those inner conflicts; they do not exist today, for in this respect alone have we of the old generation lightened the task of our heirs.

At that time, especially in Russia, we had to uproot the deepest feelings from our hearts—the feeling of duty, the solidarity with those whose sufferings we felt more acutely than the pain we inflicted on our parents, stifled traditions, bonds, habits. We had to remain deaf to the exhortations of our dear ones, to their predictions or advice. Turgenev in his *Prose Poems* has traced an extraordinary image of the character of the heroic forerunners of the Russian revolution.

"You, young woman, who are going to cross this threshold, do you know what awaits you?"

"I know."

"Cold, hunger, hostility, contempt, irony, shame, prison, disease, and death."

"I know, I am ready to endure all this."

"Even if all this were to come not only from your enemies, but also from your relatives and friends?"

"Yes, even then."

"Are you even ready to commit a crime?"

"I am ready for that too."

"Have you considered that you might be subject to a delusion, that you might find you have sacrificed your young life in vain?"

"I have considered this too."

"Enter, then."

" 'Imbecile!' said someone."

" 'Saint!' the echo answered."

Lenin too passed that threshold in full awareness; this recognition distinguished him from many of his followers, though no one contributed more to degrade and profane the idea for which so much had been sacrificed.

There was no contradiction between Lenin the statesman and Lenin the private man. He was implacable in dealing with even the slightest faults of a political or administrative nature. He criticized harshly, and his judgments and reprimands—bearing the signature of the highest authority in the Workers' Republic—were of enormous, irrevocable significance. Had the culprit been himself or one of his family, however, he would not have hesitated to apply the same criteria, to inflict the same punishments, including the death penalty. At a meeting of the Central Committee, in fact, Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, very nearly received an official reprimand because of her occasional absences from Party meetings.

Lenin was, moreover, free from egocentricity, absolutely indifferent to what might be said or written about him. He both behaved and felt as though he were nothing more than a Bolshevik to whose lot it had fallen to become president of the first Workers' Republic, and whose name happened to be Ulyanov. (The pseudonym "Lenin" was assumed in order to elude the tsarist police. As a writer he also used

other names, but the most frequent was Lenin. After his rise to power he reverted to Ulyanov, adding the assumed name in parentheses.) Despite his intolerance of any deviation from his way of thinking, he was, so to speak, a depersonalized dictator.

My close observation of him in the various phases of his life and activity and the fact that I translated many of his speeches—entering, therefore, into his thought—lead me to affirm that the popularity and undisputed authority he possessed rather annoyed him. He avoided everything that might either lead or seem to lead toward the establishment of a personality cult. He communicated this attitude so well that those who approached him never tried to flatter him or to show servility in his presence.

Lenin never spoke—except to his most intimate friends—of his loathing and disdain for official manifestations and diplomatic ceremonies. He usually found a way to avoid them, and his name never appeared in the news reports. When he considered such procedures useful and necessary he simply endured them.

One day in Moscow the office in charge of propaganda asked me to record a few words of greeting and encouragement. I refused, not only because it seemed to me a sort of fetishism, but also because I could not speak without seeing my audience. It seemed artificial to me. When I told Lenin of this incident and my uneasiness over the idolatry that threatened to seep into the Russian people, he disagreed: "You should have accepted. Our country is large, there are many illiterates. Our voices must reach them."

Another time, on one of my visits to Lenin, I was greatly surprised to find a third person. "Don't worry," Lenin said, "you may speak freely in his presence. He is a trusted comrade, a sculptor. Just think, it is the eighteenth time that he has come to model my head." Observing my surprise, he continued: "I submit to this because I consider it useful, even necessary. Our peasants are suspicious; they don't read, they

must see in order to believe. If they see my likeness, they are persuaded that Lenin exists."

One day, when he had come around to my place, I pointed to a large painting of Karl Marx on the wall and said: "I am one of the very few in Moscow today who do not have your portrait. I feel indignation seeing that a certain obsequiousness toward hierarchy has penetrated even among our people." He gave me a look of comprehension and gratitude. I believe he so appreciated my way of thinking and acting that he forgave me my not belonging to the Bolshevist Party and my disagreement with some of his views and methods.

As a public speaker, Lenin never sought any sort of facile appeal to his audience. He discouraged applause likely to follow a good argument or a nuance by refusing to give the necessary pause. His sole aim was to make the audience absorb his Bolshevist precepts. The same tone, the same examples would be used, whether he was speaking to a very small group in Switzerland or to a huge crowd assembled from all parts of the world in the magnificent halls of the Kremlin.

Lenin in Switzerland

I saw Lenin and heard him speak for the first time—more than a decade before the October Revolution—in Switzerland, where he was living as an exile and where I happened to go from time to time for my propaganda work among the Italian exiles.

Neither the content of his speech nor his handling of the topic (the Russian Bolshevist workers' movement) made a deep impression on me. But he gave rise to a psychological quest that renewed itself at every future encounter: Did his extremely simple way of expressing his views reflect his personal attitude, or was it a deliberately cultivated habit of concentrating his own attention and that of the audience on his arguments? Not even today am I able to give a cate-

gorical answer to this question. I know only that it has frequently occurred to me; such was my curiosity that on various occasions I asked him questions point-blank, hoping that his reaction would yield a clue to my puzzlement.

During a meeting of the International, Lenin sent me the following note: "Comrade Balabanoff, why are you not with us Bolsheviks? Your views coincide with ours." I remember that I smiled at that invitation and did not even answer, so far was I from sharing that oversimplified way of judging men and events.

I could not understand, among other things, why the Bolsheviks—and Lenin above all—applied different measures to members and nonmembers of their Party. Another trait surprised me: the habit of accusing notoriously honest and disinterested people of treason, dishonesty, or bribery.

When Lenin was in Zürich for a speech, I asked him to explain the matter to me, and, somewhat annoyed, he replied that to seize power every means must be used. "Even dishonest ones?" I countered.

"Everything that is done in the interest of the proletarian cause is honest," Lenin said impatiently, heading toward the door. But I stopped him: "Why do you call Socialists who have dedicated all their lives to the cause of the exploited traitors?"

"By so naming them, I do not intend to say they are dishonest individuals, but I do want to point out that, objectively, through their attitude they become traitors."

"But," I objected, "those who read your writings, the workers, for instance, are not aware of this distinction; for them a traitor is a traitor, a contemptible creature who knowingly has sold himself to the enemies of the working class." Lenin shrugged his shoulders and left without a word.

The reading of a speech given by him before an honorary jury of the Social Democratic Party in 1906 gave me a clearer explanation. The subject under discussion was the tactic to be used for the election to the Duma. Lenin had accused

certain adversaries who had left the Party of "selling the workers' votes," of "bargaining to get one of their men into the Duma with the aid of a bourgeois party and to the detriment of the workers."

"You might ask me," he said, turning to the members of the jury, "whether I consider such a mode of expression admissible. My answer is no, with a small reservation: *provided that we are not dealing with dissident members who have left the Party.* When we have to do with dissidents, we can no longer try to persuade, but we must destroy their organization, incite the working classes and the masses against them. It would not be right, with regard to comrades, to use language which might arouse in the workers hatred, antagonism, and contempt. But it is lawful and proper to do so in dealing with those who do not share our views. I have knowingly and intentionally spread confusion among those workers in Petersburg who follow the Mensheviks that have left the Party. And so I shall act whenever I am dealing with dissidents."

At the beginning of World War I, when we were still exiled in Switzerland, an event shook the public opinion of the world, of the Socialists in particular. Friederick Adler, secretary of the Austrian Social Democratic Party and son of the distinguished forerunner of international socialism, Victor Adler, had killed the Austrian prime minister, Stürgkh.

What inner conflicts could have driven a Marxist, an uncompromising opponent of terrorism, to such action? A man who had taught the masses of workers that not the single exponents of a system, but the system itself is responsible for the crimes of society? While the press of the whole world was asking the same question and we were racking our brains to understand the tragedy of the Socialist homicide, Lenin, on a chance encounter in the Zürich library, said in an almost facetious tone: "You, Comrade Balabanoff, you know everyone, tell me: To what party does Adler's wife belong?" Somewhat surprised by the question and the tone in which

it had been put to me, I said: "To the Social Democratic Party."

"Strange," Lenin said, "I thought she was a Social-Revolutionary terrorist and that she had influenced her husband. And then," he continued in a serious tone, "wasn't Adler the secretary of the Austrian Social Democratic Party? Why did he do what he did, instead of sending pamphlets to all the Party members? Wouldn't that have been more useful?" This way of reacting to such a tragic and complex event confirmed once more Lenin's habit of perceiving in any happening only what interested him as a Bolshevik and of ignoring every other aspect, no matter how important from the human point of view.

Lenin and Personal Appearances

Another occurrence shed some light on the psychological problem that had not ceased to occupy my mind. The date was March 1919—the foundation of the Communist International. For the first time since my return to Russia I had a free evening, and Chekhov's *Three Sisters* was just then being given at the Art Theater under Stanislavski's direction.

To anyone not familiar with the psychology of the revolutionists of tsarist Russia, it is difficult to imagine what the theater, and the Moscow Art Theater in particular, meant to us. At that time free theater tickets were distributed to the workers. I had given up my ticket because I thought it just that a proletarian who had never seen a stage production should be given this experience; also, I knew that I had very little time at my disposal.

But that evening I counted on a miracle that would enable me to see the performance. I was greatly surprised to find Lenin in the same situation: he too had taken the rare occasion of a free evening to enjoy one of those unforgettable performances. Seeing that no seats were available, we were both going to leave, since neither would have thought of asking for

preferential treatment. We were already at the door when we heard the powerful voice of the well-known Socialist writer Riazanov: "What?! You let Comrade Lenin and Comrade Balabanoff go away? Can't you possibly add two chairs?" [1]

The suggestion was carried out. Somewhat embarrassed, we made our way toward the assigned seats and found ourselves close to a man who gave me the impression of belonging to the Cheka. "Do you know this comrade?" Lenin asked. "I am not sure; perhaps I have seen him somewhere." "His name is Stalin," Lenin said.

During the intermissions Lenin gave me some information regarding my work as secretary of the Communist International. Afterward, in the pursuit of my character probing, I asked him: "Do you think the actors would feel ill at ease if they knew that you were in the theater?" Lenin looked at me with astonishment: "Of course they know; they even asked me to speak. But naturally I refused. I don't understand, however, why you ask such a question. You, who are such an effective and expert speaker. How did this question ever come to your mind? On my tour of the local groups of the Russian Social Democratic Party in Switzerland, I have spoken seventeen times, repeating the same speech every evening without worrying about who might be in the audience."

"Vladimir Ilyich," I said, "how much I envy you! If you knew what effort every speech costs me!" He looked at me in astonishment. This brief exchange confirmed my opinion about Lenin as a speaker. His elementary way of handling the arguments was connected with the aim he had set himself. His sole objective was that his words become a *credo* to his listeners, a guide for their thought and action.

Extending this analysis, one might say that his characteristic traits as a speaker were derived mainly from his way of dealing with the workingmen's movement. According to him,

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[1] There was no stage at the Art Theater at that time; the spectators sat at the same level as the actors.

it was to be guided by an élite; there was no need for the lower strata to understand why they thought and acted one way or another. Indeed, it is one of the most tragic aspects of Lenin's life that while he was aspiring after human equality he was also creating the most deadly and humiliating hierarchies: thought control from above.

Lenin and an Assassin

In August 1918, when a member of the Russian Social Revolutionary Party made an attempt on Lenin's life, I was in Stockholm; among other things, I was the unofficial representative of Soviet Russia, which at that time was denied the right to an official representative in various countries.

The state of anxiety in which I was living since the news of the criminal attempt had reached me was intensified by the many questions I was asked and which I was unable to answer, since I lacked detailed information. In those days I learned what the life of a personified ideal means. Overcoming many obstacles—including the opposition of the Russian leaders who did not want me to abandon my post—I went to Moscow to get firsthand information.

Besides the preoccupation with Lenin's physical condition and the consequences the criminal act might have had, I was deeply concerned over the assailant's fate. The foreign press had already reported that the assailant would be executed. Most of the journalists had even stated that the criminal had been put to death already. "Is it possible," I asked myself during the interminable hours of anxiety, "that a revolutionary government executes someone who has acted with the intention of serving the people's cause? Did we not protest when the tsar and his police-spies did it? Is this the respect for human life for which we have fought so much and which we have claimed as one of the basic rights of the Socialistic regime?"

The morning after my arrival, while I was going toward a group of Lenin's closest collaborators in a foyer of the Kremlin to get news of his health—the thought of calling on him personally never even entered my mind—a messenger hurried toward a member of the group and handed him a personal note from Lenin to the effect that his physicians had allowed him to receive me. I sensed that the exception made for me was dictated chiefly by the urgent need for precise information about the International movement. More than anyone else he was aware of the interdependence of the Russian revolutionary movement and that in other countries; he feared the indifference among the workers in other countries toward the struggle in which the backward Russian masses were engaged against the coalition of the privileged classes and the governments of all Europe.

Indeed, during the hours I passed with him and his wife, Lenin—as I had foreseen—tried to speak mainly of the International movement. After the first moment of emotion—which was acute for me, seeing him with his arm in a sling—he asked me innumerable questions. When, at the pre-established hour, the car arrived to take me to Moscow,[1] he sent it back, asking me to stay for dinner. During the conversation I brought up the subject of the possible fate of the woman who tried to kill him. I noticed that he became slightly embarrassed, as if ashamed of something. "The Central Committee will have to decide," he replied, changing the subject.

I sensed—later, my intuition was confirmed—that he would have expressed his opinion more freely if he had not been personally involved. The thought that someone should be executed for having tried to kill him was extremely painful to him. In the afternoon, having asked him to take some rest

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[1] After the attempt on his life, Lenin had been taken to a place near Moscow—where he was to die six years later—to protect him from other attempts and from disturbing visits. The location was kept secret and visits were strictly forbidden. That was why he asked the physician's permission for my visit.

and to allow me to return to Moscow, I remained a few minutes alone with his wife, with whom I had never been on intimate terms. Throwing her arms around me, she sobbed: "A revolutionist executed in a revolutionary country! Never!" Indeed, several years after Lenin's death, illegal papers published by members of the party to which the assailant, Dora Kaplan, belonged, reported that she was alive, exiled to Siberia. This news has recently been confirmed.

Dinners and Funerals

I should describe what I have called "dinner" with Lenin. On a little covered balcony, together with half a dozen scrawny peasant children in rags and two cats, we ate a bit of bread, a tiny slice of meat, and some cheese—which I had brought from Sweden—and drank a glass of tea with a small piece of sugar. Pointing at the food, Lenin said to me with a smile—pleased with the proofs of solidarity and desiring to justify the "privileges" he enjoyed: "They have brought me the sugar from the Ukraine, the bread from Central Russia, the meat was prescribed by the physician, and I don't know where it might have come from." I remember he was not easily persuaded to accept the cheese the comrades from Stockholm had sent him. "Give it to the children in Moscow," he said, and he accepted it only after my assurance that half of it had already been distributed to them and that I had brought him only the part that was meant for him.

At that time there was much talk about a book called *The Fire*, by Henri Barbusse. It was one of the very first attempts to draw public attention to the sufferings, conflicts, horrors, massacres, physical and psychic tortures of the war—a boundless, overwhelming tragedy, whose details and descriptions could leave no one indifferent. To soften the pessimistic conclusions, the narrative ends with a brief dialogue between a German and a French soldier who, in brotherly union, sing

the praises of a future without borders; and the triumph of the fellowship of peoples.

"Have you read *The Fire*?" Lenin asked me before talking about anything else. "You see, the soldiers too become Socialists, they too move toward the International." Nothing else in the book had attracted his attention. Also on this occasion I was struck by Lenin's characteristic perception, even in the most complex occurrences, of only the strategical within the workingmen's movement.

I saw Lenin at the funeral of someone particularly dear to him. I never saw such torment; I never saw any human being so completely absorbed by sorrow, by the effort to keep it to himself, to guard it against the attention of others, as if their awareness could have diminished the intensity of his feeling. This comrade had been militantly at his side at the beginning of Bolshevism as the perfect—almost passive—executrix of his orders. This does not imply that she had no personality or will of her own, I merely want to say that she was so saturated with the master's authority and infallibility that the possibility of any divergence was inconceivable to her. She was the prototype of the perfect Bolshevik of rigid, unconditional obedience.

Because of her indefatigable work and great privations, her physical condition had been such that the Bolshevik Central Committee sent her to the Caucasus for a rest period. Her weakened body could not withstand the epidemic that had broken out there, aided by the local unhygienic conditions. She died of typhus fever in 1920. Her body was transferred to Moscow for burial. I was asked to pronounce the funeral oration. I declined because a strange chill within me would have deprived my words of spontaneity. But I did attend the funeral.

At that time one had to fear attempts on the lives of the most prominent communists. One of the precautionary measures was a chain of the most trusted workers who, by holding hands, would form a circle around us. Thus, I found

myself in the immediate vicinity of Lenin. Not only his face but his whole body expressed so much sorrow that I dared not greet him, not even with the slightest gesture. It was clear he wanted to be alone with his grief. He seemed to have shrunk; his cap almost covered his face, his eyes seemed drowned in tears held back with effort. As our circle moved, following the movement of the people, he too moved, without offering resistance, as if he were grateful for being brought nearer to the dead comrade. This mood did not influence in the least his activity as statesman and strategist of the workers' movement of the world. From the funeral he went straight back to his desk.

Opportunists and the Regime

From the first day of functioning of the new International I noticed among the members of the Executive Council certain untrustworthy individuals who had never belonged to the movement. I soon had occasion to ascertain that they were tools in the hands of Zinoviev, used with Lenin's consent. He employed them for tasks he dared not undertake himself, or as strawmen to take the blame for his actions.

Since the Ukraine had to be evacuated—there were seventeen evacuations before the Bolshevik government could take over there—I had to return to Moscow. Before leaving, I wanted to put the documents in order and close the accounts. At the disposal of my office were great sums of money in foreign currencies. It took the two employees two days and two nights to count all the money I had to take with me.

When, immediately after my arrival in Moscow, I wanted to make a report on the assets to the Executive Council of the Comintern, I was received with laughter. "A statement of the assets? From you? It would be like checking up on Comrade Lenin."

"Go on laughing, if you wish," I replied. "For me it is a matter of principle. I know that you do not want to check

on me, but I want to leave everything in such condition that my successor understands that the accounts must be kept scrupulously." I proceeded to list the few expense items, citing among them the financial aid given to an ailing hospitalized comrade.

No sooner had I mentioned it than a member of the Central Committee passed a note to another member who promptly interrupted me. "Objection! This is impermissible. The Comintern is not a philanthropic institution."

"You call this philanthropy?" I said, almost unable to control my indignation. "Aiding a sick man, one who has been sentenced to death by the Whites during the civil war, you call that philanthropy? Are you not ashamed of yourself? Go ahead. I will sell my last dress, but I will not allow a sick man to be abandoned." The amount I had spent was really insignificant compared to the sums of money that had been sent to me for propaganda purposes.

Later—I had already left Russia—I learned that the man who had acted as the guardian of the assets of the International had fled from Moscow with considerable sums of money and so many jewels that he was able to open a goldsmith's shop in Vienna. He had admitted to an acquaintance of his that he would never have dared to oppose me had he not been pushed by the Bolsheviks.

II

Lenin and the London Congress of 1907

During the Fifth Congress of the Russian Social Democrats in London in 1907, I had occasion to observe Lenin very closely. He was one of the most sedulous, if not the most sedulous delegate, and certainly the most punctual one. To appreciate the meaning of this, one must keep in mind that the Congress lasted several weeks. Besides the official plenary sessions there were numerous sectional meetings either before the opening of the daily session of the Congress or at night. These submeetings were dedicated almost exclusively to the discussion of strategy and maneuvers. The agenda comprised twelve topics, on one of which, for example, were proposed not less than seventy amendments. The repetitions proved most exhausting; each speaker started from the beginning, even if what he had to say had been said already by somebody else.

To me, attending a Russian Congress for the first time and unaware of the factional intrigues, all this was incomprehensible and exasperating. The discussion about the inversion of the agenda alone lasted over a week. The fact was that behind this seemingly innocuous debate was hidden "a decision of greatest importance": on its outcome depended nothing less than the choice of a Menshevik or a Bolshevik president. If the Mensheviks won, the president would have been Plekhanov; if otherwise, Lenin.

On the eighth day of the discussion the debates finally began, but in the meantime some of the members of the Congress—including Plekhanov—had become ill. Fatigue and

boredom could be read in everybody's eyes; the discussion, however, continued with undiminished liveliness, and polemic flared up with even greater intensity, although the problems, the arguments, the repetitions were essentially the same. The tone was growing more and more violent, the huddles increasingly frequent, the hostility between the representatives of the two factions sharper. At times it was necessary to interrupt the sessions to let the members of the Congress cool off and to prevent a fist fight. At the end of the preliminary discussions, a dental plate was found on the floor among the many scraps and pieces of paper and the ashes of innumerable cigarettes.

Lenin assigned parts to his collaborators, suggested when to intervene, determined the emphasis of the various topics, and signaled for interruptions of the Menshevik speakers. Not a single word escaped him, not one gesture. He meticulously took down everything in a sort of diary. When I saw him ten years later, in Moscow, presiding over the sessions of the government, his manner was exactly the same. There he was, in the same position, bent over a sheet of paper; his ears strained, noting every interruption. He raised his head and gazed with one eye at the speaker if his attention had been attracted by a word or a hint.

Besides having been engaged in this activity in London for over three weeks, Lenin gave a very long report on relations with the bourgeois parties[1] and another one on the activity of the Party's Central Committee. He took part several times in the discussion of the report the delegates to

[1] This report, based exclusively on the conditions in Russia and the Russian Social Democracy, had been the core of the clash about the inversion of the agenda. The Mensheviks wanted to avoid discussion about the relation with "bourgeois" parties—considering this topic too theoretical—and to limit the discussions of the Congress to practical problems. The Bolsheviks—that is, Lenin—insisted instead on the necessity of discussing the theoretical question as well, stressing the relationship between theoretical issues and the practical problems of elections to the Duma.

the Duma had submitted; he objected orally and in writing to the changes that both Trotsky and the Mensheviks intended to make in the agenda submitted by him to the Congress. All in all he intervened about twenty times.

In order to understand why Lenin took such strong interest in such irrelevant details, one must bear in mind the conception he had always had of the nature of the working-class movement and of the relation between its leaders and the rank and file. It is not difficult to trace the psychological origin of Lenin's attitude to the lack of direct contact between him, an exile, and the masses of his country, as well as to the necessity of resorting to illegal means in order to carry out Socialist activities in tsarist Russia.

The Marxist Social Democratic parties and the Socialist International that comprises them all are based on the teachings of Marx and Engels brought up to date by experience and by the contributions of famous scientists of many countries who see in the struggle of the workers, enlightened and guided by Socialist principles, one of the essential means toward the realization of socialism. The ways of attaining this end vary with the advancement of technology from one historical period to another, from one country to another, but the initial, basic condition never changes: the political, ideological, and moral preparation of the masses for the historic function they are called upon to fulfill.

The profound divergence of concepts and methods between Lenin and the Socialists—which had begun to divide Russian Social Democracy into two factions and, with the rise to power of the Bolsheviks and the formation of the Communist International, extend to other countries—culminated in argument about the most useful method for rendering the workers capable of fulfilling their task of social transformation.

Lenin maintained that the workers could not become Socialists "by themselves" even if organized in trade unions. According to him they could only reach the level of petty

bourgeois trade unionism of the British variety, for which he had a profound contempt. The workers should be taught socialism only from outside, that is, by the Bolshevik élite, formed by professional revolutionists, selected, educated, and directed by the supreme Bolshevik authorities. The main part in the struggle for the emancipation of the working classes was thus assigned to the élite. In order to prove his thesis—which deviated from the conclusions Marx and Engels had reached both in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) and in the address to the Workers' International (1864), that is, that "the emancipation of the workers will be carried out by themselves"—he quoted Marx, Kautsky, and other Marxist Socialists who had written also that "by themselves the workers are not capable of becoming Socialists." The meaning given to this definition by the founders of scientific socialism, and later by Marxists in general, can be reduced to an axiomatic statement: the workers, as well as the members of other social strata, the young generations and all those who wish to understand, who wish to deepen their knowledge of what surrounds them, must be *assisted* by the experience of those who preceded them.

The worker, guided only by his instincts, especially if he belongs to a trade union, may become a rebel. But this is not enough to make him a conscious fighter in the struggle for the emancipation of his class. He lacks what distinguishes instinct from class consciousness: the understanding of the causal relationships between the various social phenomena and the resulting situations. Even if he realizes he is a victim of injustice, he does not understand its cause, nor does he see the possibility and absolute necessity of removing it.

It is in this phase of the formation of Socialist consciousness that the intellectual must give his *assistance*. Antonio Labriola epitomized this task of the intellectuals when he appealed to them to be the "intelligent interpreters" of history, "the modest obstetricians of a difficult birth." This appeal leads

clearly and incontrovertibly to another statement by the same illustrious teacher directed toward those intellectuals who, conscious of their obligation toward the society to which they belong, seek a way to fulfill their duty: "Ethics, now, consists in this: to make science serve the proletariat."

In other words: you have studied, you have come to the conclusion that the rights of most of your fellow men, now trampled upon, as well as freedom, justice, peace, and the coveted equality can triumph only with the radical transformation of the contemporary social structure. You have understood that for protagonists of this moral and intellectual rebirth of humanity history has chosen the workers, the carriers of that technical progress without which no radical transformation can be realized. You have been allowed to study, to think, while others have had to renounce this right because they were absorbed in the struggle for a piece of bread. Go to them, share what you have learned, spread faith in their historic mission, give to the proletarians the joy and pride of the consciousness of being the gravediggers of human injustice, the arrogance of the rich, the humility of the disinherited, the hypocrisy and lies, all of which dishonor the present social structure.

Antonio Labriola said to his students in his final lecture at the University of Rome: "Throughout this course we have seen that contemporary society is divided into exploited and exploiters. Who takes the part of the exploited assumes a noble task. So say I, your professor of moral philosophy. I have finished." As I recall these words, I am approaching the ninth decade of my life, three-fourths of which I can say I passed fighting for the cause of the exploited. Shouts of triumph, oaths of loyalty to the ideal, sublime proofs of dedication, heinous acts of treason, outbreaks of joy, and laments of defeat have reached my ears, but nothing ever touched me as those words of the teacher, predicting the realization of the Socialist ideal.

For us socialism no longer was a pious wish, nor its invo-

cation a mere shout of rebellion of people hungry for bread, justice, liberty. No, socialism was the verdict of history, the application of the cold, inexorable law of causality to human events. The overwhelming irony is that Lenin, who must have felt the same throbbing enthusiasm we did, was the one who had to set up the most numerous and difficult obstacles for the triumph of the verdict in which he had a stronger belief than any other man.

According to Lenin, the intellectuals, instead of helping the workers in their difficult progress, were to *replace* them, reducing them thus to the role of mere executioners of orders they could neither approve nor disapprove and whose reach and scope were often not revealed to them.

Lenin made the decisions, the professional revolutionists carried them out, the workers obeyed. This concept, far from being Marxist or democratic, created the demarcation line between the doctrine and practice of Bolshevism and the democratic forms of proletarian organizations in all civilized countries. Holding in little account the conscious action of the masses, Lenin attributed great importance to the obedience of those few called upon to bring the workers to the point at which, according to him, they could not arrive by their own strength. Each of those whom he considered capable and on whose blind obedience he could count had to be a sort of traveling handbook of Bolshevism.

This was the reason for Lenin's violent hatred of those intellectuals who attacked his point of view. If they were not Bolsheviks, they had to be fought, isolated, slandered. As dictator of an enormous country and the ideological and political guide of a number of followers all over the world, he kept repeating with unnerving monotony that the Socialist parties must be liberated from the Turatis in Italy, the Brantings in Sweden, the Levis in Germany, the Bauers in Austria. The fate of the workers and of the revolution depended on whether or not these men belonged to a particular party.

The Congress of the Russian Social Democrats, held in London in 1907, was particularly significant because of the decisions taken there or, more precisely, could have been significant if those deliberations had not been ignored by Lenin. The Congress refused to include in the agenda the preparation of an armed uprising and voted the liquidation of the organizations created to that end; it also voted, by a great majority, against expropriations. Lenin bypassed the deliberations of the Congress with the creation of a special organ, the "Central Bureau," which was not under Party control but his own. The task of this Bureau was to do precisely what had been vetoed by the Congress.

Having been delegated by the Russian Marxist university students to represent them at the London Congress, I was about to leave Italy when I received a wire from the Russian Social Democratic Party requesting me to go to Berlin and obtain financial support from the German Social Democratic Party. After having carried out this assignment I went to London; there I found about 350 delegates, very few of whom did not have to resort to the Party for their expenses. Notwithstanding all the aid the German Social Democratic Party could give the Russian Social Democrats, the situation was rather serious. For instance, to elude the police, many delegates from Russia boarded the train at the last moment without suitcases and often without coats and hats.

The Congress, which was to take place in Copenhagen, had to be transferred to London; the Danish royal family, being related to the tsar, would not have a congress of Russian revolutionists meet in Denmark. As soon as the Congress members arrived in the English capital, provision for their immediate needs became an urgent task. To that end a committee was nominated consisting of one Bolshevik, one Menshevik, and two not belonging to these factions—the great writer Maxim Gorki and me. The greatest hope—if not the only one—was to obtain a loan. We had a highly solvent firm: Maxim Gorki was at that time the best-known,

most widely read and appreciated writer in many countries. He accepted immediately. But as soon as he had made the necessary statement he was taken aside by the Bolshevik representative, who whispered something into his ear. "I must qualify my statement," said Gorki immediately afterwards. "I am willing to sign the note only if the Central Committee will consist of Bolsheviks." Such was my surprise, or horror rather, at the distinction between Bolsheviks and non-Bolsheviks when these people were hungry, that I spoke in plenary session to tell the Congress members of my surprise and concern.

To form an idea of Gorki's intolerance and fanaticism one must consider his disposition and habits. Saying that Gorki was extremely generous is an understatement: he was the typical representative of that Russian generation which, when it came to giving or helping, did not distinguish between mine and yours. It would have been considered an act against nature, an unspeakable shame, if we did not seek to level our living conditions with those who had less. Gorki especially—with his past of a pariah who had suddenly become one of the privileged, thanks to his great talent—considered it a matter of course to share what he had. Naturally, the first ones to enjoy his generosity were the Socialists.

During his stay in Capri he had organized courses in philosophy to give the comrades a chance to exchange opinions on those problems which interested them most and to prepare them for their future task of propagating their convictions. There were long and lively debates on materialism, dialectic, and empirical criticism; the discussions enabled Lenin—who refused to take part in them—to lash out at the more or less mystic "deviants" like Bogdanov and the future commissar for Public Instruction, Lunacharski who, because of his mystic bent, earned himself the nickname of "searcher for God."

Russian emigrants in London helped us to get out of our financial difficulties. Through their kind offices a British

patron of the arts, Fels, a soap manufacturer and collector of autographs, agreed to pay a rather high sum. After having made the payment he circulated a sheet of paper asking the most famous members of the Congress to affix their signatures. Ten years later, that is, a few months after the October Revolution, I, as the representative of the Republic of Russian Workers in Stockholm, received a letter from Fels asking for the restitution of the money loaned us in London. I forwarded the letter to the government in Moscow for the settling of the account.

Some ten years ago an American student asked me a number of questions about the amount of the loan and the date of the repayment. He had chosen our British patron of the arts for the subject of his thesis. I suggested he write to Moscow where, according to my information, the receipt is on exhibit under glass.

During this Congress Gorki, with whom I had had frequent and very friendly encounters in Italy, gave another and more direct proof of his intolerance. Meeting me on a street in London in the company of some non-Bolshevik delegates he hardly greeted me; he never spoke to me during that interminable congress.

Our "reconciliation" occurred under conditions that were typical of the deep friendship, not to say passion, the Russian intellectual revolutionists of that time felt for the Italian people.

Gorki and the Regime

Only ten years had passed since the London Congress, but in this time the world had been turned upside down. We were in Moscow, free citizens in the liberated fatherland, glowing with joy in the hope of collaborating in the consolidation of the people's revolutionary conquests.

One of the first pan-Russian trade union congresses took place in Moscow. For the occasion a play by Gorki was

performed, followed by a sort of reception to which had been invited all the members of the Congress, a few special guests, and, of course, the great writer of the revolution. We were at the beginning of the new regime, a period of acute scarcity of food, and the thought of taking part in a collective meal—even if it consisted of a mere piece of bread and a hint of meat—was deeply moving.

At the opening of the Congress there was music by an excellent orchestra. I gave the official speech. I talked about the disastrous consequences of the war, the suffering of the people, the struggle of the Socialists in the proletarian international Zimmerwald Movement, and of the particular merits of the Italian proletariat and comrades. While I was speaking I noticed that one of the listeners did not take his eyes off me, following my words with singular attention. It was Gorki. After the meeting a few of us were invited to a small gathering. Gorki approached me and said without preamble, breaking the ice that had separated us for so long: "Comrade Balabanoff, tell me, what would you give to be in Italy in this moment?" I replied: "And you, Alexei Maximovich, what would you give to be there yourself?"

On yet another occasion Gorki showed his great love of Italy and her people. When the Italian committee of studies came to Russia in 1920 the members—before going to Moscow—passed a week in Petrograd as my guests. Gorki phoned to ask if he might come and spend an evening with us. I understood that it was his nostalgia for Italy that made him call me; I knew how shy he was and how reluctant to socialize with people other than his friends, especially when he did not speak the language of the guests. And now here was Gorki, who had refused to say a few words to an enthusiastic imploring theater audience, announcing that he wanted to speak. For us Russians, who knew him well, this was a surprise. And for me, who had to translate his speech, it was a trying experience.

Of the great number of speeches of mine, or of others for

whom I have acted as interpreter—which amount, no doubt, to several thousands—I never made one without being overcome by a panic of inadequacy. I felt that Gorki would say a few simple, moderate words, full of inner weight, of imponderables and nuances. How to translate them? I felt the blood freeze in my veins. There was no time to insist on my refusal, for Gorki had already begun to speak.

As the words were coming from his mouth like gems falling into a mosaic whose harmony may be altered by the slightest dislocation of the stones, I increasingly identified myself with the speaker, almost losing awareness of my modest stature and growing into that giant, Gorki. When I began to say in Italian what the poet had said in Russian it seemed the continuation of a talk I had begun. In great, simple words Gorki told why he was so fond of the Italian people. "Before having lived in Italy," he said, "I thought I could love and understand only the Russian people . . . but after having been in Italy! . . ."

"Comrade Balabanoff," he said, taking leave, "I knew you as a woman of great capability, but I did not know that you were a poet." I was looking at him in surprise, and he continued: "Yes, a poet. Stop your propaganda travels and start writing."

"What? Write? There are too many illiterates in Russia and in Italy! They do not read what we write, only oral propaganda can educate and emancipate them."

I remembered that I had found myself in a similar situation in Italy many years before. Gorki's novel *Mother* had caused a stir. His literary agent, Castelli, asked me to translate the book for the *Secolo* in Milan. I refused for the same reason, and with the same explanation. "Spend time and energy on a work that would deprive me of the possibility of making propaganda that is so badly needed? Never."

In the third and last phase of my relations with Gorki it was I who felt rancor against him. Both of us left Russia at the same time and for the same psychological motives. But

he never took a position clearly against the regime and—as if this were not enough—asked and accepted asylum in Fascist Italy to live for many years on the island of Capri that was so dear to him. From time to time he put in an appearance in Russia, where nobody ever reproached him for living under a regime which persecuted, humiliated, and tortured those masses to whose emancipation he had dedicated, in his extraordinary literary works, the best years of his life.

Methods vs. *Ideals*

One was faced with a puzzling psychological situation. Lenin was neither blind nor indifferent to the harm personal dishonesty might do to the movement, yet he used individuals who were the scum of humanity. This system, exported by the Bolsheviks to all countries of the world and exerting its deleterious influence everywhere, requires closer examination if one wants to understand the nature and scope of communism then and now.

In tsarist Russia, those who dedicated their lives to spreading the gospel of revolution among the disinherited masses called their task—which necessarily had to be secret—"work among the people." When Lenin spoke to me about sending some "messengers" to Western Europe, I believed men of conviction would be sent abroad to dispel the calumnies and exaggerations the reactionary press had been propagating about the events in Russia and their protagonists. I thought pamphlets were to be distributed to the workers in other countries to inform people abroad of the actual conditions.

But gradually I realized that the Bolsheviks' criteria for the selection of their trusted men were entirely different. When a comrade seeking such a position came to me, I tried to find out whether he had the necessary political and ethical preparation, and I decided according to the outcome of my inquiries. The Bolsheviks, on the contrary, used any individual as long as he proved shrewd, unscrupulous, a jack-

of-all-trades, able to obtain access anywhere, and a humble executer of his boss's orders. I must admit I did not immediately see the enormous difference between my criteria and the Bolsheviks', who officially used my name in the International to accomplish without my knowledge things of which they were sure I would never have approved.

At that time I was abroad acting as a link between Russia and the Socialists of the left in various countries. What astonished me were the enormous amounts of money that were sent to me from Moscow. As is well known, Russia was blockaded at that time, and the only country that maintained relations with her was Sweden, where I had my office. Ships arrived in Stockholm every Saturday. They brought me cases full of newspapers and large quantities of money which I deposited in a bank. The very modest budget of my office did not require such large sums, and the purpose of these transfers was incomprehensible to me. The same boats would often bring deputies commissioned to buy machinery or other goods, since Russia was in need of everything. Often the acquisitions failed to materialize or did not absorb all the money the deputies had brought with them; this money too was then handed over to me. I felt ill at ease, and I took every occasion to ask Lenin for explanations and instructions. I tried to go to Moscow to obtain the clarifications I was so concerned about. This wish of mine became even more compelling after I received the following letter from Lenin: "*Dear Comrade Balabanoff!* Excellent, excellent (underlined three times; a habit of Lenin's to lend special emphasis to his words), you are our most capable and deserving collaborator. But I beg you, don't economize. Spend millions, many many millions."

When, finally, I could speak to Lenin, I received the explanation. It had been a misunderstanding. Considering me a good revolutionist, though not a Bolshevik, he and his collaborators believed I approved of their methods: corruption in order to undermine opposing organizations, slander

of those capable or inclined to offer opposition by branding their actions as dishonest and dangerous. . . . That very day I resigned from my post, an action which had almost no effect. Since I was in no position to publicize my resignation, the Bolsheviks persisted in using my name.

Communist Justice

Rumors of the increased persecution of alleged enemies of the regime and the suppression of human lives caused me acute concern and troubled my conscience. I became convinced that only in Russia would I be able to check the accuracy of the news spread about her abroad. Therefore, I left Stockholm.

I could appreciate the situation in which the young republic found herself, compelled as she was, to defend herself at the height of the civil war against the formidable military forces of governments threatening to uproot at all costs "the poisonous plant of revolution." I knew that *agents provocateurs* were operating in Russia, that there were conspiracies and attempts to kill the exponents of the Workers' Republic; I could even bring myself to understand the necessity of violence and terror at the height of revolution as a means of defense in order to safeguard the conquests and rights of the disinherited masses. But even granting all of these things I could not put my mind at ease. Was capital punishment not a violation of one of the basic and unassailable principles of socialism; reverence for human life?

I went to Moscow, where my doubts and apprehensions grew. The repressions had become extremely severe, the prisons were jammed. Some prisoners, in tears, insisted they were innocent, others did not even know why they had been arrested. The neighborhood of the ill-famed Butirki prisons was the setting for many heartbreaking scenes. Friends and relatives of the prisoners tried to get packages through;

parents had brought food saved from their own meager rations. People stood in interminable queues in icy wind or rain. Pleas, exhortations, curses were passing between the waiting crowd and the prison wardens. Both sides were exacerbated by hunger, nervous tension, and the elbowing crowd.

Among the "guardians of order" were individuals who had exerted the same function under tsarism. Witnesses and protagonists of mistreatments and humiliations, they had become callous and indifferent to suffering, often even pleased with the opportunity of finding an outlet on defenseless creatures for their rancor and envy.

The fact that the cruelties and mistreatments that had caused the fall of the old regime continued under the new one filled me with horror. I went to Lenin. "Comrade," I said, "there is nothing worse for the regime and for us than to hear that things have not changed, that the people are treated as under tsarism: the same police spies, the same methods. Vladimir Ilyitch, let me work in the prisons, let me save the prisoners and their relatives from tortures and you from shame, maledictions, and responsibility."

Lenin listened to me without saying a word. Then, in a grave tone: "But you could not resist even a single day among all that anguish. Your nerves . . ."

"This does not matter, comrade, I know. But even one curse unuttered, one suffering relieved, one innocent freed . . ."

Some weeks later, guided by the same principles, I asked to be admitted as judge to the tribunal of the revolution. Since I had no reply for a long time, I assumed that I had not been accepted. Cornered by my insistence, the judge finally told me the reason for the rejection: "You are too kind for a judge and you could not stand that environment."

This person was not a cynic. Before taking his post he probably felt and reasoned as I did, but now he had already conformed. I often wondered in how short a time revolutionists would switch to inflicting on others the same sufferings,

the same humiliations they had suffered under tsarism. Some were guided by rancor and vindictiveness, but this was not the prevailing mood. Several were not able, especially at the onset of revolution, to carry out certain assignments. They chose death rather than use terror and violence; others went mad; but the majority adapted themselves.

One evening an Italo-Russian Socialist who was my guest in Moscow came to knock at my door in great alarm. A young anarchist had been arrested two weeks earlier. In protest he had gone on a hunger strike that had lasted nine days and now, although his prison term had expired, he had not yet been set free. It was ten minutes before midnight, the hour at which the prison gates closed. By phone I found out that the papers necessary for the release had not come through in time.

"What"! I burst out, "don't you know that after a nine-day hunger strike not a single minute can be wasted? Tell me what to do to have him released."

"There is only one way: if you come in person, I shall give orders that the gates be kept open after midnight." In the car I was seized by the indescribable fear that the prisoner might have died. I was oppressed by an acute feeling of shame and coresponsibility. A man's life depended on me.

In the heavy silence of the night I perceived the red banner atop the building that had imprisoned so many victims of tsarism and which, for us revolutionists, had become a symbol of hatred. Now, the building served the same purpose under a regime that had promised freedom and justice. I felt so guilty and dejected that I did not dare look the young man in the face when he was led to the car, nor could I speak to him. I would have preferred being a victim of power rather than a holder of it. I am convinced that Lenin felt the same way, even though he was willing to use any means he felt necessary to keep the power in the hands of the proletariat.

Membership in the Party

One day, while talking with Lenin about the necessity of closer collaboration between the Western Socialists and us, I told him that the name of the party—Bolshevik—kept many from joining its ranks. "This is true of me, for example," I added, "and of other comrades who, although reluctant to identify themselves with Bolshevism, feel solidarity and sympathy toward the Russian revolution, toward the Soviet state."

Lenin assented without further discussion. Some time afterward the name was changed to Communist Party with a *b* added in parentheses that stood for Bolshevik, or successor of Bolshevism.[1]

In the meantime the Russian government, or the Central Committee of the Party, that is, Lenin, sent me to Stockholm to renew contacts with the Western Socialists. I was absent for a long time. When the situation worsened, and the news from Moscow became more alarming—the fall of the capital of the first Workers' Republic became a probability—I, besides giving other proofs of solidarity and collaboration, decided to become a member of the Russian Communist Party. I asked a friend, Alexandra Kollontai, who passed through Stockholm on her way to Moscow, to act in my behalf. She arrived in Russia at a tragic moment—it seemed the capital might fall any hour—and could not carry out my request; later she forgot it. After some time, when I too had returned to Moscow—which, mainly through Trotsky's strategy and courage had overcome the grave danger—I received a personal invitation to appear before a committee of Bolshevik workers of the old guard, whose task it was to decide

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[1] In the annals of the Bolshevik Party the change of name is attributed to the desire to emphasize the revolutionary character of the ex-Bolshevik Party and to distinguish it from Socialist and Social-Democratic parties. Perhaps these considerations also motivated the decision; perhaps it was mere coincidence.

on admission or expulsion from the Party. It was to be decided whether I could belong to the Communist Party and, if so, with what seniority. I answered the questions in their questionnaire and stated in a letter that I did not belong to the Party. I did appear, however, before the Committee.

The day of the hearing, while I was making my way toward the chairs where the people to be interrogated were seated, a burst of applause was heard and shouts of "Hurrah for Comrade Balabanoff! To the speaker's stand, Comrade Balabanoff!" When I began to speak with the intent of giving further explanations, I was interrupted: "Comrade Balabanoff owes no explanations! Bravo Comrade Balabanoff!"

I was given twenty-five years' seniority of Party membership. Thus, I became one of the old guard in a party to which I had never legally belonged. Since Lenin had acted similarly toward me several times, I understood that the years abroad in the service of the International and of the Italian Socialist movement in particular had been counted toward my membership in the Russian Party. That my assumption was correct was borne out by the different treatment of other exiles. At the same hearing, for instance, Chicherin, the commissar for Foreign Affairs, was given a five-year seniority only: during his exile he had taken active part for over fifteen years in the Menshevist Social Democratic movement.

The Perversion of Marxism

When Bolshevism—creating hatred, horror, and illusions—became a misfortune for a great many people and a serious threat to the rest of the world, it caused enormous misunderstanding. The improper or loose use of terms by people of differing levels of education soon affected concepts and judgments. Hazy terminology and equivocation are grist for the demagogic mill.

The greatest and most harmful of these equivocations is to refer to the regime that has been in power in Russia since

1917 as communist or Marxist; actually it is a monstrous caricature of what Marx and Engels meant by this term. To call these two antithetical systems by the same name means either to continue deception in full knowledge, or to persist, unwittingly, in a dangerous misunderstanding.

Bolshevism is a product of tsarist Russia and of Soviet postwar conditions. In dealing with it, we must use a specific name, particularly because supporters of totalitarianism do not refrain from calling their regime and their doctrines Socialist. There is no socialism without democracy; a regime based on brutal coercion and cynical inequality cannot be called Socialist. Socialism in theory and practice presupposes political democracy, whereas Social Democracy is nothing other than political and economic democracy combined. Antonio Labriola defined the term Social Democracy as the theory and the political movement of class struggle aiming at the abolition of private ownership of the means of production.

It may be said that Bolshevism was created to eliminate socialism, for wherever Bolshevism succeeds, although in appearance only, it is due to the violent suppression of socialism. The communists appropriated the Socialist theory and made it into a hateful caricature; they falsified our terminology and defiled our principles. Those who, in good or bad faith, identify Bolshevism with Marxism or socialism give Bolshevik totalitarianism a helping hand.

III

Lenin as Political Strategist

Lenin was the strategist of the workers' movement. The world was a chessboard to him on which the two opponents were represented by two social classes, the exploited and the exploiters, both vying for power. The white and black pawns demonstrated every single move made by the two classes: the victory of one meant the total and irreparable defeat of the other.

Yet this eminent strategist overlooked the difference between inanimate pawns at the unconditional service of their mover and the protagonists of the class struggle, animate beings who, even if used to obedience and to executing orders, are nonetheless beings of flesh and blood *capable of reacting* one way or another. The sum of their reactions might represent a social force that no chessplayer could foresee. Lenin's way of considering the working-class movement, which has had fatal consequences in Russia and—with the creation of the communist movement—also in other countries, originated in the fact that his strategy as well as his characteristic traits of thought and action were formed in prison, in exile, and during deportations.

Lenin was the first to recover from the terrible shock which the war and the failure and capitulation of the Socialist International had caused in all of us. While each of us, deeply distressed, was still commenting on every detail of the catastrophe and identifying himself with its victims, Lenin had already started his game of chess. Military clashes, deaths, defeats, and victories paid for with the existence of

an immense number of human beings, incalculable struggles, physical and mental disease—all this was reduced to numbers, exemplified on the chessboard. While we were still stunned by the blow of the disaster and had not yet got used to the idea that it had really happened, Lenin was already forging ahead with his plans.

From the defeat of the International[1] he hoped for the fruition of his dream: the breaking off of the working classes on a worldwide scale and the creation of a new International based on Bolshevik concepts and methods. With the outbreak of World War I, Lenin's chess-playing became more intensive. He began to play simultaneously on two boards: on one he moved the pawns representing the armies on the battlefields, on another he maneuvered the pawns representing the workers of different countries in the desired direction. Whenever war bulletins or government decisions upset all his schemes, he merely adjusted his movements to the new situation.

Essentially, everything was reduced to one question: does the working class move toward or away from a schism in the International? Lenin's attitude, which had been more or less passive before, became increasingly active during the war. No longer was it a question of moving the pawns according to the events, but of *creating* the conditions that would induce the masses to *move* in a particular direction.

Lenin created the Communist International, was its architect and mastermind. He was well aware that the goal he had set for himself could be reached only through a schism in the Socialist International, a break which could not occur in normal times in spite of all his efforts. The war created conditions most favorable to the diffusion of his ideas. Many members of Socialist parties in various countries who, in

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[1] At the outbreak of World War I the International did not live up to the expectations the Socialist masses had placed in it on the basis of its program and the unanimously voted resolutions at congresses. In this sense we speak of the "defeat of the Second International."

the past, had never wanted to have anything in common with Bolshevism had now, after the outbreak of the war and the behavior of their own national and international organizations, assumed a critical, almost rebellious attitude.

The war had drawn a dividing line between those who approved of the parties or trade unions which had associated with their national governments and the others, who passionately opposed governmental allegiance. The latter's contention was that the war, which had been caused by imperialistic or chauvinistic interests, must not divide the workers who—guided by the awareness of the interests and aspirations common to the exploiters of all countries—should all rally at the front of the class struggle. Naturally, the representatives of the workers and the organs of the international proletariat should have acted similarly. The resulting situation offered Lenin the occasion to fish in troubled waters. He took advantage of the discontent to weaken the International and to hasten its liquidation at a time when the overwhelming majority of the members, who were the ones to decide, were engaged elsewhere and in no position to voice their opinion. This, of course, was Lenin's aim.

It should be noted that not even the most ardent opponents of the tactics followed by the representative organs of socialism at the outbreak of the war thought at that time of replacing the International, although its improvement had been contemplated. Those very few who, at that time, had followed Lenin and had been caught in a Bolshevik snare were not aware that it was a plot to divide the Socialist movement.

In view of its consequences, this is one of the most dramatic events in the history of the workers' movement. And most people were not aware of this. The war had closed the various countries behind impenetrable curtains, and passions, intrigues, fears, conspiracies of silence, agencies for the diffusion of false news, spies, and *agents provocateurs* had succeeded in distorting facts, situations, and attitudes of individuals and groups to such an extent that one finished

by living in a world far from reality. Thus, the first act of the vastest of human tragedies was performed behind closed doors.

At that time Lenin and I started working together systematically. I had just returned to Italy from Brussels, where I had participated as the Italian representative at the last meeting of the Executive Council of the Second International in the fatal days of 28–29 July 1914, when I was asked by the Italian Socialist Party—of whose central committee I was a member at that time—to go to Switzerland as a foreign correspondent for *Avanti!* Soon I found myself in an intermediary position among the Socialist forces scattered throughout the world. One of them was the Italian Socialist Party, the only one of the great Socialist parties that had remained faithful to the International, and which enjoyed enormous prestige. An international Socialist group, which in time was to become the Zimmerwald Movement, gathered around the Swiss Socialist Robert Grimm and myself. We were all stricken by the same tragic events, we all were discouraged by the defeat militant internationalism had suffered, and we all shared the conviction that the war should not have severed the ties that united the Socialists throughout the world. There was an urgent need for renewing the relations among Socialists that militarism had confined into opposing trenches.

It was necessary, first of all, to give tangible expression to the faith in internationalism that animated us, to carry our voice to the greatest possible number of war victims, and to give this endeavor a collective, political character without arousing the impression that a new International was in the making.

It was not long before I received letters from various countries protesting against the war, affirming faith in the International, and voicing the necessity for a renewal of contacts among comrades in various countries. One of the early attempts to renew faith through active women, and the first at which both Lenin and the Bolsheviks participated, took place

in Switzerland since it was impossible for the men to leave their countries in wartime. The concrete proposal came from Germany through the pioneer of the international Socialist women's movement, Clara Zetkin. With her I arranged the clandestine meeting in Bern in March 1915.

As soon as the plan had matured, the Bolshevik Central Committee in Switzerland notified us that Lenin's wife, Zinoviev's wife, and another Bolshevik woman of the old guard would participate as delegates. From that day the Bolsheviks, with Lenin and Zinoviev as their spokesmen, became the most eager supporters of our initiative.

At times, their interest in the women's movement had an almost comic aspect; for a man like Lenin to sit for days on end in the corner of a coffeehouse where the women delegates of his faction came to report everything that happened at the convention and to ask for instructions was, no doubt, ludicrous.

There was continuous coming and going. Since it was a women's convention, Lenin did not participate personally; the consultations with him, however, had official character. At each ballot, with each attempt at the slightest modification of a resolution, the meeting was interrupted to allow the Bolshevik delegates to hear Lenin's opinion.

One of our chief tasks was to write a manifesto to shake the masses overcome and silenced by the war, carry to them the voice of solidarity among the peoples solemnly reconfirmed at an international meeting of mothers, wives, and widows, the most atrociously stricken war victims. We wanted it to be known that socialism was not dead and that the International, whose functioning was temporarily suspended, survived as belief, as conviction, as a shining ideal. Having at last found a formula suited for an appeal to all the women of the proletariat and having obtained the consent of the majority of the delegates, we were confronted with the Bolshevik women's refusal to sign our manifesto. They demanded the passing of a resolution which the other delegates

had rejected because of the implicit obligations. The minority group proposed the formation of a new International. The delegates to the Bern meeting did not consider themselves in a position to decide on matters of such importance without having heard the opinions of their respective parties.

The Bolshevik women—cornered by the objections and exhortations of the other delegates who begged them not to wreck the convention, for if one single signature were missing the meeting would have failed in its aim of showing the unanimity of the delegates of all countries regardless of the "block" their governments belonged to—did not dare to make any concession and left to confer with Lenin. These interruptions were filled with tension and anxiety.

Clara Zetkin, the president of the convention, was pale, very nervous, and suffering from a heart disease; she did not succeed in controlling the situation. The irritated and discouraged delegates were ready to leave without reaching the goal, though they had overcome numberless difficulties to participate in this convention, which was intended as, and succeeded in being, the first spark of light in the deathly dark of war.

The negotiations and the long talks between the Bolshevik delegates and Lenin did not yield anything; they merely drove most of the delegates to the brink of exasperation. The session was interrupted, and Clara Zetkin went to Lenin to make an attempt at breaking the deadlock. Hours passed in anguish and pain.

Lenin and the president of the convention came to a compromise: the Bolshevik delegates were authorized to sign the document drawn up by the majority of the congress members, provided the Bolshevik statement was included in the minutes of the meeting. "The convention," wrote Zinoviev, who was at that time Lenin's spokesman, "has not achieved its purpose. It could have laid the foundation for the construction of a new International. But it has not done so." This was clear enough!

Encouraged by the example of the Socialist women and aiming at the same goal, several members of the Socialist youth gathered a few weeks later in the same locale, the House of the People. Their participation in an international convention was of even greater significance than ours, partly because their going to Switzerland in wartime involved greater risk than did the attendance of the women.

Guided by the same objectives, the Bolsheviks presented the same agenda at the youth convention, causing confusion and despair. The delegates could not vote on it because the projected International did not fall within the competency of the youth organization. Also, having come with the chief aim of strengthening the international ties, they could not pass the Bolshevik motion without creating dissent and thus diminishing, if not nullifying, the results of the convention which had cost so many sacrifices and awakened such great hopes.

In my memory still echoes the desperate outcry of the young German delegate: "Being liable to conscription, I have faced great dangers in crossing the border and overcome many obstacles to get here and bring you the German Socialist youth's proof of their antiwar sentiments and their belief in the brotherhood of peoples. I have come here to take back to Germany the assurance that the war has not severed the class bonds, that we proletarians are brothers fighting for the same cause. Think what relief and encouragement this news might bring to the front and the back areas. And you, comrades, want to destroy all this, you want me to return with the news that unanimity has not been reached, exactly what our adversaries affirm!"

These words of warning, uttered in a voice unsteady with emotion, could not induce the Bolshevik delegates to give in. After consulting Lenin—who this time guided the discussions from his home by phone—they became even more intransigent and used, for the first time, that retaliation to which they were to resort later even in diplomatic relations with governments. They left the assembly hall.

After various attempts to come to some sort of agreement the convention was adjourned. As in the previous case, a delegation went to Lenin. The outcome was the same: Lenin authorized the youth of his group to vote in favor of the resolution proposed by the majority of the delegates, provided the statement of the Bolshevik minority be included in the minutes of the meeting.

These two conventions taught me a great deal about some characteristic aspects of Lenin's mentality and tactics. Indeed, they were a sort of blueprint for the many congresses, conventions, and meetings with Bolshevik participation at which I was present as an exponent of the International Socialist movement during and after World War I.

What impressed me at the very outset was the importance Lenin attributed to every agenda, every word in it, even every comma. He was capable of using hours—his and others' —even entire sessions, to discuss minute details which seemed of no importance. And this at a time in which a world collapsed, annihilating millions of lives, entire generations, wiping out epochs of civic and social conquest. What was the importance of this or that detail in a document which could not even reach the protagonists of the inhuman tragedy?

These meetings, often called at Lenin's suggestion, convinced me that for him they had the meaning of a sort of *errata* insert in the book of history. He wanted it recorded in the annals of the workers' movement that on specific occasions the Bolsheviks had said this or that, opposed this or supported that particular motion. The aim of it was to show that the Bolsheviks, and they alone, were right and all the others had been counterrevolutionaries, saboteurs, and servants of the bourgeoisie. The methods and tactics used by the Bolsheviks among the workers were the prototypes of those they adopted in their diplomatic relations, past and present: "Divide and rule." In the practice of this precept they would resort to petty intrigues, unscrupulously and without shame. They would agree in private on what attitude to take on a certain issue, yet act to the contrary in the public session,

with the aid of a strawman who pretended to be ignorant and opened a discussion annulling the previously assumed commitment.

Lenin and Sacrifice

Through my activity in the International and chiefly through frequent contacts and collaboration during World War I, Lenin had come to know well my non-Bolshevik orientation, and he expressed his displeasure more than once to his Bolshevik friends. My attitude deprived him of an executrix of his will. He was sure, however, that I would never have tolerated dishonest methods in non-Bolsheviks either.

Lenin's opinion of me was reflected also in his personal relations with me. He would not have entrusted me with a secret regarding the Bolshevik faction or with an illegal maneuver—there is a published letter in which Lenin mentions to Radek a move I would have disapproved of, warning him to keep it secret from me—but at the same time he held me in great respect. In addition to this he showed in various ways concern for my health, which, at the time, I could not explain.

I was greatly surprised to read in a German Social Democratic newspaper that at the beginning of the Bolshevik regime only four of the leaders lived the life of the rest of the population, suffering hunger and every sort of privation without ever asking or accepting preferential treatment and privileges. Their names: Lenin, Chicherin, Bukharin, and Balabanoff. This remark astonished me, because it seemed to me—and still does—quite natural that the members of a government whose program imposes sacrifices on the population should be the first ones to share them.

Every time someone insisted I ask for or accept a privilege, I considered it an insult and treated the one who suggested it with a severity uncommon to my nature. The privations were great and I, as many others, began to show clearly the con-

sequences. My body had aged prematurely; it was exhausted to the point that my temperature reached only 35.8° C. (96.44° F.). Every lecture caused me acute physical suffering that kept me nailed to the bed. The attending physician, Vinogradov—who was executed many years later—despaired of convincing me of the need to ask for a small quantity of white bread; the common bread, severely rationed and not distributed every day, was made of bean meal with an occasional mixture of straw.

"Tell me, does your party really prohibit the eating of white bread?" asked my physician, an absolutely apolitical man.

"What?" I burst out, "do you believe special regulations are necessary to make us understand that one does not eat white bread when the people have not even dark bread? Is it possible you do not see that?"

Every time I went to see Lenin at his office, he reprimanded me for neglecting my health, and although each meeting was limited to a few minutes he spent part of the time on concerned exhortations.

"I bet you don't even take the ration you are entitled to."

My eyesight had suddenly deteriorated, making it impossible for me to read without glasses. I borrowed a pince-nez from a comrade just arrived from America who happened to have two of them. Lenin flew into a rage:

"Aren't you ashamed of having reduced yourself to such a state? Look at me, I am older than you; yet I have no need for glasses. And besides, have you been to the oculist's? Have you got prescription glasses?"

When I admitted I had done neither, he became furious: "You behave like an illiterate peasant; how on earth could you get just any kind of glasses?" Somewhat intimidated by his severe tone, I tried to justify myself: "Spectacles are scarce here, and many are in need of them."

Similar scenes occurred frequently. When, by a miracle, I received a square of chocolate from abroad and I brought

him a piece, I had to insist on his accepting it, at least for his ailing wife.

"You need it more than anyone else. Look at the state you are in!" he would protest. "You need it more than we; you cannot go on like that!"

Lenin was deeply preoccupied with the growing number of weak people who could stand neither the privations nor the temptations that power holds. He felt profound contempt for opportunists and power seekers. As their numbers increased, Lenin's appreciation of those who remained faithful to their principles rose in equal measure.

I have had the impression, which in time was to become conviction, that Lenin's health was impaired by the bitter recognition that his followers, even some Bolshevik collaborators of the old guard, were morally wanting. He never spoke of it openly, nor did he name names, but the fact was much on his mind. The cynics may smile at my assertion; I, however, am certain of its truth.

As the genuine, convinced revolutionist that he was, Lenin could not but hate social privilege, and as the strategist and leader of a regime moving toward socialism, he could not ignore the damage each differentiation, each privilege must do to the regime. In this spirit he signed, immediately after his ascendancy to power, a decree fixing at 500 rubles the maximum monthly salary of any worker in the Soviet Republic. The Central Committee's attempt to make him an exception in view of his enormous amount of work, his immense responsibility, and his poor state of health, was answered with the following letter (20 May, 1918): *"The Administrator of the People's Soviet of Commissars W. D. Bunch Bruyevich:* Since you have not complied with my repeatedly stated request for the reasons for raising my monthly salary from 500 to 800 rubles, beginning March 18, and given the clear illegality of this raise which you have applied arbitrarily with the consent of the Soviet's secretary, N. P. Gorbunoff, in violation of the decree of the People's Soviet of Commissars, of

November 23, 1917, I subject you to severe reprimand. *The President of the People's Soviet of Commissars V. Ulyanov (Lenin).*"

Another document proves Lenin's observance of equal rights and duties for all citizens—the foundation of every regime that claims to be socialistic. Needing dictionaries of philosophical terms in Greek, French, German, and Russian, Lenin, the highest authority of one-sixth of the world, wrote to the administration of a Moscow library: "If the library regulations forbid the removal of dictionaries from the building, may I borrow them overnight? I shall return them early in the morning."

IV

Lenin and the Church

In the beginning of the Bolshevik regime, huge signboards with gigantic lettering were displayed in Moscow: "Religion is the opium of the proletariat." This statement was no longer confined to speeches and scientific or polemic writings; instead it became part of the program of a government called upon to guide the destiny of "one-sixth of the world."[1]

The Bolshevik government's definition of religion was an implicit indictment of those who attribute every event to superhuman, uncontrollable forces and resign themselves to their fate. Such a mood atrophies an individual's will and energy; it therefore counteracts the revolutionary cause, the triumph of which depends on the workers' awareness of their function in society, their reliance on their own strength, and their fight for the transformation of society's structure. What means should a government that calls itself Marxist use to combat the narcotic administered to the population by previous regimes?

To Marxists the problem was not new. According to Marxism, the transition from a state of resignation to the workers' awareness of their rights depends on the mode of production. In a primitive economy in which man alone must struggle against nature, which he cannot control, he will show resignation, uncertainty, and fear—that inferiority complex, in short, which is so deeply rooted in the disinherited. The

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[1] At that time, aggrandizement through military conquests had not yet been contemplated, and Russia occupied *only* one-sixth of the world.

worker's contact with modern means of production, on the other hand, and his direct participation in the manufacture of goods that were previously considered miracles, become a source of faith in his own strength and in his class. The manifestations of modern life, technology, and progress have given rise to the body of associations, comparisons, and reactions that constitute Marxism.

Only after the economic development of a country or a social stratum has reached a certain level can a party or a government help the masses to adjust psychologically to the new environmental conditions. Recognizing the interdependence between the workers' way of thinking and their economic condition, a government which calls itself revolutionary has the duty to improve the living conditions of the disinherited masses, to free them from their economic insecurity, to guarantee work and a worry-free old age. It is a question of uprooting those fears which generate and nurture superstition and the belief in miracles and supernatural forces. No one seriously striving for the emancipation of the human spirit can hope to achieve this end through violence. Least of all can Marxist Socialists countenance coercion.

When Bismarck wanted to apply special laws to Catholics, the sharpest and most determined opposition to this plan came from the small number of Social Democratic deputies. This was to be expected. As Socialists we defend the inviolability of the human spirit and as Marxists we know that technical progress and the maturing of the workers' awareness proceed on parallel lines; there are no artificial means to spur or hold back the psychological growth of the masses.

In Soviet Russia a form of persecution of the weak began in the general euphoria of triumph. The victims were the backward people in the country, shackled by poverty, illiteracy, and the century-old nefarious influence of the clergy. Freed from the tsarist yoke, confused and shocked by the tsar's fate (who in his person had united the authority of the head of the state with the infallibility of the head of the

Church), part of the population, inspired by Bolshevik agents, gave vent to its age-old discontent—the delusion of the war and the fear caused by the chaotic conditions in the country—by demolishing what they had believed in in the past.

The Bolshevik government's great error was to persecute the believer, knowing full well that by doing so not the system but its victims were hurt. Worse still: the government began using different weights and measures. When the peasants' opposition to the government's antireligion campaign assumed dangerous dimensions and the wealthier peasants refused to carry out such ordinances as the delivery of their grain quota to the state, the government gave in and stopped its antireligion campaign. This campaign became more ruthless, however, in those localities where the government had nothing to fear from the population. Equally repugnant was the acquiescence in acts of vandalism perpetrated by fanatic young people who ridiculed and demolished everything the old people held sacred.

Thus, the government which called itself the defender of the poor was particularly hard on those who were deprived of material as well as spiritual goods. How many consciences were wounded, how much hostility aroused against the government and Bolshevism! By such action the Bolshevik government not only falsified Marxism but, quoting Lenin in support of its procedure, acted contrary to his teachings.

There were a considerable number of foreign observers in Russia after the Revolution—mostly hostile to the regime—who could find out for themselves how tolerant and kind the people were when they had not been incited by the Bolsheviks. Exacerbated by hunger and social injustice, the people would not touch the immense treasures of the churches; indeed, a soldier of the Red Army, ill-clad and with poor footgear, would stand guard day and night to protect the church treasure. Many other instances of tolerance and generosity could be cited here from the period in which the people had not yet been changed by Bolshevism or bureaucracy, and one could still believe that Russia could be made,

if not into a Socialist country in the true sense, at least into a country that would not give the lie to the byword of "fatherland of the workers."

All this is past now. The Church and the ecclesiastic hierarchy were rehabilitated. They even enjoy privileges which are cynically reciprocated. The religion of the poor has been stricken severely, while religious institutions, which are protected by powerful groups in capitalistic countries, have no reason for complaint. Their sermons and publications are no longer considered a narcotic of the people.

Marx and Engels suggested that the German Social Democrats include in their program for the Gotha congress in 1875 the statement: "Religion is a private matter." In other words, the Social Democrats were to demand the separation of church and state, implying that all religious groups, without exception, should be treated by the state as private associations not subsidized by public funds.

This injunction of a purely political nature does not reflect the attitudes of Socialist parties toward religion, which might be summarized as follows: in contrast to anarchists, utopian socialists, and other factions, the Marxists did not consider church membership to be an obstacle to joining the Socialist movement. Their concept of human relations implies respect for the opinions of others, but not indifference toward the way of thinking or the educational level of the members. The Marxist Socialists consider it not only their right but their duty to raise the intellectual and ethical level of the masses, regardless of their beliefs.

"The statement 'religion is a private matter,' must be defined to prevent misunderstanding," wrote Lenin in 1905, when he was still the theoretician of Bolshevism. "We demand that the government consider religion a private matter, but we cannot consider religion a private matter when our party is concerned. Everyone shall be free to profess any religion or none. . . . The state shall not subsidize religious organizations; they shall be considered independent of the government. The separation of church and state is

what the Socialist proletariat demands of the modern state and of today's church. The Russian Revolution must fulfill this claim which constitutes an essential part of political freedom. We demand the separation of church and state that we may fight the obscurantism of the church with ideological weapons: speech and press. Our program is based on the scientific concept of historical materialism and it includes an analysis of the historical and economic roots of obscurantism of the church. No book or sermon can enlighten the proletariat if it is not being enlightened by its struggle against the sinister forces of capitalism. The revolutionary proletariat will succeed in having the state accept religion as a private matter. In a regime freed from medieval rottenness the proletariat will be able to fight openly against economic enslavement, that true source of obscurantism!"

In 1912, before the elections to the Duma, Lenin entered into polemics with the liberals who wanted to deny the clergy the right to participate in the political struggle. "We demand unconditional freedom for political participation of the entire population regardless of class, sex, national or ethnic affiliation. . . . We are not opposing the clergy's participation in the electoral campaign, we are merely opposed to the clergy's medieval privileges."

Religion and Bolshevism

A young ballerina died in Moscow in 1918; she had been neither a Socialist nor a friend of the new regime, but was considered a mystic. At the cemetery, I was approached by a collaborator of the International—of which I was then secretary—who asked me: "What shall we do? Everything is ready, but the deceased's aunt wishes the intervention of a priest."

"Go and call a priest then," I answered. "A priest?" gasped the man. "A funeral with religious rites?" "Certainly. In a case like this it is our duty to act according to the wish of

the deceased. Furthermore, the aunt expressed this desire also. We cannot act contrary to her wish." "But how will the mourners receive the priest at the cemetery?" "Leave it to me. Call the priest and tell him that I guarantee his safety."

There was no demonstration. I walked beside the priest, leading the way for him. In the few words I pronounced before the religious rite I expressed confidence that the wish of the deceased would be respected. I added that because we were living in a country that had been freed from oppression, we had to guard our liberties and those of our fellowmen. The funeral took place in an atmosphere of respect and silence.

Immediately after the October Revolution a significant change took place, especially in the large cities, with respect to the social strata of church attendance. The bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie were returning to religion; deprived of their class-derived security, they felt endangered by the vicissitudes that befall the disinherited and were losing hope in the future. They believed that only the intervention of superhuman forces could protect them against the effects of the Revolution.

The workers, on the contrary, felt more secure and stronger. They felt at home in the fatherland of the Revolution, they knew that their rights would be safeguarded and, most importantly, that they would be assured of the daily bread for which they had prayed in the past. The government's oscillating policy with regard to religion shows the speed at which the Bolsheviks were influenced by their position in government and how detrimental an effect success had on the revolutionary ideas that had carried them to power.

One day the president of the Soviet State Publishing Houses said to me: "Comrade Angelica, you are one of our few writers who take a psychological viewpoint in dealing with historical events. Why don't you write another book or pamphlet? It would be greatly appreciated. You are free to choose the subject."

"I might write on the influence the October Revolution exercised on the thought of the masses and their attitude toward religion. It is a subject that has been of great interest to me in my activity in Western Europe, especially Italy," I said. "Excellent idea!"

To gather material on Soviet legislation I went to the Party offices and spoke to the director of the movement, which was called "the movement of the godless." He was very cooperative and put at my disposal all I had asked for. But in doing so, he added: "We must be careful not to hurt the feelings of the high dignitaries of the Church." This statement was a terrible shock to me, perhaps the first I suffered in the Soviet Republic. I lost interest in writing the book, and I limited myself to merely studying the problem.

For a closer study of men and events I contacted the commissar of Justice. I wanted to work in his office and did so under an assumed name, to save employees and visitors from possible embarrassment. Unfortunately, my anonymity was of short duration, but even in that short time I learned much more than I could have from books, journals, and other more or less official publications. In that postwar period many delegates from villages and small towns came to the commissariat to claim the bells that had been removed from churches during the war. It was very interesting to observe the ease of adjustment and the shrewdness of these delegates. None of them ever told me that the bells would serve again the same purpose as under tsarism. When I asked what had made them undertake that long journey to Moscow (some had spent weeks on a train that would stop now and then because of lack of fuel) they all had a ready answer: "You see, the bell is necessary in case of fire or some other disaster to warn the population." One man said with a smile: "Sure, if all were like me, we would not need bells, but the old folks . . ."

It was surprising how quickly they had picked up Bolshevik terminology and newly coined phrases and how well

they understood the various articles of the new legislation. They seemed to have lived with it all their lives. The ex-priests showed more zeal than the others and paid their respects to the new authorities without mention of God or saints. Good neighbor relations were eventually established among the top men of the two hierarchies by a series of concessions and compromises, carried out at the expense of the rank and file of believers as well as nonbelievers. Confusion, surprise, and cynicism resulted in both groups.

To "handle" the masses better without losing votes, the Bolsheviks hailed freedom and spread obscurantism at the same time, applauding insults against religion and then going to confession to be absolved by those who had been publicly denounced as the worst exploiters of the poor. Posing as emancipators of the masses, they enthralled them more deeply, politically, and psychologically, thereby spreading demoralization, bad faith, and cynicism.

By contrast, there existed in Italy before World War I a movement of proletarian free thinkers. Urged by a critical spirit and strengthened by readings and discussions, they left the Church and renounced their religious faith with coherence and dignity. They went against the current and gladly paid the price that was exacted. They became courageous propagators of their ideas and gave their children a non-religious education; they wanted to live and to die according to their convictions.

V

Lenin and the Kronstadt Revolt

Accepting the repeated invitation of the seamen of Kronstadt and at Trotsky's insistence, I went to Kronstadt to give two speeches. One was given in the morning at the meeting of the Soviet, the other in the afternoon at a mass meeting for which several speakers from Petrograd also were scheduled. No sooner had I mentioned the Italian Socialists' attitude toward the war and their campaign against the tsar's visit to Italy than all the members of the Soviet and the large audience rose to their feet and applauded enthusiastically. This manifestation continued throughout my speech. Every sentence was punctuated by cries of: "Long live the Italian comrades! Long live international socialism!"

I went immediately afterwards to the mass meeting, where the enthusiasm of the people reached fever pitch. Each new speaker was received with heightened acclaim. Leaving the meeting, which had been attended by 18,000 seamen, I was almost crushed by the crowd. A seaman near me made every effort to get me to the door, as others shouted: "Let's carry Comrade Balabanoff!" Thus, I found myself on a sedan chair of interlocking arms without the possibility of extricating myself. I was breathing with difficulty, but any attempt at getting away from the crowd would have brought on a new storm of enthusiasm pent up in those masses by centuries of slavery and decades of struggle for the revolution. I resigned myself with seeming indifference, but the few minutes it took to cover the distance were like eternity for me. I felt like one who has been condemned to death.

I knew one of the men who carried me, and I tried to convey my feelings to him, asking him to put an end to this show that was so trying to me. His gesture of denial and his words are still in my mind: "Comrade Balabanoff has struggled for many years in preparation for this moment of triumph. Today the proletariat of Kronstadt want to carry Comrade Balabanoff in triumph."

Some seamen boarded the boat and accompanied us to Petrograd. There was great enthusiasm and pride in having been able to show their Red Kronstadt to the comrades outside and also the satisfaction of having met the representatives of the International. The enormous crowd did not want to go home. During the mass meeting the seamen had collected money for the Zimmerwald committee as proof of their solidarity with the workers in other countries and in the ardent hope for active aid from the revived International. They were overjoyed to find that they had collected 400 rubles.

We left the placid Neva in a sunset of solemn beauty and returned to a Petrograd silent, somber, and heavy with memories and promises. The sight of the Red capital, like the day that lay behind us, was of symbolic grandeur. At Party headquarters—an ex-prince's immense palace—I was asked with passionate interest about the results of our propaganda. The account was received with joyous exclamations: "You see, we were right in predicting an overwhelming reception. You are happy now, what more do you want?" I kept silent. To me this victory was not final.

Before the October Revolution and during the first years of the Soviet regime Petrograd was considered the cradle of the Russian Revolution; workers in the large industrial plants of that city enjoyed great esteem among the proletariat. The seamen of Kronstadt were equally esteemed, for their participation in the insurrection of 1917 was a significant contribution to the triumph of Bolshevism. It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that the attitude of the

people in these two hotbeds of revolution was to be of decisive importance in the following years; in fact, it marked the beginning of a new era in the relations of the more advanced masses with the Soviet government.

From Petrograd came, in 1921, the first outcry of protest against Bolshevik despotism, against martial law and the arrest of Socialists. Petrograd also saw the first strike in Soviet Russia. "The workers want to be free," the strikers' manifesto said. "They do not wish to live by government ordinances. They want to be the masters of their fate."

But the Bolshevik government, too, initiated a new era. Lenin sent communist troops—Asian for the most part—to Petrograd to quell the revolt. He had chosen Asian troops because he believed them more reliable in the use of the most dreadful means of repression. The seamen of Kronstadt, faithful to their revolutionary tradition, declared their solidarity with the strikers. "Here in Kronstadt," the manifesto said, "has started the third revolution that will break the last chains which enthrall the working classes and open the road to Socialist initiative."

That same manifesto demanded reelection of the Soviet on a democratic basis, freedom of the press, and release from prison of all Social Democratic revolutionists, Social revolutionists, and anarchists. Furthermore, the seamen insisted upon equal rations for all workers and equal treatment of all parties by the state. "No political party," the manifesto stated, "shall enjoy special privileges for the diffusion of its ideas, nor shall state funds be used to that end." It should be noted that among the seamen's claims were very few related to trade union matters or the specific interests of their union. It was an outcry of revolt against infringement upon civil rights and the restraint of freedom suffered by all citizens. That manifesto, by the way, accused the Cheka of surpassing even the tsarist police in atrocities.

There is a tragic parallel between that first revolt against Bolshevik despotism and the more important, enduring, and

heroic revolt of the people of a satellite country of contemporary Russia: Hungary. The similarity is especially marked by the means used to crush the revolutionists: the shameless lying and slandering to which the protagonists of the heroic uprising were subjected with the aim of falsifying the objective of the revolt and the use of the less advanced strata of the population of a backward country to quell a movement for civil rights.

The sinister murderers of the Hungarian people did not even trouble to bring their slogans and trite phrases up to date. As thirty-five years before, when the uprising of the heroic seamen of Kronstadt had been attributed to the instigation of imperialist agents, so the same falsehood was used to misrepresent the nature of the Hungarian uprising and to revile its leaders. As Lenin and Trotsky had resorted to bombs and mass executions, so the Bolshevik government in Hungary used tanks and the gallows to put down the revolt against slavery and hunger. As the least advanced peoples of Russia—the Bashkirs and the Kirghizes—had been enlisted in the fratricidal action, so was it necessary to use in Hungary the most brutal and brutalized Russian soldiers. Yet, in both military actions, many deserted, preferring hunger, exile, and even death to the role of their brothers' executioners, assigned them in the very name of brotherhood of all peoples.

Fifteen years before Lenin ordered the bloody repression of the Kronstadt revolt (and fifty years before his successors compelled Russian men to crush the Hungarian uprising) he wrote to the Executive Committee of the Socialist International:

"*Dear comrades,* I am asked to inform you that, according to a Berlin paper, the Russian government has asked other governments to aid it by sending their fleets to Odessa to re-establish 'order.' It is likely that the tsarist government, unable to rely on its Navy, seeks the assistance of naval forces of European countries to put down the Russian uprising. We are facing grave danger. The tsarist government

might use European troops to quell the Russian revolution. We ask you to consider this situation and to devise a means for averting this danger. Perhaps the Executive Committee of the International should launch an appeal to the workers of all countries. Such an appeal should emphasize that this is not a revolt of the scum of the Russian people, but a revolution, a fight for freedom, a fight that aims at convening a constituent assembly, which is demanded by all progressive parties and, particularly, by the Russian Social Democratic Party. An appeal translated into several languages and published in all the Socialist papers may influence public opinion and thwart these dangerous plans of the Russian government. Signed: *V. Lenin (Ulyanov).*"

When the strike was called in Petrograd and Kronstadt, Lenin—and he was the first to grasp its true meaning—understood this form of protest from the workers in the Red capital and of the seamen of Kronstadt, who were the élite of his followers. He stamped out the manifestations of their discontent, knowing that this would shatter the people's faith in Bolshevism. The strikers wanted freedom and bread. He thought he could not give them freedom; he decided to compromise and give them bread, hoping to abate hunger as well as discontent.

Lenin took an enormous step back and eliminated from the economic program a great part of what had distinguished it from programs of capitalist regimes: class dictatorship.

Lenin's "New Economic Policy"

The nature of Lenin's "New Economic Policy" that entered political terminology under the initials NEP is now well known. It was a loosening of the grain requisition laws, whereby the peasants were allowed to sell the surplus grain produced in excess of the state quota. The village market was revived and so were small trade and handicraft; money was again being used—premise and consequence of the new

government policy—which, aside from economic repercussions, had vast psychological effects. All this is known and so is the effect the reversal of Bolshevik policy has had inside and outside of Russia.

My concern here is the manner in which Lenin explained —one cannot say justified—his regression, which for him was merely a strategic move. On this occasion too, he showed his capacity for going it alone and his courage in admitting his errors and defeats.

In his speech on October 29, 1921, Lenin said: "In the spring of this year it became clear that we had suffered a defeat in the attempt to pass immediately to the Socialist mode of production and distribution. We had to concede that in many problems of an economic nature we were forced to withdraw on the state ownership line. If this causes complaints, regrets, and dejection among you, you must remember that defeat is not so perilous as the fear of admitting defeat and so failing to draw from it the necessary conclusions. The struggle between capitalism and socialism is even harder than war. We defeated Kolchak and others because we were not afraid of admitting our mistakes, we were not afraid of learning from them and doing over what had been done badly or had been left unfinished. Let's not be afraid of admitting our defeats. Let's learn from them. Let's do better, more prudently, more systematically what we failed to do well. If we were to concede that the admission of defeat entails frustration and loss of energy, we would be worthless. If an army that is unable to take a fortress by assault refuses to fall back to its position and take up new ones, it has learned to attack, but not to withdraw, and it will never win a war. History has hardly ever known a war that was a succession of victories only. And that was traditional warfare. But what about the war that will decide the future of an entire class and the struggle between socialism and capitalism? Can we assume that the people who are the first to tackle a problem of this kind will come upon the

perfect method at once? Experience proves the contrary. In war danger is ever present. And what is the dictatorship of the proletariat? It is a war, fiercer, longer, and harder than any war ever fought."

At that meeting one of the questions from the floor—written on a piece of paper and handed to the speaker—was: "How far can we go back? Where is the limit?" Lenin replied: "We shall go on retreating till we have learned, till we are ready to make a massive move forward. It is hard to withdraw, but when defeat is upon us, no one asks whether we like it or not. Armies withdraw, and no one shows surprise."

I saw Lenin after his announcement of the new economic policy: the compromise that affected Russian life from the political, economic and psychological points of view more deeply than any other—including the peace treaty of Brest Litovsk.

I was staying at the National Hotel in Moscow, an establishment whose history reflected the political and social phases of Russia. Before the Revolution it was patronized by the privileged strata of the population.[1] After the Bolsheviks' rise to power it was reserved for a special category of government officials who not only held posts of great responsibility and were working beyond the call of duty, but also had been active for the cause before the Revolution. For these officials the government wanted to provide the greatest security and comfort. With the new economic policy and the return to the use of money, the hotel became once more the lodging house of the privileged: high functionaries and foreign businessmen. Today, the hotel is open to all who can pay.

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[1] When the chambermaid heard my name, she pointed to the safe in the wall and said to me: "Your parents kept their jewels here, I remember it well. Now you do not have even a piece of bread to lock away from the mice."

In tsarist times there had been at the street level of this hotel a famous confectionery known throughout Europe. During the "war years of Communism," when the country lacked everything, even bread, I was faced one evening on my way home with a sight of gloom that had an almost symbolic quality. The confectionery's huge windows, once filled with a variety of delicious pastries and sweets, were now empty and gray, covered with dust and cobwebs. One could see mice scurrying about in search of food. The morning the new economic policy was announced, which "rehabilitated" money and authorized commerce, I could hardly believe my eyes. The confectionery, which had been empty and abandoned for years, was open and full of light. The shop windows were clean, the counters shiny and full of white bread, pastry, and sweets. Outside the bakery people clutching shopping bags and purses stood in line. Clearly, everyone had known of the change in advance. The money they had kept in reserve was now being spent on luxury items. The sight of all this was very painful to me. I thought of the workers, the children, and the old people who had not had enough to eat in all these years. How would they feel if they saw what was going on here?

I went immediately to the Kremlin to see Lenin. He was grave and worried and very irascible. "What is the conclusion the workers must draw from all this?" I said to him. "Either that they understood nothing of what we told them about equality, or that they must revolt and send all of us to hell. It is a return to the past made all the more serious by disenchantment, skepticism, and rancor. Now as before, the workers will say, those who have means can get everything, even white bread and sweets. Fine equality!"

Lenin's face darkened more and more as I continued saying what he, no doubt, must have though himself several times. The repetition irritated him. "You know very well that this was necessary. Russia would not have resisted otherwise. You see how those burghers have sabotaged us. As soon

as the announcement was made, they took from their hiding places all the foodstuff of which we had had to deprive the population. This could not have gone on much longer. We made a minor sacrifice to reach the major goal: the consolidation of the important conquests of the Revolution. The proletariat in other countries does not come to our aid; we cannot hold out alone."

"The way things look in the Workers' Republic," I replied, "will make the proletariat lose faith in the future of socialism."

"Well," Lenin said, in a tone that was sad and ironic at the same time, "if you can suggest another way . . ."

"I certainly did not come to teach you. But, although I do not know the way out, I do know what a proletarian, Socialist government is not allowed to do. It is not allowed to tolerate a minority living in abundance while the overwhelming majority is literally dying of hunger. Even the bourgeois governments prohibited the use of pure wheat flour during the war."

I left, putting an end to that painful conversation. "If you have some concrete proposal," he said, "write to me." And I did write him a long letter. . . .

Lenin on Compromise and Retreat

Contrary to the opinion commonly held about Lenin—especially before his rise to power—he was anything but intransigent in politics. It might be said of him what Turati, with rare insight, had said of himself: "Uncompromising compromise." Lenin, it must be remembered, dedicated one of his writings[1] exclusively to the demolition of those left-wing communists who a priori exclude any compromise.

In that pamphlet Lenin says: "To declare oneself contrary to any compromise is a childish attitude that can hardly be taken seriously. There are compromises and compromises.

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[1] *Extremism, an Infantile Disorder of Communism.*

One must analyze the setting and the actual conditions of each compromise or type of compromise . . . Whoever tries to hand the workers a blueprint for behavior or promises them a future without difficulties and dilemmas, is a charlatan." And, referring to a personal experience,[1] he continued:

"When your car runs into a holdup, you hand over money, passport, gun, and car. Thus you get rid of the unpleasant presence of the bandits. No doubt, this is a compromise. Any man in his right mind will consider such compromise admissible. Only a madman will declare that he who makes a compromise of this sort becomes an accomplice of the bandits." This example was directed against the left-wing communists in general and against those who reproached Lenin for the concessions made to Germany at the peace

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[1] Lenin's wife had undergone an operation in Switzerland and her health was poor. Living conditions in Russia after the war were difficult, and she had the added burden of her work as a teacher, which she had resumed with such zeal after her reentry. The physicians were not able to persuade her to allow herself some rest. Lenin, greatly preoccupied, told me about it. I mentioned to him a renowned physician I had known for years who had great influence upon his patients. Indeed, this physician was able to persuade Nadezhda Krupskaya to spend some time in a sanitarium not far from Moscow. It was the only sanitarium which had any facilities at that time. Lenin went to see her almost every day and brought her a bottle of milk now and then. Sometimes he walked, but often he went by car. One day the physician advised me to caution Lenin against walking alone to the sanitarium, for it was surrounded by woods where holdups had occurred frequently.

It was a Sunday and many mass meetings had been called to protest the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, the two noted German Socialists. Lenin, Kamenev, and I were scheduled to speak on Red Square in Moscow. When I was close to Lenin I told him of the physician's warning. Visibly annoyed, he interrupted me: "Well, what do you expect me to do? Not to move at all?"

A few hours later, the car in which Lenin and his sister went to the sanitarium was stopped by two men. One pointed his gun and said: "Your money or your life!" Lenin took out his identification card and said: "I am Ulyanov Lenin." The aggressors did not even look at the card and repeated: "Your money or your life!" Lenin had no money. He took off his coat, got out of the car, and, without letting go of the bottle of milk for his wife, proceeded on foot.

treaty of Brest Litovsk in particular. Lenin epitomized his tactics—strongly opposed by his closest and most authoritative collaborators, Trotsky in particular—in the phrase: "Give up space and gain time." Today, his successors employ the same principle in their aggressive imperialistic politics. The goal, however, is contrary to the one Lenin sought in his struggle for emancipation of the working classes.

Greatly different though they were, both in mentality and action, Lenin and Turati had one thing in common: moral courage. While unafraid of declaring themselves flexible in politics, they were intransigent regarding their principles of personal conduct. The dichotomy between public and private morals was merely an appearance. The point of departure, the guiding thought, was always to serve the cause which, in their minds, was to bring about the triumph of the highest ideals toward which mankind has ever aspired. The pursuit of these ideals informed their entire lives; they were capable of controlling instincts and feelings and, in Lenin's case, also moral scruples.

To the generally accepted ethics Lenin opposed one of his own, based on the following reasoning: "Contemporary society is deeply immoral because it is based on man's exploitation of man. The few privileged rich owe their privilege to the ill-paid work of the proletarians who, in order to live, that is to eat, must surrender health, energies, technical skills and are thus deprived of the possibility of fulfilling the aspirations to a life fit for human beings. Those who profit from this state of affairs and those who defend it or merely tolerate it, have no right to call themselves ethical. In the struggle against an immoral society like the contemporary one, every means is admissible, since this struggle, implicitly, aims at the uprooting of evil and at the formation of a society that no longer allows man's exploitation of man."

Lenin never deviated from this principle, even if the use of certain means, the causing of suffering, ran counter to his nature. This was his intransigence. It enabled him to

apply extremely harsh measures. In time, with the worsening of the country's situation and the increase of those cases which, according to him, required the application of repressive methods, his sensibility atrophied, naturally. A single case, a single human life no longer meant to him what it had meant at the beginning of his career as a statesman invested with responsibilities equaled by few.

This adaptation to reality, this yielding to the exigencies of the moment, Lenin revealed also in private conversations. In the beginning, when harsh repressive methods were first used, he explained to me why the application of severe methods in a specific instance prevented the use of more drastic ones. Thus, he commented, for my benefit, on the shooting of some Mensheviks: "If we had not eliminated these few, we would have been compelled before long to shoot over ten thousand peasants whom these Mensheviks instigated against communist power."

The change manifested itself not only in the arguments he used to explain his decision, but also in his behavior. In the beginning, when I had come to ask for lenience in a particular case, he became extremely nervous and perturbed; he seemed to try to quiet his own conscience, as if he must answer not only to me, but to himself as well. At times he would get up and pace the room, as if he wanted to escape from something that might shake his decision. After some time, however, he seemed to have found the necessary equilibrium and his reaction to my pleas became calmer and poised. Even then, only a superficial observer might have found him cold and indifferent. It was not easy for him to compromise, to step back, to admit in practice what he had denied in theory, to wipe out what he had tried to impress upon entire generations. To do so was to commit violence upon his inner self in the name of his categorical imperative: subordinate everything to the cause of Bolshevism.

In reply to the Laborite Lansbury's question whether the English trade union leaders could be accused of siding with

the capitalists, Lenin said: "One cannot renounce, once and for all, all compromises. Circumstances may force compromises upon even the most revolutionary parties. But one must know how to consolidate with every compromise tactics, organization, revolutionary conscience, and preparation of the working classes and of their avant-garde, the Communist Party."

About one month before his rise to power, Lenin wrote from his hiding place in Finland: ". . . According to public opinion—confirmed by the anti-Bolshevik press—the Bolsheviks are opposed to compromise and will not compromise under any circumstances. This conception the public has is flattering to us as a revolutionary party of the proletariat, because it shows that even our enemies have to admit that we are faithful to the fundamental principles of socialism and of the Revolution. But to tell the truth, this conception does not correspond to reality."

VI

Secretary of the International

Although Lenin's aim, from the very beginning of World War I, was the foundation of a new International, and all his overt and hidden strategy was guided by this desire, the foundation of the third International came to him, as well as to his closest collaborators, almost as a surprise.

Speaking to me about it, Lenin had already a priori excluded the possibility of getting a sufficient number of delegates to Russia to establish there the coveted Third International. In the meantime, however, some members of the Executive Council of the Russian Communist Party (Zinoviev, Radek, and Bukharin, with the consent and aid of Trotsky and Lenin) tried to obtain by fraud and deception what they had not been able to obtain by normal and honest means.

Since only one delegate, the German Eberlin, had answered Chicherin's call, the Bolsheviks put on a farce: they assembled members of parties in countries already belonging to Russia, such as Latvia and Lithuania, who were, in fact, members of the Russian Communist Party and did not enjoy, therefore, any autonomy. They called in prisoners who for years had not had any contact with their countries and a few emigrants who had left their countries for one reason or another and had lived in Russia for a long time. Among the thirty-five assembly members only one had the political right to represent his country and to vote as its delegate. This was

the Spartacist[1] Eberlin; he was in possession of a regular mandate. As soon as he realized how contrived the situation was, he publicly declared that in such an assembly no deliberation could be taken since this gathering could not be considered a constituent assembly for a new International. Thus, it was decided that the meeting was to serve merely as an exchange of ideas.

The next day, however, members of the Russian Communist Party, with the usual shrewdness, proposed that the decisions of the day before be annulled. They announced that an event had taken place which would change the situation completely: the whole of Europe was in revolutionary ferment. As it turned out, it was a Bolshevik bluff. A prisoner of German extraction, who, during and after the Revolution had been living in Russia, where he had become a fervent Bolshevik,[2] had been sent by Radek to Germany for propaganda action. After the maturation of the deceitful plan, whose aim was the creation of a new International, the Bolsheviks called him back. The enormous difficulties of illegal travel at that time caused him to arrive one day late in Moscow, when the voting had already taken place. He was asked to address the assembly. Partly out of naiveté and partly because of the instructions received from Radek, he gave a glowing account of what he had seen and heard: everywhere enormous enthusiasm for the Bolshevik revolution, the workers ready to follow its example, the new International in the hearts and hopes of all.

The voting—shrewdly engineered by the Russian delegates, Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev, and a few others—was this time in favor of an immediate constitution of the new

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[1] The Spartacist League, to which the German left-wing Socialists belonged, was founded in 1918 in Berlin by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. Later, it was replaced by the Communist Party. The two founders were murdered by the Germans in 1919.

[2] Not long after his return to Russia, he left the Bolsheviks, disgusted with their methods, and returned to his printing job in Germany.

International, in spite of the German delegate's opposition (he was the only one in possession of a mandate) and to the surprise of the others.

Since I had declared I would abstain from the vote, there was an exchange of written messages between Lenin and myself containing some severe criticism of my action. "Why don't you vote? You have so many mandates from the Italian Socialist party, you are more than authorized to vote for it; and then, you read *Avanti!*, you are informed." I wrote my reply on the same note: "No! My mandates are not sufficient to commit the Italian Party in such a decisive action."

"You are making a mistake; in your capacity of secretary of the Zimmerwald Movement you have the right, even the duty, to vote for the Italian Socialist Party."

"I cannot agree with you," I countered. "I have no direct contacts in this moment with the Italian Party. . . . Here we can decide, protected by the Red army, we are in power. But there, in the capitalist countries, the situation is quite different. I cannot make others assume such grave responsibilities without their being able to discuss them first."

I was not aware at the time of what was hidden behind the unexpected and illegal proclamation of the new International, and I was impatient to return to the Ukraine to work among the masses far from officials and Moscow officialdom.

When I met Trotsky in a corridor of the Kremlin, I said good-bye to him. "What, you are going to leave?" he burst out. "You know you have been nominated secretary of the International!"

"I? Not in the least! Let me do my work among the masses . . ."

"But you are the only one capable of holding that office. Come with me to Comrade Lenin, he is around here. He will tell you what the Central Committee has decided."

From the manner in which Lenin received me, I understood that he had not forgiven my insubordination. I decided to come right out with it: "Comrade Trotsky tells me you

want me to take the post of secretary of the International, but I ask you to be excused. As long as the work was very difficult and taxing, especially in war time, I have never refused. Now the secretariat is in a Socialist country, the procedures are normal again; you can find replacement for me." Lenin gave me one of his characteristic looks. "Comrade Balabanoff, discipline must exist for you also . . ."

"What does this mean? It was you who advised me to transfer to the Ukraine! I have not even started work there, and you make me return here already. And my commitments toward Comrade Rakovsky? And then, all my books and the things I need are already in Kharkov!"

"I shall inform Comrade Rakovsky that you are more necessary here than in the Ukraine, and I shall have your things sent back here immediately," Lenin said firmly. While I was still remonstrating, Lenin added in an even firmer tone: "The decision, by the way, was taken by the Central Committee, not by me personally." This way of his of attributing to the Central Committee decisions that had been suggested by him was known to me. It meant the decision was final.

No sooner had I returned to my hotel room than the phone rang: "The Party's Central Committee informs you of your appointment as secretary of the International. Vladimir Ilyich has informed Comrade Rakovsky that your presence is urgently needed here and that you cannot return to the Ukraine. At the same time, Comrade Lenin has sent word that your things are to be shipped back here."

The evening of the day after the proclamation of the Third International a meeting was held in one of the largest Moscow theaters with the participation of the foreign "delegates." One can hardly imagine the state of mind of the masses streaming to that convocation. Isolated from the world for so long, they thought they could finally see that promised ray of light, finally hear that long-awaited voice of solidarity that would bring them the liberation promised by their leaders.

This joyful anticipation was in the air, one sensed it in the people's eagerness to get seats in the hall, in the outcries of joy over the possibility of seeing the representatives of the hoped-for world revolution. I admit, this euphoria was transmitted to me to the extent that I identified myself with some of the speakers in translating their addresses. I felt that my words struck the listeners' conscience, creating a response that transformed the hall. I too was transformed. I seemed to see before me the protagonist of that epic revolution that was destined to create a new world. I was almost grateful to Lenin and Trotsky for having obliged me to accept the assignment.

This magic spell, however, came to a sudden end. In one of the speakers' addresses I perceived a strident, demagogic note, something that had a false ring. I could not and would not identify myself with the speaker, and I gave a lifeless, limp translation of his speech, instinctively omitting all that had rung false to me. As soon as the translation was finished, Trotsky came up to me: "Anything the matter, Comrade Angelica? This last translation did not seem to come from you . . ."

I said nothing, but I decided not to translate any more official speeches in Russia. I kept my resolution. Never have I consciously been an accomplice to a fraud. The speaker who had caused me so much revulsion was one of the most unconscionable accomplices of Bolshevism. This man, Fritz Platten, a Swiss living in Russia, was shot, according to press reports, some time later.

I was just going to take up again my activity as secretary of the Zimmerwald Movement when I received news that the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party had appointed Zinoviev president of the International. In selecting him for the office of president, Lenin was guided by one principle: to put at the head of the International a man who would lend himself to being a tool in the hands of the Central Committee.

My appointment as secretary was designed to attract to the new International Socialists of other countries for whom my name warranted integrity and impartiality.

Lenin, who counted Zinoviev among the most faithful executors of his orders, knew well every aspect of his character. Lenin asked Zinoviev to do for him things he would not have done himself. True, Lenin treated him with that camaraderie, that trust, which many years of underground work amid serious difficulties had established between them, but he never had, nor could have had, any esteem for him. This was borne out by the fact that in 1917, on the eve of the October Revolution, Zinoviev, for the first time in a position of direct responsibility, left Lenin's side and opposed the seizure of power. Lenin disowned him, denouncing his vileness and his cowardice—a particularly grave accusation against a revolutionist of that time.

I soon realized, not without surprise, that our sessions began and ended with the dispatch of administrative matters. One day I brought this matter up with Vorovsky, who had been assigned to me as collaborator—as I found out later—so that he might influence me and mitigate my intransigence, given our friendship and the esteem in which I held him. "Is it possible," I said to him, "that everything ends up as a bureaucratic institution? To tell you the truth, Vaclav Vaclavich, I feel ill at ease. Why have they insisted so much on my taking this job? . . . I do nothing useful here."

"Dear Angelica," Vorovsky said, looking at me with his wistful eyes, a subtle smile on his face, "you have only one fault, which is a quality, perhaps: you know the International too well, and if you disapprove of someone, if you consider him dishonest, you refuse to collaborate with him."

At one of the meetings of the Executive Committee of the International Zinoviev announced radiantly: "I have good news. Our situation is so good that we have decided to establish a branch of the Communist International in the Ukraine, a very important location for future relations with comrades

abroad. Comrade Balabanoff will be in charge of this office. She will be aided by highly qualified collaborators."

"Comrade Balabanoff?" I cut in. "But why do you send me elsewhere again? I have hardly started my new job . . ."

"Of course, Comrade Balabanoff," countered the president of the International. "We need a great name for a position of such responsibility, do you want us to send there just any comrade?"

"These are not arguments to be taken seriously," I replied, determined not to consider the invitation extended to me.

But Zinoviev went on to ask me when I was going to leave. To put an end to this situation I went to Lenin, confident of his support, in the belief that he considered my stay in Moscow of greater usefulness than the activity in the Ukraine.

Instead, Lenin said to me: "In the Ukraine, it will be easier for you to establish contacts with foreign countries; and then, why should we keep in Moscow our best propaganda forces, our best speakers?" Since I persisted in my refusal, I was called to confer with the secretary of the Party. "We have found a most interesting assignment for you," he told me. "You shall be the leader of a propaganda train leaving for Turkestan."[1]

"Why Turkestan?" I burst out. "Is that a joke? I know neither the country nor the psychology of the people, who, no doubt, are very primitive; my propaganda work would be wasted there. Besides, very few understand Russian."

"But we need a famous name, like yours," he countered. "I am not a prima donna," I said, turning to the door, "and

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[1] At that time in Russia there were trains built and used exclusively for propaganda purposes. These trains were ultra-modern and consisted not only of cars for the accommodation of the Moscow emissaries (two members of each commissariat, whose task it was to supervise and instruct the local commissariat leaders), but also of a printing car for the publication of daily bulletins and of a movie car. I was to direct the collective work at each stop of the train in important towns and to deliver the introductory and closing speech.

I don't want to be treated like one!" I soon realized that everything was already arranged for my travel. The members of the Turkestan expedition called on me to read their report, asking for my approval. I let them go on, partly out of politeness and partly because I liked the kind of work which gave me an opportunity to learn many things.

One day, a Communist woman who had shown great friendship for me, put me on the alert. "Watch out! This is a trap that Zinoviev has set. He wants to get rid of you." Much later I learned from the wife of Vorovsky, the first Russian Soviet ambassador to Italy, that her husband—a Bolshevik of the old guard with whom I had worked in Stockholm during the most tragic and decisive months for the young Soviet Republic—had written to Lenin: "Shall we really let this woman die in Turkestan?" The typhus epidemic that raged there at the time and the poor sanitary conditions of the towns in which our propaganda train was to stop made the probability of contagion extremely high.

I wanted to see clearly in all this. At the first meeting of the Executive Council of the Communist International in Petrograd, I asked Zinoviev: "I should like to know," I said, "why I am supposed to leave Moscow at a time when foreign Socialists are likely to arrive. I do not understand, and I shall not move." Zinoview, not used to being told the truth, could not hide his embarrassment. "I know nothing, it is Moscow that decides," he replied lamely. Then he began writing the usual memos asking for help from those members of the Executive Council who were beholden to him and who lent themselves to such services. Indeed, they took the floor to insist on my departure.

Turning to Zinoviev, I asked again: "Could you explain to me why I should be thousands of kilometers away from Moscow when, after so many years, we finally succeed in making contact with the Western Socialists?" Without looking me in the face, he replied: "Because our politics is directed now toward the East, which is of the greatest importance to us."

"But what plans are there for me? What is the special assignment in which I cannot be replaced?"

"You will be told in Moscow."

"Moscow indeed! It is the International that has to decide." Zinoviev had become deadly pale. His lips trembled.

During the afternoon session of the same day an urgent telephone call arrived from Kronstadt. "The comrades in Kronstadt want you to give a talk tomorrow," Zinoviev said turning to me. "Tomorrow?" I asked in surprise. "How can I be there tomorrow if our work here is not yet finished? And then, there is that session that concerns me personally."

"But you will be back by then," Zinoviev said.

"Can you assure me of that? I do not like to say no to the comrades, but neither should I want to be absent from my work here."

"You can do both," Zinoviev assured me.

Having never missed an appointment (not even now after fifty-five years of party activity), I decided to call Kronstadt again to make sure of the connections, especially in view of the fact that I was going by boat. I insisted to the man in Kronstadt on a clear and binding answer. He ended by saying that he could not guarantee my return in time. I decided not to leave Petrograd. The meeting of the Executive Council was scheduled for the afternoon, and I accepted an invitation in the morning to give a talk to the women convened in special assembly on the occasion of the youth mobilization.

This was one of the most memorable speeches I gave in Soviet Russia. I was to persuade the mothers—mostly non-proletarians—to make the supreme sacrifice of letting their sons go to the front. I do not remember what I said on that occasion; I only recall that the listeners' faces grew less diffident, less hostile. I shall never forget the handwritten notes which were brought to me at the speaker's stand (this was a customary feature of Russian meetings of the time). One note said: "When my daughter volunteered for the Red front, I cursed her; now, after having heard Angelica Balabanoff,

I give her my blessing." And another: "If it is this that our sons are fighting for, our sacrifice cannot be in vain." This was the tone of the many notes that came to me on that occasion. A man in his forties came forward: "I move that these notes be all preserved in the Museum of the Revolution!"

Completely exhausted—I had not yet eaten anything—I met on my way to the room where the Executive Council was to meet a group of members on their way out. "How do you happen to be here so early?" I said jocularly. "We have just finished," replied one of Zinoviev's disciples.

"What have you finished? Was the session not scheduled to continue in the afternoon?"

"Yes," he replied, "but then we decided otherwise."

Zinoviev's baseness and cowardice was revealed to me in all its ugly nakedness. Assuming that I was in Kronstadt, he had called a meeting of the Executive Council and rammed through the order of my departure. I waited for him to come out of the meeting, and I faced him squarely. "So, you have met and decided in my absence a question that concerns me personally, after you had assured me you would discuss it this afternoon when I would be present."

He grew pale, fiddled with his briefcase, made a step forward, as if he wanted to break away; then he said in a low voice: "Yes, the Executive Council has decided for your departure." He said this in the tone of a mere witness who has had no influence whatever on the decision. And he added: "It is not I who decides, but the Central Committee of the Party."

"I am not going," I replied firmly.

"And the Party discipline . . . ?"

"I am second to none in the observance of discipline, but this is no longer discipline, this is absurdity, idiocy! You will regret your actions. You want me out of the way exactly when my presence might be useful, when the comrades from abroad finally arrive. And you want me to miss the encounter with the Italian Socialists. I will not stand for that!"

I had returned to Moscow the same day, and I heard nothing further about that matter until one day the American poet John Reed, one of the most disinterested and courageous supporters of the Russian Revolution, came to me greatly perturbed. "Are you, Angelica, the secretary of the Communist International?"

"Yes, I am."

"And why, then, are you not at the meeting?"

"Which meeting?"

"The meeting of the Executive Council which is taking place in Livinov's office."

I phoned, and the employee, as cowardly as his employer Zinoviev, muttered some excuse: he had forgotten to invite me . . . forgotten to invite the secretary! At my appearance they felt uncomfortable because of their complicity in the vulgar fraud.

"Well," I asked Zinoviev, "what have you decided about the train to Turkestan?"

"What? Has Trotsky not told you?" (Zinoviev used to leave it to some friend of the victim of his plottings to break the news to him; thus he avoided questions and confrontations.) "Strange, we have asked him to do so."

"But what has Trotsky to do with it? I ask you."

"The Central Committee has decided," said the omnipotent president of the Third International, "that you may not go to Turkestan, but at the same time you are relieved of the office of secretary of the International. Trotsky will explain to you."

Such was my revulsion at this act of baseness that I could not say a word. I returned to the hotel with a load off my mind—relieved of an office which had become intolerable to me with its atmosphere of intrigues, maneuvers, and slavishness.

Naturally, I did not go to Turkestan. Around that event something like a legend was growing, since this had been the first attempt at relegating an embarrassing rebel to

outlying regions of the country. Since Turkestan was a peach-growing region, someone at a congress of the Russian Communist Party asked the leaders if they had intended to have me "eat peaches." And when the same method was applied later to other opponents, the wry saying circulated: "They wanted him to eat peaches as they had tried with Comrade Angelica."

A few weeks later, a mellifluous voice came over the phone: "How are you, dear comrade? I should like to visit you with Comrade Olga." "Who is speaking?"

"It is I, Zinoviev. I should like to come and see you with my wife." In the ten years we had known each other we had never exchanged a single word that was not strictly connected with our work. When we met on the stairs, we merely greeted each other, without the customary polite exchanges. And now, after having acted toward me in that base manner, he wanted to visit me. "But I am very well. You would not find me at home."

"I wanted to tell you that the Central Committee has unanimously decided to reinstate you as secretary."

"I am reinstated?! I have yet to get an explanation for my removal. Besides, you know well how often I resigned from the post, and now, I should accept it again after that foul play of yours in Petrograd?"

I felt revulsion rather than indignation at the sight of such cowardice. What could have induced that individual to assume such an apologetic attitude? The riddle was solved soon enough. Radek, returning from Western Europe, reported to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party that the news of my removal from the International had caused great dissatisfaction among the Socialists of many countries. They had asked him to bring me their greetings and to beg me to resume my activity. This invitation was extended to me personally by Trotsky, on behalf of the Central Committee. "Dear Comrade Angelica," Trotsky said, "as you know, we have annulled the absurd decision of the other

day. I have always been against your removal, and I voted against Zinoviev's proposal. Now . . ."

"Listen, Lev Davidovich, it is not a matter of revocation or of how you voted on that occasion, but rather of the whole system of lies and intrigues which you should not tolerate."

"What do you want me to do, dear comrade? I know you are right . . . But you must come back to the International."

Meeting with firm refusal on my part, Trotsky suggested a compromise. "You do not want the office of secretary? Accept another one then: Comintern correspondent for Italy, as Marx was for Germany."

"Thank you very much, but it is no use insisting. You know how often I handed in my resignation, and it was always ignored. You know what gulf separates me from the leaders, just think of Zinoviev and the vile methods with which he has degraded the International . . ."

"But he has apologized to you . . ."

"This has only heightened my disgust. Like a schoolboy reprimanded by his teachers! . . . This is the exponent of a revolutionary International?"

VII

Lenin and the Italian Socialists

The way in which Lenin dealt with the Italian Socialist Party reflects many of his character traits, the hidden aims of his strategy and the methods that characterize Bolshevism. The Italian Socialist Party was the first one on whose living body the Bolsheviks carried out those experiments which were to have such deleterious and deadly effects on the workers' movement. And this happened at a time in which Lenin took direct part in all the actions of the Bolsheviks; he inspired them, he guided them. He provided the blueprint for communist action the world over. On that occasion Lenin's methods were applied for the first time outside Russia on a large scale: nonobservance of ethical precepts, selection of collaborators not in view of their merits but—on the contrary—in view of their weaknesses, their corruptibility, since Lenin needed accomplices rather than collaborators. Trustworthiness to him meant absolute certainty that an individual would carry out all orders, including those contrary to his conscience.

Long before the victory of the Russian Revolution in October 1917, especially during the bloody defeat of 1905, the Russian revolutionists had found in the Italian Socialists and workers deep comprehension and close, active solidarity. Every act of insolence or violence of the tsarist regime caused protests and indignation in every civilized country. The Italian Socialists, however, did not stop at that: in every part of the country, in every Italian proletarian family the sufferings and the heroism of the Russian revolutionists

found a response. From the thousands of meetings—which were held even in the remotest villages—erupted a hatred for the tyrant and a boundless solidarity with his victims; everywhere people rallied in spontaneous manifestations of protest, and money was collected to aid the victims.

To comprehend the measure of abnegation and idealism that moved these people, one must keep in mind the miserable wages the workers, especially in the agrarian sector, were getting at that time. They would walk ten kilometers and more in worn-out shoes—those who had a bicycle could be considered privileged—in rain and wind, or under the burning sun. Like pilgrims they walked to the meetings of solidarity with their distant comrades.

Often at meetings our words were lost in the outbursts of indignation or enthusiasm or in the tinkle of coins being deposited in platters or hats. More than once I have seen an old woman—living symbol of hard work and suffering, who had already given her share—lift her apron and take from the pocket of her dress another coin and still another. And with a corner of that apron she would dry her tears. It is significant that the famous Maxim Gorki, who had gone to America to raise funds for the victims of the revolution of 1905, was able to collect only one-third of the amount offered for the same cause spontaneously by the Italian workers.

And it was the Italian workers again who barred Tsar Nicholas II's official visit to Rome. Speaking for the Italian Socialist Party, the deputy Oddino Morgari declared in Parliament that the Russian tyrant's visit would not be tolerated and if he—the slaughterer of the revolutionists—should attempt to put foot on Italian soil, he would be whistled down by the people. *Sempre Avanti*, the Socialist paper edited by Morgari, announced the purchase of several thousand whistles for workers and Socialists to give due reception to the man responsible for the sufferings and humiliations of the Russian revolutionists. The official visit did not take place. The omnipotent tsar had to be content with an almost clandestine

visit of a few hours in Racconigi. But the unwelcome music reached him even there: deputy Morgari was there.

Yet, what were the tsar's crimes and his responsibility compared to those of the totalitarian autocrats who today control the Russian territory, immensely enlarged by imperialistic conquests? Compared to the present situation, the happenings of the past seem harmless, for both the number of victims and the manner in which they were treated.

In tsarist Russia a slim minority of paid agents, who were targets of general contempt because of their occupation, spied on, arrested, and persecuted another exiguous minority which, voluntarily and with open eyes, challenged the established regime, assuming implicitly the consequences of its actions. The secret agents' procedures, the judges' verdicts, the severity of the sentences, all these things were discussed and censured by public opinion. In Russia and abroad the revolutionists were considered the moral élite of the population. Slanderous attacks against them would not be countenanced, they would not be manhandled by prison wardens, and political prisoners would not be treated as common criminals.

In Bolshevik Russia today, the persecuted are no longer a minority accused of subversive actions; they are the majority of citizens, all the unruly, the independent thinkers, even their friends, neighbors, or relatives, and those who refuse to become informers. Persecution and terror may strike any moment, and the reasons are not revealed. People are in the hands of someone exercising unlimited arbitrariness, who gives vent to his rage and resentment, who satisfies a morbid need for revenge, and who, sure of his impunity, insults and ridicules. And all that in the name of the revolution, of the rights and the welfare of the people!

During the cruel chase of revolutionaries, the hated tsarist regime inflicted physical sufferings upon its victims and suppressed—directly and indirectly—their physical existence. Today's Bolshevik tyrants, however, do not limit themselves to

this: before killing the body they try to hurt the honor of their victims. Proof of this we have in the Moscow "trials," in which it was attempted to strip the protagonists of the Revolution—in the name of which the tyrants pretended to act—of what is most inalienable in man: honor, integrity, honesty of intention.

Today all this does not suffice to rouse the indignation and disgust of the Italian workers whose fathers and brothers have shown such sensibility and such generous and passionate solidarity when a few individuals' safety was at stake. Now they countenance with indifference crimes against humanity numbering many millions. Not even the gallows erected in Hungary by the Russian Bolsheviks were a sufficient deterrent. Those who declared themselves in agreement with this procedure and hastened to thank the henchmen of the Hungarian proletarians enjoy the continued support of the Italian workers at the polls.

In 1917, when the Russian Revolution broke out, the public opinion of all the capitalistic countries attacked it, not only by word but by military intervention. While even the most advanced and extreme leftist groups were cautious and waited for the die to be cast and the prospective winner revealed before taking a position, the *Avanti!*—under Serrati's editorship—and the whole Socialist Party did not wait for the hour of triumph, but emphasized their solidarity with the Russian comrades—and this even in those most difficult days on the eve of the separate peace treaty of Brest Litovsk, when it took courage and consistency to defend the Bolshevik government's attitude. For a long time the *Avanti!* and the Italian Socialist Party were the only defenders and supporters of the Republic of Russian workers, peasants, and soldiers. But how did the revolutionary government, with Lenin as its leader, reciprocate?

In the beginning, during the most desperate and critical weeks, the Bolshevik regime plastered three names all over the walls of the Russian capital: Karl Liebknecht, Zeta

Hoglund, and Giacinto Menotti Serrati. Karl Liebknecht had refused to support the military budget in the German Reichstag in wartime; the Swedish comrade Zeta Hoglund had been imprisoned for having organized, in wartime, an anti-militaristic congress in Stockholm; Giacinto Menotti Serrati was the most intrepid defender of revolution and the Russian revolutionists.

Serrati was one of the very few Western Socialists who was highly thought of by Lenin—because of his intransigent attitude, especially during and after World War I, and for his services to revolutionary Russia during the most difficult periods. Besides, Lenin—like many Russian revolutionists who had known Serrati—took a spontaneous liking to him out of an affinity of temperament.

In 1920, when Russia was boycotted, blockaded, and assailed by hunger, Serrati organized an apolitical committee composed of technical, specialist, and trade union experts. This committee went to Moscow to study the institutions and the general structure of the Soviet Republic and to issue an impartial opinion in order to put an end to the diffusion of lies.

It is indicative that neither the British Labour committee —which had preceded the Italian one—nor any similar group that visited Russia afterward, has made that simple and thoughtful gesture of the Italians: they came with hundreds of cases of food and clothing to alleviate the plight of people in dire need.

When, after a long wait, Trotsky phoned to give me the names of the Italian delegates and to tell me that the special train with which I was to meet them was ready, I could hardly believe it. There had been so many postponements, so many thwarted hopes. The day before, I had been invited by two Petrograd labor organizations to inspect the party office and the social center where the Italian guests were to be received. There was nothing artificial about it, and the joy of the people was deeply felt and genuine.

Dusk was descending upon the city; the street lamps had not yet been turned on. The Red flags seemed to rend the darkness and to light the streets and squares, as if they alone wanted to receive the brothers from abroad. It seemed to me that this tense solemnity, wrought of sufferings and hopes, was transmitted to the guests also, to the rhythm of their steps during the short walk from the train to the cars. Without fanfare or inappropriate manifestations the crowd, singing revolutionary songs, followed us to the guests' lodgings.

No sooner had the committee arrived in Russia than the Bolsheviks decided to profit from the presence of members of the Italian Socialist Party by provoking a split within that party. The Bolsheviks' gambit consisted in asking me to convene the intransigent faction of the Italian Socialist Party, to which I myself belonged, in Zinoviev's study. Unaware of Zinoviev's aim, I spoke to Serrati of the assignment I had received.

"You should not carry out Zinoviev's wish," Serrati said. "We are here as members of an apolitical committee, and the opinion we have been asked to give about Russia may be of great importance for her as well as for the revolutionary cause, provided that it is *unanimous*. By splitting into groups and subgroups within the committee, we merely arouse hostility and suspicion. Besides, we Socialists have been delegated as a homogeneous group, without factional distinction." Serrati's words made me see a new side of the problem. Thereafter, I scrupulously avoided anything that might be taken as a differential treatment of the various committee members.

Serrati had been right. The Bolsheviks tried to take the occasion of the Italian Socialists' visit to Russia to provoke a split in their party to facilitate the incorporation of part of the Socialists under the aegis of the Russian Bolsheviks. According to Zinoviev's Mephistophelian design, at that meeting the plots and intrigues were to have been prepared to break the unity of the Italian Socialist Party. Having failed

in this attempt, he conceived the even more wicked plan of convening the Comintern congress to set the stage for the Italian Socialists' participation in a vote entailing a split of their party. Zinoviev told me he would accompany the Italian committee on its journey from Petrograd to Moscow. He had the special cars in which he and his staff used to travel coupled to our train, and no sooner was the train in motion than he invited the Socialist members of the committee to meet and discuss the position they intended to take at the Comintern congress.

Serrati immediately stated that, since the delegation had left Italy without knowledge of the forthcoming congress and therefore without instructions from the leaders of the Italian Socialist Party, the members of the committee did not consider themselves in a position to participate in any discussion entailing binding commitments for their party. I fully approved of Serrati's statement, which expressed the opinion of the entire Socialist delegation. This action sealed our—and especially Serrati's—destiny. This was the prologue to a tragedy which has not yet ended and of which many incidents, perhaps the most dramatic ones, will never be known.

Thus began that unconscionable and relentless campaign of slander against Serrati which the Russian leaders and their followers in other countries carried on for years. At Serrati's death, Zinoviev, who had masterminded the slanderous attacks, wrote a long obituary emphasizing first the incomparable services the deceased had rendered to Soviet Russia and the Socialist movement of the world, then admitting openly: "We have fought and slandered him because of his great merits. It would not have been possible to alienate the masses without resorting to these means."

In 1919—the Italian Socialist Party had just won the elections—Lenin sent a note to Serrati. I knew of this since, as secretary of the Communist International, I was handling the mail to Western Europe. After congratulating Serrati on the victory of the Italian left-wing Socialists, Lenin added: "Keep calm. Avoid premature revolutionary upheavals."

I phoned Lenin to tell him that, given the great importance of the letter and to avoid any misunderstanding, I would be glad to translate it into Italian. Lenin was pleased. I pointed out that his mentioning of premature upheavals might be misunderstood. "It would be grist to the opponents' mill," I added. "They are the ones who consider Italy immature for revolutionary action."

"If that is how you feel," Lenin replied, "go ahead and modify the text in your Italian version." "I would rather have you make the modifications yourself," I said. "All right. I shall send for the note and return it to you immediately."

A few minutes later, I handed the note to Lenin's messenger. Lenin phoned shortly after to tell me that, having reread his note, he did not think a modification was necessary. I translated the note into Italian without making the slightest change. Though privately he insisted on great restraint and precaution, in public Lenin and his followers intensified their campaign against the Italian "reformists," who "benumbed and sabotaged the revolutionary will of the Italian people."

A few days after the departure of the Italian guests, whom I had accompanied as far as Tallin, Lenin asked me to see him. He wanted to know what impression Soviet Russia had made on the committee. But primarily he wanted to hear my opinion of the situation in Italy, where the workers were taking over the plants—a fact to which no one paid much attention in Russia.

"If you mean the most recent developments," I said, "I know no more than you do: our sources of information are the same. But if you ask my opinion on the general situation, the prevailing mood, I believe that the Italian masses are closer to socialism than is the proletariat of other countries."

"Comrade Balabanoff," Lenin said gravely, "do you take into account that Italy has neither wheat nor coal?"

"I know. And the Russian people? . . . Do you remember in what condition they were when the Revolution broke out? If one had told you then that they were capable of enduring such privations, so long? . . ."

"Don't confuse the Russian people with other peoples. Under the circumstances, a revolutionary upheaval in Italy might trigger a catastrophe. We do not need a second Hungary. That would be another disaster."

No doubt the attempts I have mentioned above were not the only ones to halt the revolutionary surge in Italy. At the same time, however, the Italian Socialist Party was denounced by the Bolsheviks as responsible for the tragedy of the Italian people and the failure of the Social Revolution to materialize. This failure was attributed to treason on the part of the Socialist leaders, Serrati in particular. The Bolsheviks hoped that the Italian Socialists, with their deep dedication to the common cause, might be persuaded to break the unity of their party. Having failed in their attempt, the Bolsheviks unleashed a hurricane of abuse against Serrati—now branded as enemy number one—and mobilized their agents against him; orders were obeyed and Serrati was attacked with ruthless fury. Officially, he was portrayed as an obstacle to the revolutionary unity the Italian Socialists —without that man—could have achieved within the Communist International. In actuality, the Bolsheviks tried to oust an incorruptible man, a defender of the International Socialist movement and a supporter of the autonomy of the Socialist parties.

From his first appearance in Russia, Bombacci provoked ironic and contemptuous comments among the Bolshevik leaders because of his vanity and silly oratory. "Shorten the translation of this bearded imbecile's speech," Lenin wrote on a slip of paper which he passed to me the moment I began to give the audience the Russian version of Bombacci's speech. Yet the leaders of the International planned to use Bombacci as a tool in their fight against Serrati. They made Bombacci believe that he would take Serrati's place, after his defeat, in the Italian Socialist movement and that he would be the revolutionary council's trusted man.

"Don't talk to me of this illiterate imbecile!" Lenin flared

up, when I showed him a bit of nonsense Bombacci had written. "He is an idiot!" In the press and at public meetings, however, Bombacci was presented as the best qualified and most deserving exponent of Italian socialism, as opposed to the "social-fascist reformist" Serrati. But this was not enough. Lenin's closest collaborators—Zinoviev, Bukharin, and Radek—suddenly became very friendly toward Serrati. When he was getting ready to leave Moscow, they insisted on his staying a little longer "to spend a few days of relaxation together."[1] But Serrati did not yield to his "friends."

One of the reasons for his return to Italy was the following. During World War I, when communications between the various countries were extremely difficult, the Vienna correspondent of *Avanti!* (whose editor at that time was Serrati) succeeded in sending to the journal a few articles through a declared pacifist and businessman who was able to travel freely. This man was more than eager to be of service to the journal. Serrati was extremely hospitable, and the messenger soon became a friend of the family. When Serrati's wife happened to mention at lunch the necessity of buying furniture, and Serrati replied that he would get a loan, the guest offered him a personal loan.

After that occasion the man did not come again to the house, and Serrati feared that he had walked into a trap—that an attempt had been made at compromising him. He went to the Party office in Rome to inform them of what had happened and also to borrow the necessary amount to pay back the personal loan. He left the sum in the hands of a lawyer and notified the creditor through the daily press to collect it.

Serrati's recounting of these happenings was received with

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[1] It was, of course, a trap. They wanted the Italian fifth columns, which they had bought with gifts of furs and money, to arrive in Italy before Serrati to organize another slander campaign against him, accusing him this time, among other things, of remaining outside Italy during the occupation of the industrial plants.

laughter by the three Bolsheviks: "What? Serrati, you worry about such things? Trifles! Who would believe such lies about you? . . . Don't give it a thought . . . remain with us a few more days"! And I, far from suspecting a Bolshevik plot, said to him: "Just think of all that has been said and printed about me after the beginning of the war, and I have been one of the leaders of the Zimmerwald Movement . . ." Serrati did not give in: he left and arrived in Italy in the first days of the occupation of the plants. But before his arrival, the communist press—with the Russians in the lead—insinuated that the motive of Serrati's absence was "sabotage of the revolution." The press campaign was organized by the same people who tried to detain him abroad.

This was the last straw. I felt an impelling desire to sever all relations with a government and with individuals responsible for such actions. Before, at the arrival of the Italian delegation, I had expressed my intention of returning to Italy. Half facetiously and half in earnest I said that although I was authorized to leave I would be willing to translate all the speeches at the International Congress. And so I did for over three weeks. When, during a recess, I asked Lenin to hasten the decision concerning my departure, he seemed annoyed and replied in a tone of hardly veiled reproach: "If you love Italy more than Russia, you may leave."

Some time after Serrati's departure for Italy, at the height of the campaign against him, Lenin asked me point blank: "And you, Comrade Balabanoff, would you be willing to write a pamphlet against Serrati?"

"I, against Serrati? But I fully agree with him. You should write that pamphlet. But you know only too well that Serrati is a man of integrity and one of the best Socialists, and deep inside you, you admire him for the courage with which he attacks your doctrines, your methods, and yourself, but you want to compromise him in the eyes of others."

Shortly afterward, a pamphlet titled *Parrot* was on exhibition in a glass case near the entrance to the Kremlin. It con-

tained the Russian version of articles the interventionist, conservative papers had published against Serrati over a number of years. The pamphlet was compiled and prefaced by the commissar for Public Education, Anatoli Lunacharski.

But even this was not enough. After a year of blackmail and slander the Bolsheviks realized that neither the rank and file nor the leaders of the Italian Socialists would take orders from them. They tried again; on the eve of an international congress they divulged through a Bolshevik news agency that the most influential representative of the Italian Socialist Party had accepted money from a secret agent of the Italian government. The engineers of this slander were the same Bolsheviks who had tried to persuade Serrati to ignore all defamatory statements on the ground that, given his reputation of adamantine integrity, no one would have believed them. Lenin did not protest against these base methods; on the contrary, he directed every move against a man who held the same beliefs as he did and for whom he had the greatest esteem.

Time passed, but that government permit without which, at that time, no militant political worker could leave the country, did not arrive. Another congress was in the offing, and I knew I was needed. To give my boycotting official character I wrote that I would not participate. And to prevent any misunderstanding, I put in an appearance at the Kremlin a few minutes before the opening of the Congress. At the door I ran into Lenin. He greeted me smiling: "I am glad to see you in good health. I had heard you would not participate and I thought. . . . All the better. . . . You will be of great use to us."

"No," I replied, "I have not been ill. I have come here to show that I am well and that I do not intend to collaborate with the Comintern. The way you deal with the Italian Socialists is contemptible and abject. Even if I did not agree with the Italian Socialist Party—which happens not to be the case—I would side with the Italian comrades against you."

I decided to leave at all costs. The duplicity of Lenin's behavior toward the Italian Socialist Party, exhibited in his talks with me, became more evident—and still more contemptible—after the unsuccessful attempt at occupying the industrial plants. In letters and conversations with Serrati, he opposed any revolutionary action as untimely and dangerous; publicly he attributed the responsibility for the Italian workers' defeat to the reformists. Thus, in a letter to the German and French communists (24 September 1920), Lenin wrote: "The events in Italy must open the eyes of those most reluctant to face facts. The Turatis, Prampolinis, and Dugonis began to obstruct revolution as soon as it was becoming a *real revolution.*"

This accusation of the Italian reformists became a dominant note in Bolshevik propaganda; it was taken up by disciples in every country and transmitted, unchanged, to future generations. In the ensuing long and violent polemic between Lenin and Serrati, once again the essential difference between Lenin and the Socialists was borne out. To Lenin the problem reduced itself to expelling the leaders: once Turati, Treves, Modigliani were eliminated, everything would be settled. It did not occur to him that the future of the Party and of socialism depended also on the Party members. This, of course, was consistent with Lenin's conception, the view of the élite as the exclusive leaders of the movement under his direction. The rank and file had to obey and carry out the orders. Thus, he thought that in Italy, too, Serrati's decision would be sufficient to expell Turati and to change the political attitude of the party members. "How can one get ready for revolution and decisive battles when there are men in the Party who sabotage the revolution? This would be not merely an error, it would be a crime."

And when Serrati mentioned the difficulties in which the institutions run by Socialists would find themselves if the administration should be taken over by ardent new communists, Lenin scoffed at Serrati's objections. "A party that

has reformists among its members cannot bring about the Revolution," he wrote. "To compare these difficulties with the losses, the errors, the disintegration of labor unions, cooperative and municipal organizations is not only ridiculous, but downright criminal."

Another example of Lenin's oversimplified and authoritarian manner appears in his polemic with the secretary of the Italian Socialist Party, Costantino Lazzari. After having stated again that there is no room in the Communist International for a party which tolerates reformists among its members, Lenin emphasized that the admission to the Comintern must also mean a definite and irrevocable break with reformism: "And then the masses will be definitely on the side of communism."

After his opposition to the Bolsheviks at the Comintern Congress, every line of Serrati's in the *Avanti!* revealed the power of his vision and his deep concern for socialism everywhere and especially for the future of Russia after the Revolution. He was the first one to stigmatize publicly the degeneration of Russian communism in an open letter to Lenin published in *Avanti!:* "Your Party now has six times as many members as before the Revolution, but despite rigid discipline and frequent purges, its quality has not improved. Its ranks have been swelled by individuals who always cater to power and who constitute a nefarious source of new privileges in Soviet Russia. These individuals, who have become revolutionists after the Revolution, have made of the Russian Revolution, which has cost so much suffering, a source of enjoyment and power. Terrorism, which to you was only a means, to them has become an end.

Officially, and with regard to his political affiliation, Serrati was a communist to the end of his life, but in his innermost self he had never become one. This became clear to all who had been close to him and to those who had occasion to observe him after his return from Russia.

Realizing the failure of all their attempts at capturing the

Italian Socialist movement (including the show put on in Leghorn, complete with peave dove and a prefabricated address by a Bulgarian delegate), the Bolsheviks decided to turn once more to Serrati, notwithstanding all their injurious actions against him. Speculating on his boundless devotion to socialism and the Revolution, they made him feel once more all the lure and power of the revolutionary circles at the very time of his discouragement over the headway made by Fascist gangs in Italy. They tried to convince him that only by merging with the communists and by switching to illegal activity could the rise of Fascism be halted, thus sparing Italy and the International Socialist movement irreparable misfortunes.

Serrati did not believe them, but he wanted to prove to himself and others that he was capable of any sacrifice for the sake of the cause. His moral fiber, which had resisted so much stress, had weakened during the years of the Moscow persecutions. Chagrined and exasperated, he joined the communists. Opposed to their methods, he became an honest follower without faith in the future. The psycho-physical stress exerted upon him over the years was, no doubt, a contributing factor in his premature death. Serrati could not survive the break with what he had loved and believed in so fervently: the Italian Socialist Party. It would have been impossible for him to fight it from outside. Death freed him from a conflict he alone knew.

Kollontai and Riazanov

Toward his opponents and enemies,[1] as well as toward Bolsheviks who had aroused his anger, Lenin was implacable. He was unjust to them and knew it; he even resorted to

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[1] These were always political opponents or factional antagonists, never personal enemies; had he had any personal enemies, he would have ignored them.

slander, guided by his maxim: "The end justifies all means; keep on slandering, something will stick in the end."

It was the time of the Ninth Party Congress in Moscow (1921). The Bolshevik regime was still in its honeymoon, but some subdued rumors began to circulate about a current of dissatisfaction in the party. The spokesman of this discontent was Alexandra Kollontai, the well-known Socialist, who was admired in Russia as well as abroad. In her youth she had participated in the Socialist Workers' movement. A Menshevik in the beginning, she became a Bolshevik after the Revolution and was commissar for Social Assistance on the Council of the People's Commissars. Courageous, educated, an able speaker and writer, she later became ambassador and rendered great services to Soviet diplomacy. She owed her diplomatic post to the "heresy" she committed at the congress of the Communist Party. Lenin never forgave her. At that time, being sent outside of Russia—albeit to cover a position of importance and prestige—meant punishment, especially for a militant Socialist.

A few minutes before the opening of the Congress, Lenin learned that Alexandra Kollontai had clandestinely printed a pamphlet which criticized the attitude of the government and the Bolshevik Party, demanded greater autonomy for the workers' organizations and less bureaucracy in the party —an attempt, in short, to check autocracy and totalitarianism and to advance what was called "democracy within the party." It was an admonition of sorts aimed at the government and the party members assembled to judge its actions.

I had stopped in the congress lobby to exchange a few words with a group of delegates; not far from me I saw Alexandra Kollontai engaged in lively conversation with a French communist. At that moment Lenin entered at a brisk pace. He looked very tense and did not stop to return greetings. Walking up to Alexandra Kollontai's interlocutor, he said to him angrily: "What? You still speak to this individual?" He entered the assembly hall and became immediately

engrossed in the reading of a pamphlet, entirely oblivious to his surroundings, even to greetings and words addressed to him directly. As he read on, his face darkened more and more. Later, from the platform, he gave a speech full of invectives and grave accusations directed at the person who had dared to touch the unity of the party and its iron discipline. Such was Lenin's fury that he resorted to a rather vulgar pun and alluded to the intimate relations of the accused woman with a Bolshevik who had signed the appeal in the name of the prospective "workers' opposition" faction.

When she fell into disfavor, her portrait was removed from the party offices. (At that time, beside the effigies of the two foremost exponents of the Revolution, Lenin and Trotsky, hung pictures of the "deserving comrades"—Alexandra Kollontai, Nadezhda Krupskaja (Lenin's wife), and Angelica Balabanoff. As one after the other fell from favor, her portrait was removed from the group of the "deserving comrades."

Comrade Kollontai's pamphlet contained this paragraph: "We, the workers, who are we? Are we the pivot of class dictatorship or a flock of sheep that support those who, having severed all ties with the masses, continue under the party label a politics of their own without considering our point of view, our attitudes, our capabilities, and our initiatives? Now that the enemies have been defeated, it is time to revoke the exceptional laws and to pass to the realization of the promises made in 1917." To this Lenin replied with the prohibition—under penalty of expulsion or worse—of every group of opposition within the party.

Kollontai's situation worsened. Having declared herself in agreement with the commissar for the Marine, who had been severely reprimanded by the government, she left her post as commissar and followed him. She was made the object of public censure and ostracism and was removed from every public office. The Central Committee of the Party, which was equivalent to the government, called me in to offer me

the posts previously held by Alexandra Kollontai. I rejected the offer with indignation and went to Lenin to protest against the proposal and to speak in defense of Alexandra Kollontai. I had to convince myself, however, that any effort to mitigate Lenin's anger would be in vain. In the years that followed, he would fly into a rage whenever Alexandra Kollontai's name was mentioned.

It was spring 1921. I stayed in the house of Riazanov, the well-known observer of the trade-union movement, who was considered one of the foremost Marxist scholars. On his return to Russia after years of exile, he immersed himself in trade-union work. This particular morning he had gone to the meeting of the communist faction of the trade-union congress taking place in Moscow. When he came home, radiant with joy, he told his wife—also a passionate trade unionist—and me of his triumph: he had succeeded in pushing through a motion demanding the trade unions' rights to elect their own leaders (the agenda submitted by the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party, on the other hand, demanded that the leaders be appointed from above). Riazanov's motion was approved by 1500 votes against 30.

While, with great gaiety, he was giving us details of his triumph, he was called to the phone. From the tone in which he answered and from the few words we heard him say, we understood that something serious had happened. Indeed, when Riazanov joined us at the end of the conversation, he seemed a different man. Pale and extremely tense, he said over and over: "Incredible. Despotism. Sheer despotism. Do you know what has happened? I have been committed to the Court of the Revolution. I must appear there tonight."

"But why?" his wife cried. "It must be an error." "No. No error. I have been informed by Lenin's personal request. I have been accused of having submitted a motion in opposition to that of the Central Committe of the Party and of having claimed some autonomy for the trade union movement."

Lenin had protested by phone against the adoption of Riazanov's motion. Accompanied by members of the Central Committee, he had gone to the meeting of the trade-union section, which then annulled the vote on Riazanov's motion and voted *unanimously* for the Central Committee's proposal. That very evening the assembled Court forbade Riazanov to take any part in the trade-union movement; at the same time, they removed from office the president of the pan-Russian trade-union movement, Tomsky, for his failure, as section president, to stop that vote.

VIII

Lenin's Agents

Lenin never denied the actions for which he was blamed, neither did he try to diminish their gravity since he always acted with confidence in his cause and was permeated by the certainty that only his theory—Bolshevism—could triumph.

In the prerevolutionary period he did not hesitate to channel to the Bolsheviks sums that were destined to the Party and not to a single faction. Between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks a legal dispute had been dragging on for years. A Russian capitalist had left to the Social Democratic Party a considerable sum of which the Bolsheviks had taken possession. In vain the Mensheviks tried to assert their rights. They had to appeal to the Socialist International which, after having tried without success to resolve the conflict, was compelled to nominate a committee composed of eminent members of the German Social Democratic Party: Kautsky, Mehring, and Clara Zetkin. This committee was faced with a trying task. From the beginning the Bolsheviks resorted to subterfuge, intrigue, and sabotage to delay the decision, which in the end forced them to pay that part of the sum willed to the Mensheviks.

Lenin used money to create and consolidate the supremacy of his faction within the party. To reach this supremacy (which might be termed hegemony) he considered every means fit, none excluded. Thus, Lenin created a party within the party. But even among the Bolsheviks, the group of those whose voice carried weight and who were informed of the

origin of the financial resources was small. Everything was transacted between Lenin and trusted individuals who helped him fill the coffers of the faction, thus establishing a sort of secret understanding and complicity. Lenin considered the activity of these individuals not only legitimate but absolutely indispensable.

Very meager were the sources of income of the Bolshevik Party upon whose victory—according to Lenin—depended the fate of the Russian people. The number of workers who adhered to the Bolshevik movement was extremely small, and smaller still was the number of those who subsidized it regularly. And although Lenin was far from rejecting donations from those liberals who saw the necessity—in their own interest—of saving Russia from the ties of tsarism and were ready to help the revolutionary movement, these sporadic donations were naturally insufficient. The lack of money was felt more and more as the reaction became more ferocious and the fight against it assumed collective character.

When Lenin was an émigré and his influence was limited to an insignificant number of persons, the majority of them guided by idealistic aspirations, the principle "the end justifies the means," was applied only when the end required it. The actions of those who, to attain the desired end, resorted to objectionable means were then regarded as purified by the sacrifices which they entailed. That's why the terrorists in Russia and the anarchists in other countries were pardoned at times by public opinion hostile to their mode of action and in some cases even by the courts themselves.

But when, with the accession of the Bolsheviks, the same principle was applied by people who acted not in the interest of an idealistic end, but in their own interest, people who had no conception of what, originally, had been that "end" for the attainment of which the use of illegal means was justified, the debacle began, dragging with it to destruction principles, scruples, inhibitions, idealism, and ideals.

The decay began with epigones who could not resist the

temptations of power. If the head of the government declares, as Lenin did many times in his speeches and writings, that to penetrate the reactionary trade unions "the communists must, if necessary, distort the truth and resort to subterfuge, cunning, and mental reservations," and if Lenin, speaking as the Bolshevik leader, said one time that to "finish" a group of dissidents slander was acceptable, one should not wonder that people within and outside the party have later used the same methods to reach their own ends. "The sums derived from the activity of the armed bands," Lenin wrote, "are used chiefly for the support of the participants in the expropriations." As is known, these "expropriations" consisted in the assault and occasional murder of the guards in charge of money transports from banks.

Stalin himself carried out and directed many operations of this kind, especially in the Caucasus. His excellence in this field attracted Lenin's attention, who had him elected to the Central Committee of the Party. This will not come as a surprise, if one keeps in mind Lenin's habit of selecting his collaborators and trusted men precisely because of their weaknesses and shortcomings and also for their checkered past. This method, however, became a trap for Lenin more than once.

For instance, one of the most venal spies, Malinovsky, succeeded not only in gaining Lenin's trust, but also in getting himself elected to the Duma, with the assignment to make a statement of principles on behalf of the Bolsheviks. Despite the fact that this was an individual of ill repute, suspected even of connections with the police, Lenin continued to protect him for a long time although he knew that the man had been sentenced for nonpolitical crimes. In the end, that individual's double dealing was discovered. From the police on one side and from Lenin on the other he had received the assignment to provoke a split within the Social Democratic group in parliament. To achieve this end there was no better means than having one's own trusted man

inside the group. Both government and police made the candidacy and election of the Bolshevik deputy possible, facilitating the procedures and clearing his police record of every trace of the past. Thus, he worked for two employers who, to achieve opposite ends, happened to use the same agent.

After the outbreak of World War I, among us—political emigrants in Switzerland—appeared a young Frenchman who ostentatiously showed hostility toward his country. At close range it became clear that his behavior was by no means a reflection of Socialist or Internationalist principles. He gave vent to his opposition to the war in an exaggerated, stupid, and vulgar manner. He shouted insults against France and her representatives. When he asked me to help him to prepare a lecture in Zurich, I merely advised him to study. I was greatly surprised, however, to find that the Bolsheviks seemed to take him seriously. They supplied him with a mandate and elevated him to the position of French deputy to the International meetings. In this post he revealed his total ignorance of the most elementary precepts of socialism, but he had occasion to evince the greatest zeal in carrying out the orders of the Bolsheviks.

This man edited a periodical whose contributors were opponents in the war. It was our only organ in French, published in Switzerland. One day—I was in Stockholm at the time—I was informed by trusted Italian comrades residing in Zurich that this individual, Guilbeaux by name, had accepted money from a German industrialist for his periodical. This news seemed so incredible to me that I decided to leave immediately for Switzerland to take action, if necessary, toward Guilbeaux's expulsion from the Zimmerwald Movement. I soon became aware of the transformation that Guilbeaux had undergone through Bolshevik influence: respectful at first, he had become arrogant and cynical. "What's wrong with it?" he said. "To succeed in our intent, we would unite even with the devil."

In the meantime, I tried to inform Lenin of the measures I intended to take against this individual who was unworthy of belonging to our organization. Lenin gave me a look of tacit commiseration and said: "Why get excited over so little? Doesn't your Zimmerwald statute contemplate cases of this sort?" I remained speechless.

Some months later, the Bolsheviks began putting on the act of founding a new International. Being in need of another vote to ram through one of their proposals, Kamenev ordered a special train to be sent to the border to make it possible for Guilbeaux to vote. When I informed Kamenev of Guilbeaux's past performance, he did not seem much perturbed and did not revoke the order. And Lenin did not hesitate to preface a pamphlet written by Guilbeaux at that time. But when there was no longer need of him, he was left to his fate. Having taken seriously the flatteries about his importance, he now felt bitter resentment and left Russia as a sworn enemy. He died a Fascist and anti-Semite.

Guilbeaux's case was not an isolated one among the followers of Bolshevism. Many approached "the fatherland of the revolution" out of a more or less idealistic impulse, to satisfy their curiosity or to prove their solidarity with a suffering and rebelling people. As soon as they arrived in Moscow they were classified as superficial, naive, ambitious, or venal. Then they were used according to this classification. All, without exception, however, were made to believe that they were considered important personages. They were given confidential assignments and often even sent to their own countries with great sums of money for propaganda purposes, which frequently amounted to simple corruption. Very few were able to resist so much flattery. Those who had come to Russia as revolutionists or conscientious sympathizers left, broken-hearted and pained, but many others, in particular the naive and the ambitious, remained imprisoned in the trap into which they had fallen and ended by getting used to their despicable function of corruptors.

Others—Guilbeaux belonged to this category—became cynics and, having lost all faith in the revolutionists, went over to the enemy, fired by inextinguishable rancor against those who had abused their credulity, good faith, and naiveté. The largest category was formed by those men who, having been corrupted, had become corrupters themselves. In the beginning of the regime, these were the only emissaries the Bolsheviks sent to the Western countries.

Step by step this employment became a lucrative profession. Men without home or occupation—adventurers, smugglers, gamblers with life—put themselves at the service of the Bolsheviks. Their mission consisted in corrupting, slandering, and dividing the working men's Socialist movement. One can easily imagine the moral and political damage that was done to the international working men's movement when a great number of individuals of this type were not merely authorized but even encouraged to act according to the Bolshevik principle: "The end justifies the means." Thus began that degenerative phase that was to submerge the virtues of those who, with great sacrifice, had started the emancipation that led to socialism. Gradually, the means was replacing the end, and the end receded farther and farther into the distance.

At that time the Bolsheviks began to resort to a method which was to have fatal consequences for the working men's movement, that is, to smuggle into Western Europe Bolshevik orders and have them voted even by illegal procedures. Persuasion was replaced by the abuse of authority and that particular attraction the Revolution and the Bolshevik system held for a great many disinherited people. Failing this, they would resort to corruption or blackmail. One of the most efficient weapons in frequent use by the Bolsheviks was—and still is—slander. Since the most systematic and informed opposition to Bolshevism came at that time from the leaders of the Western Socialist trade unions, they became the chief target of Bolshevik slander—the aim of which was to destroy the trust earned among the organized masses. The same method was used also against single militants opposing

Bolshevism; it was the most deadly method to be used by a movement of social and psychological renewal.

Toward the end of 1918, on my return from Stockholm, where the Zimmerwald Movement then had its offices, I found that Radek—a Polish revolutionist who was a cultured, intelligent, and brilliant journalist lacking moral scruples—had organized a sort of international office to which all foreigners (almost all were prisoners of war)—had to report for "instruction." The aim was to make them into undercover agents to be sent abroad with Bolshevik propaganda assignments. When I heard that among them were two men from Trieste, who were to be sent to Italy supplied with documents signed by Lenin himself and with considerable sums of money, I wanted to meet them. A look and a few words with them sufficed to convince me that they were impostors of the worst kind. Posing as revolutionists, with the prestige of the important assignment conferred upon them by Lenin, they could be certain of being received everywhere with the greatest confidence and sympathy, although they were only vulgar cheats. They did not even know that Trieste had a Socialist newspaper. Greatly perturbed, I went to Lenin to inform him of the base comedy and to induce him to require them to return documents and money.

To my surprise—the Communist International did not yet exist, and the Bolshevik methods had just come into use in the International movement—I noticed that Lenin showed neither astonishment nor indignation; on the contrary, he seemed to be displeased with my observations. "To destroy Turati's party," he said with resentment, "those men will do." A few weeks after their arrival in Italy, Moscow received notes of protest and complaint from the Italian Socialist Party. The two individuals had caused a scandal by spending enormous sums of money in nightclubs and bordellos.

I had arrived in Kiev as commissar for Foreign Affairs for the Ukraine and secretary of the International. Here, even more than in Moscow or the rest of Russia, one seemed to

live in an inferno. I had not yet taken office when I was besieged by innumerable people in tragic circumstances who came to me for help or to lodge complaints of all sorts. Often I was told that innocent people had been arrested and sometimes even shot. Shots were heard in the night, and I was told that troops were training. Only later did I learn that during the evacuation many citizens had been shot to prevent their being utilized, one way or another, by the enemy.

To my great dismay I was told by trustworthy people whom I had known for a long time that in Kiev a man had taken up residence who pretended to be the ambassador of an exotic country and was willing to procure passports for anyone desiring to leave the country. That same man also acted as money changer. He had been responsible for the shooting of people who had fallen in his trap. Among his victims were some old Jews who had put aside over the years some savings, or who possessed a tiny amount of foreign currency sent to them by their children who had emigrated to America.

I informed the president of the People's Commissars of the Ukraine and my government colleagues of this situation. Their reaction did not seem to correspond to the seriousness of the case at hand. I decided to go to Moscow immediately to confer with Lenin about this incomprehensible state of affairs. At the same time I wanted to inform the head of the Cheka, Dzherzhinski, of all this. I had known Dzherzhinski and thought highly of him, both because of his fight for the freedom of the people and for the dignity with which he had borne the consequences of his faith in the revolution when he was exiled in Siberia. As soon as I arrived in Moscow, I asked for an appointment. Our meeting was of revealing brevity. Dzherzhinski believed I had come to call to his attention some aberration of his employe and was greatly surprised when he understood that I was outraged and expected him to punish the man whom I considered a mere adventurer. He informed me, instead, that the man in question was one of his agents.

More exasperated than before, I went to Lenin. It cost me some effort to control my temper. I was dumbfounded when Lenin, looking at me squint-eyed—as was his habit when he wanted to study a person's innermost thoughts—said to me in the tone of a father who, with affectionate pity, realizes the son's inadaptability to the exigencies of life: "Comrade Balabanoff, what use can life find for you? *Agent provocateur?* If it were possible, I would even send some into Kornilov's army . . ."

This was, and remains, one of the most terrifying revelations of my life. A class called to elevate and transform society resorted to the same abominable means that had been used by the social system it had fought and intended to replace. An implacable nemesis seemed to have stricken Lenin with blindness in that very sector which required him to be a seer. Indeed, he did not see—or wanted not to—that by resorting to illegal means he lessened the number of builders for a new social structure which requires first and foremost absolute honesty and purity of intent.

Lenin and Paul Levi

To sustain the faith of the workers in other countries in the final triumph of socialism in Russia, Lenin pretended that the domestic situation of the Soviet Republic was better than it really was. For instance, to create an atmosphere of optimism and enthusiasm for the Comintern Congress in Moscow in 1920, he timed it to coincide with the Red Army's march on Warsaw. It is no longer a secret that the ill-fated march was decided on by Lenin despite opposition from Trotsky and other members of the Bolshevik Central Committee and even from the Polish communists who foresaw the defeat of the Russian Army. But Lenin persisted in his plan, hoping that the military operation might kindle revolutionary upheavals in Poland and Germany.

During the three weeks the congress was in session, every meeting was opened with the reading of a news dispatch

from the front announcing victories of the Russian forces. I translated these bulletins into the various languages of the members of the congress; their great enthusiasm was reflected in their speeches and in the way they considered and decided upon other problems.

Only later, much later, did I learn that these dispatches falsified the texts of the authentic telegrams or were outright fictitious. The director of this unsavory performance was the ill-famed Zinoviev, president of the International, who was in the habit of producing such farces whenever things did not go well and public attention had to be shifted away from a situation unfavorable to him. Without being familiar with the details of the staging, Lenin knew its aim, which was part of his strategic plan to create an atmosphere of indulgence toward the government of which he was leader.

Zinoviev, who was president of the International and also held the very important office of president of the Petrograd Soviet, devised another staging on a larger scale. Since the workers of Petrograd, who at that time were considered the most revolutionary in the country and who were suffering from hunger more than all the others, began to show signs of discontent with the city administration, Zinoviev, who was responsible for the situation, decided to give them some compensation. To bolster his personal prestige, the opening of the World Congress and also the first session were to be held in Petrograd with Lenin's participation. The decision had to be kept secret until the last moment because an attempt on Lenin's life was feared. I was not the only one to disapprove of this disgusting performance by serious people, revolutionists to boot. With the disastrous conditions of transport and the severe shortage of all commodities, how could one allow such waste of material and energies!

Lenin traveled by regular night train as protection against suspected attempts on his life; the rest of us used special trains. In Petrograd we had to walk in a procession-like formation through the main streets of the ex-capital. The

most prominent congress members were protected by security cordons formed by workers, while the lesser known ones were surrounded by agents and Red guards.

Once more I was close to Lenin, who was taciturn and deeply worried. In the afternoon we all went to the March field to deposit flowers on the tombs of those who fell for the Revolution. On our return I found myself between Lenin and the delegate of the German Communist Party, Paul Levi, who, together with Serrati, had rendered great services to the European socialist movement. A highly cultured man, a prominent lawyer and defender of socialists (among them being Rosa Luxemburg), he had given up the privileges of birth and—to some extent—profession, to dedicate his life to the working men's movement in his country and to the Socialist International. With enthusiasm and conviction he had adhered to the nascent movement and he was designed, it seemed, to become president of the International.

At that time Moscow considered Germany one of her bulwarks: communism seemed to take root there. I felt that Lenin might have taken the occasion to talk with Levi, and I invited them to my house. We were hardly seated when Lenin, who apparently had not ceased to ponder the question foremost in his mind, asked Levi point-blank: "After the victorious entry of the Russian troops in Warsaw, how long will it take before the revolution breaks out in Germany?"

Levi replied calmly: "Three months, or three weeks; perhaps the revolution won't break out at all." The *at all* put an end to the conversation. Lenin got up and left with a mere nod of the head. This nod put the seal on Levi's political destiny. He, who had been declared by the leaders in Moscow in indisputable authority and proclaimed "infallible," was immediately removed from all his offices and subjected to denigration and slander.

As a delegate of the International at the congress in Leghorn, he sided with Serrati in defense of the Italian Socialist Party. In a pamphlet he warned the German Party and the

International against the methods used by the leaders of the Communist International; these methods, he contended, could not but lead to defeat and dishonor of the international movement. He was expelled from the Party with great publicity, according to the Bolshevik principle: "Slander without hesitation! The greater a man's merits and the better he is liked by the people, the more hateful must he be made to those people."

Levi continued his intrepid fight for a cleanup in the working men's movement. After some time he fell ill with typhus. During a momentary absence of the nurse, he threw himself out of the window and was found dead in the street. This is the official version, confirmed by relatives, comrades, and friends.

I do not doubt the truthfulness of the description of these events; however, having observed Levi closely and having found myself in analogous situations, I believe that the high fever and the nurse's temporary absence merely precipitated the action he had been contemplating. Too many intellectual and ethical bonds tied him to the conception he had of his ideal and to those who were to be its protagonists to enable him to survive the collapse of the former and the infamy of the latter. True, he again had become a member of the Social Democratic Party. But his soul had received a deadly wound.

Conflict with the Party

Neither in Russia nor in other countries have I ever joined groups of opposition. But I always expressed my opinion, which from the Bolsheviks' point of view was worse—given the friendship and consideration I enjoyed among Socialists in many countries. In dealing with Socialists of other countries, the Bolsheviks in "the fatherland of the workers of the world" made use of every kind of diplomacy, mental reservation, and sophistry. Knowing that I was opposed to these practices, the government sought every pretext to keep me

away from the capital whenever a Western Socialist was likely to arrive.

One day in 1920 the Executive Council of the Russian Communist Party notified me of the decision that I was to enter a sanatorium, a great privilege at that time. I thought the typist must have made a mistake. I was dumbfounded when I learned from Party secretary Krestinsky, whom I had occasion to see on other matters, that no error had occurred and that the Central Committee had actually taken this decision.

"I . . . in a sanatorium?" I burst out. "How could you ever think of such a thing? Not even if I were ill would I go to a sanatorium, and you want me to go there when there are millions of men and women in Russia who are in much greater need of it than I?"

"A little rest after all your hard work!" Krestinsky replied. Unsuspicious of the underlying scheme, I replied, to cut the matter short: "When all women of my age and physical condition can enter a sanatorium, I too shall go there, but not before."

Some weeks later another attempt was made to remove me from Moscow. Khristian Rakovski[1] informed me that I had been named a member of the Ukrainian government as commissar for Foreign Affairs. The prospect of working with such an educated, intelligent man, who was dedicated to the International Socialist movement, compensated somewhat for the fact that I had to leave Moscow again, just when I had begun to settle down.

I went to Lenin to hear his opinion. "Of course," he said, in reply to my question whether my transfer to the Ukraine might be really useful to the movement. "In your capacity

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[1] A well-known Socialist of Rumanian extraction, who enjoyed great esteem in the Second International; after the October Revolution he settled in Russia and held positions of great responsibility: president of the People's Commissars in the Ukraine, ambassador of Soviet Russia to France.

as commissar for Foreign Affairs and as secretary of the International you will have a great range of activity. I myself will see to it that you are supplied immediately with all you need. I shall keep in direct contact with you . . ."

"And if Comrade Chicherin's initiative should be successful," I countered, "and comrades from the West were to arrive?"[1]

"But who on earth will come to us?" Lenin replied sadly, alluding, no doubt, to the enormous political and technical obstacles which, at the time, made arrivals from abroad extremely difficult, if not impossible. "But, if such a miracle should happen, be assured that I shall send immediately a special train to the Ukraine to fetch you and Rakovski." And so he did. I had hardly reached the Ukraine and not even started work there, when I received a phone call from Lenin: the special train which was to bring me back had already left Moscow. I arrived March 20, when the session of what was to go down in history as "the First Congress of the Communist International" had already begun.

I am unable to say whether Lenin's repeated offer to nominate me as ambassador to Italy was meant as a punishment or a reward. To tell the truth, I did not take it seriously. At that time the Soviet Republic was far from being able to send abroad representatives of her diplomacy, which was guided by revolutionary class concepts. From a personal point of view, I could not have accepted a post which would have required me to enter into relation with the monarchy and other political spheres antagonistic to the class to which I felt I belonged. I did not think it necessary even to discuss the matter. Whenever Lenin brought up this question, I brushed it off with a laugh.

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[1]A few days before this encounter with Lenin, G. W. Chicherin, who was then commissar for Foreign Affairs, had extended an invitation to comrades in other countries who approved of the basic Soviet organization to come to Moscow for an exchange of ideas.

IX

Lenin and the Working Class

Lenin was fully aware of the Russian people's boundless capacity for suffering. The year was 1920; the lack of solidarity and collaboration on the part of the workers in other countries made itself felt in every sector of Russian life. It was not merely a question of political or revolutionary solidarity—which, alleviating the isolation of the Russian people, would have encouraged them to persevere—but also another kind of collaboration.

At that time the main problem was to reactivate factories and plants. They had been idle for lack of raw material, fuel, and, primarily, technicians and skilled workers, who had been either killed in the imperialistic and the civil war or had been assigned administrative posts in the vast country.

We used to say that an ideal combination of the experience and discipline of the Germans, the revolutionary virtues of the Russians—plus the élan and the generosity of the Italians, I added—was needed to get Russia out of her chaotic conditions. But from whom could the Russian workers expect help? Where were those workers who would risk going to a country that lacked everything and about which such horrifying news was being spread?

From the very beginning after his rise to power, Lenin's dominant preoccupation was the lack of solidarity on the part of the working classes in countries more advanced than Russia. There were obvious reasons: success or failure of the Bolshevik attempt to introduce a Socialist regime in one of the most backward countries in Europe depended heavily

on the comprehension, collaboration, and aid the young Workers' Republic would receive from the working classes of other countries.

During the first years after the October Revolution Lenin did not make a single speech, public address, or appeal to the people without mentioning the proximity of the world revolution and the helplessness of the capitalist regimes under the assault of the proletarian forces. "The final triumph will be ours," he would say at the end of his speeches. One could not help thinking that perhaps his insistence on this point resulted from a deep desire to hide from others—and perhaps even from himself—the lack of this hoped-for solidarity.

Shortly before his death, he addressed a convention of transport workers: "How could it happen that in a country in which the industrial proletariat is in such minority compared to other parts of the population, and so backward and isolated from countries whose proletariat is better educated, more aware, better organized and disciplined; how was it possible that the working classes here have been able to conquer power despite the resistance and the attacks of the bourgeoisie of the whole world? We all know that our working class never suffered such dire need as under its own dictatorship. Never has the country been so exhausted. What, then, has given this class the moral strength to endure all this? . . . Ask yourselves if the Soviet Republic could have endured what it has for three years and a half. Ask yourselves if she could have defended herself so successfully against the White Russian army aided by the capitalists of the entire world, if the proletariat of all the capitalistic countries had not been united with us . . . The victory was not ours, since our military forces were exiguous, our victory is due to the fact that the enemy powers could not mobilize against us all their military forces. The waging of war depends to such an extent upon the workers that it is not possible to continue it against their will. In most cases they

have put an end to the war against us, due to their passive or semipassive resistance."

In reality this assertion was an attempt to hide, even from himself, the truth of the matter: the international proletariat failed to give its active support to the Russian masses.

One day Lenin informed me that some Scandinavian workers had shown willingness to come and work in Russia. Swedish steel workers! I could hardly believe my ears. "But do you know the conditions?" Lenin went on. "They want to be paid in gold here, plus the equivalent of their wages to be paid to their wives in Scandinavia." I must admit that I did not realize the magnitude of the demand; Lenin told me, however, that the offer was unacceptable.

"What would our Russian workers say if we paid the Swedes wages that are so much higher than their own?" I had to agree with Lenin and I said sadly: "If the Italian workers had the technical preparation and the experience, I am sure that many of them would come without insisting on conditions of that sort."

"And you believe," Lenin remarked, "that they could live under the conditions our workers endure?"

"Surely. If our workers can stand them . . ."

"Our workers? The Russian people can endure what no other people is capable of enduring . . ."

This assertion of Lenin's saddened me and made me pensive. I had nothing to counter it with, except my faith in the solidarity and idealism of the Italian people. Guided by the subconscious hope of having my views confirmed by D'Aragona and Serrati, who had just arrived from Italy, I went to their hotel. When they heard about Lenin's contention and mine, both agreed with Lenin. "No. The Italian workers will never accept the life the Russian workers lead . . ."

I could hardly hide the disappointment and the pain I felt at hearing this denial from such an authoritative source. I must confess that my pain was caused not merely by the sad conditions under which the Russian people lived, but

by the doubt expressed about the Italian workers' revolutionary idealism. It was my contention that this idealism would have induced them to make sacrifices and suffer privations to lend a fraternal hand to the builders of a society of free and equal men.

I am aware of the fact that my delusion may seem somewhat naive to the reader who has known the Italian people only during and after the Fascist regime and who cannot, therefore, imagine to what extent the character and mentality of the Italian workers have been defiled by the Fascist yoke and by Bolshevik influence.

X

Lenin and Trotsky

When speaking of Lenin as the mastermind and chief exponent of the Soviet Russian regime, one must also speak of Trotsky. In the most difficult and crucial moments, in tragedy or triumph, their names were united, not only in the opinions expressed about the regime but also, and more importantly, in the consciousness of countless human beings, whether followers and admirers, victims or foes. In encomium or condemnation, their names, their merits, their guilts and responsibilities were never separated.

Not even the most detached, impartial and well-documented evaluation by contemporaries and witnesses of these two revolutionists "who shook the world" would yield a precise answer as to which of the two was more important in the conquest and consolidation of Bolshevik power in Russia and its consequences for the entire world.

No line of demarcation can be drawn; there is truly no way of establishing what part each had in any single event. It was the fusion of their iron wills and of their almost totally different temperaments, reinforced by scientific conviction and an unconditional dedication to the cause of the Revolution, which enabled them to create and maintain the regime which had come into being under the most unfavorable circumstances, endangered by forces vastly superior in number, military preparation, and political support outside of Russia.

The chief protagonist of a collective movement is always, of course, the masses. The case of Soviet Russia is a clear and tragic example. The Revolution degenerated and became

a bloody caricature of what it should or could have become if the masses, which had been instrumental in bringing it about, had been mature enough to maintain and consolidate its achievements. But it was not possible for a socially and technologically immature country to become the forerunner of a deep social change which presupposed a much higher economic development than Russia was capable of in the years after the war. The more backward the masses, the more assertive the individual's authority and initiative. The deformation of the October Revolution progressed at the same rate at which the individual replaced the masses. This substitution, which was made at the outset in good faith, was bound to degenerate in time.

When he was still a Menshevik and in violent opposition to Lenin, Trotsky traced with extraordinary foresight the trajectory of the Bolshevik movement: "The organization will replace the Party, the Central Committee will replace Party organization and, finally, the dictator will replace the Central Committee."

Unfortunately, events not only proved Trotsky right, but showed the consequences to be much graver than could be foreseen. The trajectory Trotsky predicted eventually extended over the vast expanse of Russia and, in time, to other countries as well.

Both Lenin and Trotsky dedicated their entire lives to serving the cause of the people, but on close observation, they seemed to proceed on different lines. Lenin did what he considered a duty in an impersonal manner. He let statistics speak, cited the experience of history and the teachings of the masters of socialism; he applied his implacable logic, summarized the conclusions he had reached, and engaged in polemics with the opponents of his view. He attacked, derided, and ground the adversaries to dust, resorting to methods and expressions which were not always justifiable and often inadmissible; he wanted to convince, to be obeyed,

but without ever letting his personality intrude. Those who approached him with shyness or respect reported having received the impression of talking to an equal who might be right or wrong, but who had nothing of the superman. He did not show off his knowledge and eliminated by his behavior any actual or assumed difference between one who has studied and knows and one who has not studied and feels inferior, between one who exercises power and one who is subjected to it.

Such behavior was no effort for Lenin: it was his nature, his self. It was not merely a manifestation of his socialistic and egalitarian beliefs, for he was constitutionally incapable of acting otherwise. I emphasize this aspect of his character because it *seems* incompatible with his manner of dealing with men, theories, and arguments that were contrary to his views.

He was intolerant, stubborn, cruel, and unjust in dealing with his opponents (opponents of Bolshevism, never personal enemies). To say, as many did on the occasion of his death, that he was modest is, to my mind, inaccurate. A modest behavior presupposes comparison between oneself and others. This did not interest Lenin. The desire to learn from others was characteristic of him, especially after his ascent to power. He would ask peasants about agricultural matters; about the conditions of some remote village, he would seek the advice of people who lived there. He did not do it to attract attention or cause sensation, but rather unobtrusively. Often he would call the peasants in to hear their objections to the regime or to the local administration and to be informed of the needs of the people. Everyone was treated equally, even those whose opinions and attitudes were known to him and which he considered wrong—perhaps he hoped to find in their words yet another confirmation that he, that is, Bolshevism, was right.

One day in 1920 he sent me the proofs of the pamphlet

Extremism, an Infantile Disorder of Communism,[1] which caused a sensation among both the followers and the opponents of communism. The proofs were accompanied by the following letter: "*Dear Comrade Balabanoff.* Excuse the trouble I am causing you by asking you to do me a great service [the last two words were underlined twice]. Please read what I have written from page . . . to page . . . and tell me what you think of it, what your objections are."

The pages indicated by Lenin concerned the Italian Socialist movement, the polemic against Turati, and related matters.

The letter continued: "If you should have time to read pages . . . too, and give me your opinion, I should be extremely grateful." Here also, the two last words were underlined twice. The pages in question concerned the International Socialist movement. The letter ended with renewed apologies.

Clearly, I could not possibly have told Lenin anything he did not know already. There had been innumerable verbal exchanges between Lenin and myself about Italian socialism, congresses, and elections. He knew my views only too well, and he thought them wrong. My arguments could not possibly have changed his views or his tactics. Why, then, did he want my opinion? I believe he wanted a sounding board to enhance his own theories.

Trotsky thought and acted in a quite different manner. He served the Revolution with equal dedication, but he wanted every action, every thought of his to carry his personal mark: Trotsky said it, Trotsky wrote it. The manner and the form in which he presented an idea was important to him, and he was not indifferent to what might be said

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[1] A closer translation of the original title: *The Infantile Disorder of Leftism in Communism,* April 1920, Russian, French, and German coeditions. Lenin wanted his pamphlet to appear before the Second Congress of the Communist International so that it might be distributed to all participants.

about him, even after death. He seemed to look constantly in the mirror of history, forever anxious to detect what place, what fame, what admiration would be reserved for him. Contrary to Lenin, he did not limit himself to quoting statistics or citing facts and experiences, but in his speeches he adorned and interpreted the facts with consummate skill.

Even in his boyhood he seemed to love to excel, to draw attention to himself, astonishing schoolmates and teachers by his knowledge and those peculiarities that distinguished him from boys of the same age. His desire for praise and admiration was related to his exuberance and his great gifts. His fear of not being sufficiently appreciated increased over the years as he became more aware of his talents. Although he was never persecuted or ostracized because of his Jewish origin, he may have felt it a handicap to be compensated by self-esteem and the admiration of others. His haughty behavior, however, made people shrink from him. He found an outlet for his mental energies in his fierce polemical writings. His polemics naturally, carried the Trotsky mark; he provoked aversion by his very exuberance, by his trenchant irony in dealings with others. He was in the habit of looking down on everybody and everything. His arrogance caused him to be disliked by his revolutionist comrades even before any political discrepancies arose. He created a wall of ice around him even when he meant to be kind.

Lenin explained and taught; Trotsky decreed and ordered. This difference revealed itself more clearly after their rise to power. Lenin remained the same, although millions of people—followers and opponents—were in his power. As before, he would walk up to the speaker's stand at a clipped pace and, ignoring the applause, he would enter immediately upon the argument at hand. His words, his tone of voice, his gestures, his reasoning were the same as always. He still had that air of a provincial schoolteacher: sure of the truth and conscientious, trying to make his pupils assimilate the axioms of his theory. He would leave the platform

in the same manner, completely indifferent to audience reactions, favorable or unfavorable.

Trotsky, on the other hand, approached the platform at a slow, heavy, almost solemn pace. No longer an ordinary mortal, he was the leader, the man sure not only of himself, but also of those whom he had captivated by his exceptional talents. The high position and the resounding military victories had wrought in him a metamorphosis, which manifested itself to an astonishing degree in his delivery. I was struck by this change the first time we spoke from the same platform in Soviet Russia.

In Switzerland, as émigrés, we had on various occasions spoken at the same meeting. At that time, neither of us belonged to any of the factions that divided Russian Social Democracy. We were Marxists without qualifications, and the organizations which shared our views would often invite both of us. I vividly remember the solemn commemoration —at Geneva in 1904—of the leader of the German Socialist movement, Lassalle, who was killed in a duel near Geneva in 1864. Trotsky gave a polemical speech to the students and the Polish and Russian emigrants; I addressed in their respective languages the Italian bricklayers in Switzerland, the French watchmakers, and the German-speaking workmen. Some of the listeners' remarks are still in my memory: "But you are going too fast, dear comrades; you are the fastest speakers of the International movement," an old man said.

In Soviet Russia, after his ascendance, Trotsky abandoned his fast delivery and adopted a slow-paced style, pronouncing every word clearly and distinctly. This adaptation was astonishing to his audience, the Russian soldiers, who were peasants for the most part. He wanted to save them any effort of grasping his meaning, he meant his words to become orders the moment they were uttered. Without the listeners' awareness his words reached their conscience and their ears at the same time. Firm and sonorous, his voice seemed to echo the footfall of a marching column, his words

the rhythm of the peasant crowd. At that time I realized how great a speaker he was, and I understood why some compared him with the most famous speakers of the century.

The transformation he had undergone manifested itself, naturally, in other fields as well. He dressed in uniform and saluted in military fashion as if he had done so all his life; ceremonies, which we had always considered silly and conventional, he now seemed to take seriously. I could not help laughing when I saw him mount on horseback to accept or bestow military honors. In other revolutionists, who were antimilitarists by definition, I could observe similar changes: clearly, military power holds a great attraction for even the most rebellious individuals.

It is hard to understand how Lenin, free from respect for formalities, profoundly hostile to every kind of exhibitionism, and—even by admission of his opponents—a man without ambitions, could have collaborated so long and so well with a man of such a contrary disposition and mentality. The answer to this legitimate question contains the answer to many similar questions: Lenin was able to separate his opinion of a person as an individual from his opinion of the same person as an instrument of Bolshevism.

Lenin did not like Trotsky personally. At their first encounter, when Trotsky came to see him in London, Lenin—although sensing the gifts and versatility of his young visitor—felt an aversion toward him because of his excessive self-assurance. Even in his testament Lenin cautions against this trait of Trotsky's, although he recognized his exceptional abilities and merits. During the years of emigration Trotsky had been one of his most dangerous adversaries, for he was the ablest and most brilliant of them. The polemic bouts with Lenin were necessarily tinged, at that time, by personal rancor, acrimony, and hostility.

Trotsky was in the United States when the February Revolution broke out in 1917. His ardent desire to be in Russia, to give himself to the fight, body and soul, was thwarted;

difficulties were posed by the local authorities of those countries which he had to cross to return to Russia, where Lenin already was.

When Trotsky, after fierce struggle, defying authorities and danger, arrived in Petrograd, he was received as a man "displeasing to God and His enemies." The ostracism to which he was subjected was bitter, humiliating, depressing. The Bolsheviks treated him as a traitor and stayed away from him, naturally; the Mensheviks did the same for exactly the same reasons: none of his ex-comrades felt safe from his blazing polemics.

Trotsky, who as a very young man became famous as president of the first Petrograd Soviet and as the victim of persecutions, arrests, and imprisonments, now was alone and cut off from any action. And this had to happen to him, who was so full of energy, of initiative, of revolutionary ardor, of thirst for revenge on the enemy of the working masses. During this rather brief period, I was the only Socialist who kept Trotsky company. Isolated and ostracized, he suffered a great deal.

Taking advantage of the presence in Petrograd of several Russian members of the Zimmerwald Movement, I called a meeting at which we would decide whether or not we of the Zimmerwald Movement should participate in a peace conference in Stockholm announced by the right wing of the Socialist movement (Second International). The majority of the members present was against participation. The Bolsheviks' speeches were hard and intransigent, but the one who attacked the Second International most violently and was firmest in his stand against any contact with the non-Bolsheviks was Trotsky.

I noticed that Trotsky seemed to fear that he might not appear revolutionary enough. Lenin seemed somewhat irritated by his behavior, and I, moved by the constant desire for gaining psychological insights, asked him when we were alone: "Can you explain to me, Vladimir Ilyich, why Trotsky

does not join your party? What is it that separates him from you? Why does he publish his own paper?[1] He seems more Bolshevik than the Bolsheviks . . ."

Lenin replied angrily: "Don't you know? Ambition, ambition, and more ambition." And in his voice was all his aversion toward any manifestation of vanity. Within a short time, however, Lenin not only sponsored Trotsky's admission to the Bolshevik Party, but invested him with unlimited power, entrusting him with positions of highest responsibility.

Aware of the serious difficulties which Russia would have to overcome in order to survive and convinced that Trotsky would be able to cope with every obstacle, Lenin silenced all resentments, factional animosities, and his personal dislike of Trotsky's behavior to put at the service of the Bolshevik regime not only his unusual gifts but also his weaknesses, which Lenin knew how to exploit. This plan proved highly successful. Above and beyond Trotsky's devotion to the cause, his love of the Workers' Republic, his genuine passion and enthusiasm for every manifestation of rebellion of the disinherited masses, he was highly flattered by the honor that came to him from the omnipotent ex-enemy Lenin. He was the neophyte who wanted to outdo in zeal and ardor the Bolsheviks themselves, the neophyte who wanted to be forgiven the many crimes against Bolshevism he had committed in the past—by becoming a greater royalist than the king, by becoming more intransigent, more revolutionary, more Bolshevik than any of them. He avoided everything that held even the remotest possibility of his being taken for a Menshevik.

Despite all this, the Bolsheviks were not less hostile toward him now than they had been before his conversion.

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[1] After having found his bearings, Trotsky tried to unite his political confrères—Marxists not belonging to any faction—in a group, giving them their own paper, directed by him. This initiative did materialize, but it lasted a very short time. Trotsky asked for admission to the Bolshevik Party, thus bringing matters to a head.

Some felt slighted by having to accept him as a leader; others suspected him of not having undergone a complete conversion, of being still heterodox. Still others, and they perhaps were the majority, asserted that Trotsky had joined the Bolsheviks and accepted Lenin's orders because the Bolsheviks had won. Those who thought he had joined the Bolsheviks because they had triumphed were wrong. Trotsky's detractors were guided in their judgment, no doubt, by the ill will they bore him. It must be conceded, however, that the Bolsheviks' triumph fascinated and intoxicated Trotsky.

He no longer had to deal with abstract entities and theories, but saw them transformed into living human beings, full of hope in a better future and sure that the goal was not only attainable but within reach. His magic eloquence shortened the thorny road the masses had to walk. Trotsky, no doubt, would have identified himself also with a defeated revolutionary movement. The atmosphere of victory, however, gave him more élan, stimulated him to new strife, provided him with inner satisfaction as well as prestige, offered continually renewed outlets for his indomitable energy, and opened new areas for the application of his fertile mind. He no longer was, it seemed to him, the hated "counter-revolutionary" Menshevik—he now was the hero of the Revolution that was about to triumph, to immortalize his name in letters of gold in the book of history.

It cannot be said that Lenin remained indifferent to the manifestations of enthusiasm among the people; the heartbeat of the masses in revolt was not foreign to him. He too had tears in his eyes when he heard revolutionary songs sung by countless men and women who had been slaves until yesterday. At times he would join in the singing, but this had an impersonal quality: he did not show emotion or enthusiasm. Although he was the masterbuilder of the events that moved the others, he merely wanted to be one among many.

Although he had joined the Bolshevik Party and government, Trotsky was aware of the shortcomings of the regime and of the misdeeds of the Bolsheviks. This man, who had defied countless obstacles and who had often risked even his life, was extremely weak when he found himself running counter to the opinion of the Party or the masses. It frightened him to be taken for less of a Bolshevik than the others or to be suspected of Menshevik leanings.

At the time when I thought—not mistakenly, perhaps—that one might still influence the attitude of the government or the Party, I went several times to Trotsky to call his attention to actions that were incompatible with Socialist principles. He always said I was right, but at the same time he admitted his incapacity to change the situation: "What do you want me to do, dear Comrade Angelica? You know well how much I am opposed to their abject methods." Yet if Trotsky, who was then at the apex of power, had had the sagacity and the courage to dissociate himself from his Bolshevik colleagues when they used methods he abhorred, the young Republic would have been spared many defeats, moral as well as military. And Trotsky would have been spared that sad end of being killed first morally and then physically. Covered with mud, he was reduced to the most humiliating state of impotence and deprived of every means of defending his honor as a revolutionist.

Trotsky's behavior raised some psychological questions, which induced me to observe him more closely. Is it possible, I asked myself, that a man of his intellectual calibre with a broad and deep education and with the experience he must have drawn from his own life and from all that he had read and learned—is it possible that he should take seriously such relative and passing things as fame, acclaim, and honors? And how could such a man be so sure of himself, of his superiority, of the inalienability of his influence and his authority.

This problem presented itself to me with greater insistence than ever before at our last encounter because of the absolutist and pretentious manner with which Trotsky spoke of the Italian Socialists and because of his opinion of my desire to return to my post as a little fighter for a great cause.

"Please, sit down, dear Comrade Angelica," Trotsky said, when I visited him in Moscow before leaving Russia. (I had gone to see him to expedite an orphan's return to his relatives abroad.) When this question had been settled, Trotsky —impeccable in his uniform, and with the air of one absolutely sure of himself, anxious to irritate, to annoy—said to me: "Last night I put those scoundrels, those Italian comrades of yours, in their place: at a workers' rally I had a motion voted censuring severely the behavior of the Italian Socialist Party."

"This," I interrupted, "is demagogy, pure and simple. Do you think the Russian workers, who do not even understand the workings of their own politics, know what is going on in Italy? The workers voted in favor of the motion because it was you who submitted it. As likely as not they would have voted in favor of another motion if I had submitted it."

"Look here," Trotsky said, with his air of militaristic superiority, "this is the way to deal with your comrades!" With these words he opened the drawer of his desk, took out a revolver and placed it on the table. "If that is your language, one must answer you with this," I said, showing him my umbrella. We were interrupted by a phone call. "Excuse me, dear comrade, I shall be back in a minute."

"Why call me comrade? We are not comrades if you think of using demagogy and violence in our struggle. And surely I am not dear to you to judge from the manner in which you treat my Italian comrades with whom I am in full agreement."

"Is it true," he asked me, when the phone conversation was finished, "that you are leaving Russia? You, who have such talents and so much influence upon the masses, you leave the land of the Revolution? Why do you do it?"

"I do not know whether you will understand, but I shall try to explain it to you," I said, not without sarcasm. "I shall try," Trotsky replied with an ironic smile.

"You see, Lev Davidovich, I am on a razor's edge: another slight move . . . and I shall be a demagogue. I cannot speak today as I did before the new economic policy. Things have changed; I would not be able to speak the truth, therefore I prefer to leave. I have given thousands of speeches, I may have been mistaken more than once, but never have I spoken a word which was not consistent with my convictions."

"If one desires the end," Trotsky objected, "one must also desire the means." I interrupted: "What would you say if Zinoviev were to infest your army with his demagogic methods?"

"If Zinoviev is an accomplished agitator, why not?" I was approaching the door, but he detained me with a friendly gesture. "Reconsider, comrade, do not leave. The government is willing to let you choose your activity. Would you like the post of propaganda commissar, not for Russia alone, but for the whole of Europe?" I knew well what it meant. Title, office, secretary, car, all would have been supplied by the Party apparatus but I would have had no freedom. I made a gesture of denial without even discussing the matter and turned again to the door.

"Listen," Trotsky said, stopping me once more. "I should like to make a proposal. We are going to establish a university for officers of all countries. You would be the director; you understand, how vast a field of activity would be open to you!"

"No use insisting."

"I ask you to reconsider. Tomorrow at 4 P.M. I shall send you one of my aides; he will explain our project to you in detail." With the punctuality Trotsky knew how to impose not only on himself but also on his collaborators, that aide appeared. He put great zeal into the assignment. He went so far as to tell me the amount of paper I would be granted

for my publications. I hardly listened to him and dismissed him with thanks. "I shall give my answer to Lev Davidovich, who has promised to phone me."

Indeed, at 4:30 sharp Trotsky called. He inflicted twenty minutes of torture upon me; there was no end to his sarcasm. "Ah! So you would rather see the Italian monarchic army with Serrati at its head attack our country? You prefer Italy and your Italian comrades? You prefer the bourgeois countries? . . ." We never saw each other again, but we did exchange a few letters.

When Trotsky—humiliated, slandered, abused, and spat on by those who had been his collaborators, disciples, and admirers—was expelled from Russia and had to seek refuge in Mexico while a shameless campaign was being plotted against him, I expressed my solidarity. "Your protest is no surprise to me," he wrote. "I knew you would side with us against this gang of . . ."

"Certainly I am with you," I replied, "but I want to remind you that the detestable methods which are now being used against you have been applied with your approval against Serrati and other revolutionists, whose sincerity, honesty, and devotion to the Socialist cause were known to you."

"Those were other times, when other conditions obtained," Trotsky countered. "Let's not go back to the past, dear Comrade Angelica. Let us not perturb our friendship." This was the last letter I received from him.

Men are usually judged not according to their qualities or defects but rather on the basis of what makes the contact with them pleasant or difficult, and the opinions about Trotsky were often onesided and unjust. Very few, for example, knew of his self-inflicted privations. Had he been willing to avail himself of the privileges to which his position entitled him, he and his family could have lived in much better circumstances. He was misjudged by those who turned to him with petitions or pleas, the validity and urgency of

which he understood without being able to satisfy them. Because of his omnipotent air and his militaristic tone, which colored even his personal relations, it never occurred to those who came to him for help that he might not be able to grant it.

One day a woman came to see me who had offered hospitality to Trotsky when he, under tsarism, had been sought by the police. Now she came to beseech him for help: her pharmacy, the family's only source of income was to be expropriated. She wanted to see him and ask his intervention in her favor. I knew he would be able to do nothing for her, it being a case of law enforcement. To claim exceptional treatment, to make one's influence or power felt, did not occur to any of us who fought with such determination the nepotism of the preceding governments.

Knowing from experience what it means to have to deny when, inside us, is the urge to grant, to mitigate suffering, I wanted to spare Trotsky this torture and went to see him about this matter myself. He confirmed my assumption: his intercession was impossible. In our talk we recalled the sad cases of those in whose behalf we should have liked to intervene and the anguish we had felt at not being able to do so. "Just think," Trotsky said to me, "for two years now my father has been wanting to see me, but he has no shoes and I cannot get them for him. With so many people around who are without shoes, how could I request shoes for my father?"

With regard to himself he did not act differently. He ate inadequately, although he suffered from a stomach disorder. If he was able to endure the burden and strain of his demanding position, it was due, in part, to the fact that during his travels he ate with the general staff. For him, the observance of every Soviet ordinance was a matter of principle, a question of honor. He was the first to observe the discipline he taught others, and his private conduct was never in contradiction with his position as the leader of a revolutionary

army. In the most dangerous and difficult moments, in immediate proximity of the enemy, he would march at the head of the army although he had been advised, in the interest of the republic, not to risk his life.

In October 1919 the war between White and Red Russia had come to a turning point: White Russia seemed to have won. 25,000 men, well armed, well fed, and headed by the notorious General Kornilov were at the gates of Petrograd. The defenders, ill clad, ill fed, disorganized, and discouraged would not be able—it seemed—to resist. The signs of inevitable defeat were everywhere.

Lenin, more deeply aware than the others of the meaning of irreparable defeat the loss of the Red capital held, asked of Trotsky what no ruler under similar circumstances could have demanded of a military leader. In Siberia and eastern Russia the attacks of a well-equipped army under Kolchak's command had to be sustained; Denikin had established himself in Central Russia, and the British army was supplied with everything necessary to defeat a much stronger and better-equipped enemy than the Red Army was at that time.

But Lenin's order was: "Petrograd must be defended to the last drop of blood! Every street, every house in it must be defended, if necessary!" As always, Trotsky gave himself body and soul to the reorganization and the moral preparation of the troops at his disposal for the defense of Petrograd. As he went on in his arduous task it became evident that the sparse ranks of his army needed replenishing. Mobilization and more mobilization! To that end the young communists called a meeting in Moscow. Trotsky, Alexandra Kollontai, and I were to speak.

When the situation at the gates of Petrograd had become extremely grave and every effort to save the city seemed doomed, Trotsky decided to head the troops himself and to lead them to a duel of unequal arms. This decision, however, he kept to himself. That evening death was not mentioned, although it was before everyone's eyes—the effect of

Trotsky's powerful rhetoric, the sense of tragedy created by his words. That evening he did not stamp out his words: he spoke solemnly, without affectation. It seemed to me that if death had entered the hall that very moment to choose his victims, every man in that immense crowd would have been vying for the honor. Never before or since did I hear Trotsky speak as on that evening.

Before it came to Lenin's mind that Trotsky would be the man—the only one, in fact—who could bring Russia to such a state of preparedness as to be able to defend herself, he had treated him with unveiled hostility. But as soon as it occurred to Lenin to make use of him in the interest of Bolshevism, he appointed him to the highest office and changed his public and private attitude toward him. At that time Trotsky was for him the irreplaceable Bolshevik, unequaled in his tireless, manifold activity and his boundless devotion to the cause.

When, however, exploiting a disagreement on the trade union question, Trotsky's adversaries—instigated and guided by Zinoviev and Stalin, who were envious of Trotsky's fame —unleashed a slander campaign against him, digging up his anti-Bolshevik past, and exposing him as an opportunist and dangerous Menshevik, Lenin kept silent. Why did Lenin not stop those base attacks on a man whose merits he knew and appreciated more than anyone else? He feared, no doubt, that after the country's return to more or less normal conditions, Trotsky might show some deviation from "orthodox Bolshevism" and, given his prestige and his exceptional gifts, facilitate the infiltration of the Menshevik poison.

In his defense against the vile attack, Trotsky unfortunately descended to the level of his opponents. He did not use the challenge as an occasion to clarify systems, principles, and methods, and he showed only one concern: to prove that he was a Bolshevik. This decision was to be fatal for him. It stripped his name of the revolutionist's halo and of the gratitude that were his due.

Toward the end of his life Lenin once more changed his attitude toward Trotsky. His great concern for the future of Soviet Russia determined his choice of Trotsky—the latter's deviations notwithstanding—as the only man capable and worthy of carrying on after Lenin's death the work he had initiated. But it was too late. Paralysis deprived Lenin of every possibility of influencing men and events; and Trotsky was already submerged in a mire of infamy and slander.

XI

Lenin and Dictatorship

It must be conceded that without Lenin there would have been no Stalin, even if Stalin was only a monstrous caricature of the founder of Bolshevism. From the very beginning of his career as a revolutionist Stalin embraced Lenin's theory and methods; the repulsive traits he revealed as a dictator were developed under Lenin's regime. The apparatus[1] devised by Lenin made it possible for individuals like Stalin to develop their innate wickedness. Given his intellectual insignificance and lack of initiative, Stalin could not have been an innovator like Lenin. Bolshevism as doctrine and as antithesis to socialism was entirely Lenin's creation.

Lenin—let me reiterate—was a man of incomparable courage. Even in his youth he defied doctrines, theories, and traditions: it was a battle of one against all. When he felt impelled to act he did so alone, antagonized by his collaborators, derided, threatened, persecuted, and slandered. He even acted contrary to Marx's theory that a social revolution presupposes a certain level of technical and industrial development and a corresponding political maturity of the working classes. This condition did not obtain in Russia, and Lenin, although he realized its significance, wanted men and environment to skip a phase in the development. Nature made him pay dearly.

Stalin only applied Lenin's maxim, "The end justifies the means," and considered himself a priori absolved of his

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[1] "It was not Stalin who created the apparatus," Trotsky wrote, "but the apparatus created Stalin."

crimes. His contribution to the moral deterioration of the Soviet regime was merely quantitative. He introduced no new element, but multiplied the misdeeds and annihilated by his example the last remnants of scruple that still lingered in Russia. He made arbitrary rule, terrorism, vulgar careerism, and the secret accusation method triumph. Under Stalin the brutalization of the masses assumed frightening proportions. Yet he merely hastened the morale débacle of the regime, using the methods introduced by Lenin.

Stalin entered history as a personification of violence and terror. And this characterization is justified. But we must not forget that even in the spreading of terror he was Lenin's disciple. The Stalin pseudotrials of the old-guard Bolsheviks, which aroused protest and hatred all over the world, had their prototypes in the trials—staged during Lenin's regime in 1922 and after—of revolutionary Socialists and Russian noncommunist technical experts who were made responsible for economic deficiencies.

As to the abolition of freedom of the press, Lenin considered it not simply a necessary evil but a valuable weapon in the ideological battle. He wrote in 1921: ". . . Freedom of the press in the Soviet Republic, which is surrounded by bourgeois enemies, is tantamount to political freedom for the bourgeoisie and its devoted servants: Mensheviks and revolutionary Socialists. It cannot be denied that the bourgeoisie all over the world is still much stronger than we are. To hand it yet another weapon, such as political freedom, which includes freedom of the press—center and basis of any political organization—means to help the enemy of the working class. We do not intend to commit suicide and therefore we shall not allow freedom of the press. We do not intend to lend the world bourgeoisie a helping hand."

It was Lenin who abolished the right to criticism even within the Party, a right claimed by the "Workers' opposition" and the majority of the Party members at the beginning of the Bolshevik regime. In dealing with this claim Lenin was

particularly severe and intransigent. The smallest transgression of his iron discipline entailed drastic punishment.

Of terrorism, Lenin wrote: "We never declared ourselves contrary to terrorism, nor could we ever do so. It is a weapon which, under certain circumstances, is not only useful, but even indispensable. We are far from denying the usefulness of single acts of terrorism, but we feel impelled to warn against an infatuation with terrorism, against its exclusive use in battle . . ."

And in 1916, when the Austrian prime minister was murdered, he wrote: "As to our view of that murder, we remain of the opinion, confirmed by decades of experience, that political murder is not a *rational* means. Acts of individual terrorism are useful only in connection with revolutionary mass movements."

In the same letter Lenin attacked the Social Democratic papers that had censured Adler's act on moral grounds. These theoretical and polemical statements were followed after Lenin's rise to power by others which were of much greater importance because of their actual, irrevocable consequences. Less than a year after the Revolution Lenin wrote to Zinoviev, then president of the Petrograd Soviet: "Only today has it come to our knowledge that the workers of Petrograd wanted to react to the killing of Volodarsky with mass terrorism and that you, members of the Executive, have stopped the action. I protest most vigorously against this procedure. In government resolutions we threaten to resort to mass terrorism, but when it comes to actions, we block the revolutionary initiative of the workers, who are absolutely right."

In a first draft for a supplement to the civil law code, which Lenin sent in 1922 to the commissar for Justice, Kurski, he stated that it was necessary to explain to the people the nature and the justification of terrorism and added: "Abolishing terrorism is out of the question. If we promised that, we would deceive ourselves and others; instead, we must openly prove its legitimacy."

During the fierce fight against Kerensky, the Bolsheviks reproached him for having introduced capital punishment for deserters. But after the Bolsheviks had come to power and some of the leaders wanted to abolish capital punishment, Lenin opposed the move: "This would be a serious mistake, an unpardonable weakness . . . If you believe that we can win without terrorism, you are under a delusion."

Lenin's views on dictatorship were substantiated by the regime he introduced in Russia. "One cannot be a true revolutionist without preparing for dictatorship," he would say. Or: "Dictatorship is the most important point in class struggle." And: "Dictatorship is a word charged with blood and ruthlessness, it spells implacable fight between two classes, two worlds, two epochs on a worldwide scale."

Lenin sustained the ineluctability of dictatorship at a time when the mere thought of his becoming a dictator would have seemed folly. Thus, in a polemic with Russian liberals he wrote in 1906: "Dictatorship—may this be understood once and for all—means unlimited power, based not on law but on force." And in 1920: "Those who have not understood that no revolutionary class can dispense with dictatorship to achieve victory have understood nothing of the history of revolution or refuse to understand . . . To be a militant revolutionist means to plan for dictatorship."

It is highly significant that not even the peasants, who were hit hardest by his decrees and coercive methods, held any rancor for Lenin personally. They would get angry with him and curse him as head of the government, but for the man Lenin they always felt tenderness and indulgence. They sensed that he was one of them, that he was moved by filial love for Russia and her martyred people.

Lenin had the courage to say unpleasant things and to draw attention to the most difficult aspects of a problem without fear of losing what he had gained. He wrote in 1919 —two years after his rise to power—to the Hungarian workers on the subject of dictatorship: "The essence of the dic-

tatorship of the proletariat does not consist in violence alone, but in the discipline and organization of the avant-garde of the workers, that is, the proletariat. The aim is to create socialism, to obliterate class distinctions and to put an end to man's exploitation of man. This end cannot be achieved overnight; the transition from capitalism to socialism requires considerable time." And in the same missive Lenin continues: "Only an exploited class which is united, educated, and linked by decades of economic and political struggle with capitalism is capable of abolishing class distinctions through dictatorship. Only a class tempered by the experience of industrial culture and capable of enduring the great sacrifices history demands of those who break with the past will conquer the future."

Lenin never ceased asserting that the victory of the world proletariat was near, yet he always reminded the people that the victory would cost dearly. On the eve of the peace treaty of Brest Litovsk, he told the Bolsheviks who were opposed: "The road to Revolution is not covered with roses. We shall walk in mud up to our knees, if necessary, to reach the communist goal, to achieve victory!"

How can it be explained that, despite all this evidence, public opinion inside and outside the workers' movement has drawn a line between Lenin and Stalin? And how is it that some vile action in Russia often elicits the question: "What would Lenin have said about it?"

The very asking of this question reveals the thinker's hope that Lenin would have disapproved. For there was unanimity about the honesty of Lenin's intentions and his utter unselfishness. When his enemies called him a fanatic, an enemy of freedom, they had to grant him unselfish motives. This unselfishness and austerity transmitted itself also to the executors of his designs, even when they used illicit methods.

Stalin's influence on those who surrounded him and carried out his orders was naturally quite different. It was no longer the cause that was to be served, but ambition, rancor,

revenge, thirst for power, a parvenu's megalomania, and a satrap's sadism.

This enormous difference in the characters of the two men is reflected in their treatment of Trotsky. Lenin had no liking for Trotsky and held a grudge against him on the political level. However, when he realized that he would be an asset to the Bolshevik cause, he assigned him to the highest posts. In his implacable hatred for Trotsky, Stalin removed him from all his offices, resorted to physical violence to expel him from the country and hired an assassin to murder him. Stalin was goaded by envy for Trotsky's immeasurable superiority. He had to get rid of him, even if it meant an irreparable loss for Russia and the revolutionary movement of the world. Having elevated individual arbitrary rule to system and created a pedestal for himself, Stalin aroused the most abject demonstrations of servilism and hypocrisy, eliciting hostility and contempt.

Outside Russia, the difference between the two regimes was deeply marked and gave rise to serious consequences. At a time when the separation from official communism was still an isolated phenomenon which implied crises of conscience, the new heretics tried to persuade themselves and others that their separation coincided with a turn in Bolshevik politics. This alibi was to placate those who reproached them with having waited too long. And when, after Stalin's death, his accomplices tried to make him the scapegoat for all the errors and horrors of which the regime and they themselves might be accused, they resorted once more to the artificial dichotomy between Leninism and Stalinism.

XII

Ethics and Communism

Ethics is not abstract, and those who want to present it in such a manner defile its character and meaning. The concept and norms of ethics change as the fundamental conditions of society change. We cannot conceive of a form of human coexistence which is not guided by that more or less tacit contract constituting its moral code. It regulates the relations among individuals and the individuals' relations with society. The nonobservance of its norms entails the destruction of the bases of coexistence.

If the falsifiers of socialism, who call ethics a "bourgeois prejudice," arouse contempt and repugnance, their ignorant victims elicit sympathy and pity. The Socialists are against—and how could it be otherwise—all that is contradictory, unjust, and hypocritical in the accepted ethics of today, but they are not opposed to ethics as such. The conviction that only a radical change in the legal and economic structure can give society a truly moral foundation is the wellspring of their endeavors toward social change. Only those who are ignorant of the most elementary facts and aims of socialism can believe that it implies the abolition of all moral values. On the contrary! The profound ethical transformations we are trying to attain must be preceded by a radical change in the social structure, and we must, from this moment, adhere in our personal conduct to those ethical norms that are derived from our Socialist convictions.

In creating a cynical dichotomy between words and deeds, between political and personal life, the Bolsheviks have

assumed an enormous responsibility and have committed an unpardonable crime by lowering even further the moral level of society. Lenin's tragic error consisted in having used and suggested methods which could not fail to produce deleterious effects on the movement to which he dedicated his entire life. This mistake assumes even vaster proportions if one considers the fact that he committed errors (and spread horror) in good faith while others, following his lead, were prompted by inadmissible motives. The eminent Marxist, Karl Kautsky, whom Lenin considered his teacher and used to quote as highest authority, before his rise to power, wrote: "From its very inception, the Bolshevik regime was based on falsehood and on the enslavement of the proletariat, on the principle, that is, that the conquest and the preservation of power justify all means. This principle will bring disaster to every party that adopts it. It will corrupt some, and others, who do not oppose them, will become paralyzed. A party that aims at the emancipation of the proletariat has no right to use means which disorient and demoralize the workers."

When those who under tsarism had fought against infringement upon liberty began themselves to violate freedom, when independent thinkers were persecuted by the Bolshevik government and the prisons were filled with men and women the Russian people considered innocent, the suspicion rose—it was to become certainty later—that nothing had changed and things were as before, and even worse. When the man in the street found that the revolutionary government showed the same hateful traits which had made him fight the preceding one, his faith in the Bolshevik program was shaken. His readiness to make more sacrifices, suffer more privations, and defend that fatherland, which had not fulfilled its promises, vanished.

If in normal conditions any privilege or ostentation is an insult to poverty, this insult becomes a burning outrage in

times of general scarcity. Those who know the Russian people, its inexhaustible patience, its capacity for resignation, its acceptance of an unthinkably low level of life have no difficulty in persuading themselves that material privations alone have not been the cause for its hostility toward the Bolshevik government. The people were antagonized by the political persecutions, the spying, the abuse of authority, the sentencing of innocents, the nepotism, and the blatant inequality.

The common man, the peasant in particular, cannot be persuaded of the value of a program through reading or propaganda. His skepticism can be overcome only by concrete examples. The workers and peasants had enough common sense to understand that the sufferings and privations of the postwar period could not be abolished or relieved through the good will and heroic efforts of the old-guard Bolsheviks. They could understand that the governing body and the armed forces were entitled to certain privileges if they were to fulfill the task devolved upon them by the Revolution. But these same people rebelled—even if only in their consciences—against the execrable differentiation in retribution and living conditions in postwar Russia. Those masses had been suffering too long from the lies and hypocrisies of their masters and their priests not to be discouraged and disgusted at seeing them practiced again by those who had denounced them before.

Lenin was an implacable enemy of all forms of communist vanity. He would mercilessly ridicule anyone affected by it, and even coined a special word: *comchvanstvo*, derived from *com* ("communist") *chvanstvo* ("boastfulness"). Those who believed that their Party membership or their position in some government office gave them the right to hold forth on complex problems suffered from communist boastfulness, according to Lenin. "Nothing but pompous arrogance," Lenin would say.

Lenin could be a merciless realist while living in a world of abstractions. With his rise to power his most salient characteristic was revealed: his ability to turn any event or situation into an asset for Bolshevism. The field of ethics was no exception. This is Lenin's definition of the relation between ethics and communism:

"Is there a communist ethics? Of course, there is. We are often represented as not having an ethics of our own, and the bourgeoisie frequently accuses us of rejecting any ethical code. This is an attempt at confusing the workers and the peasants." And he added: ". . . Our ethics is entirely subordinated to the class struggle. Ethics is that which serves to destroy a society based on the exploitation of man. It is the bond uniting all workers with the proletariat that is building a new society, based on communist principles."

If we keep this definition in mind, we can easily understand why certain actions of Lenin's were considered immoral by others, although they did not appear so to him. "The workers," Lenin said in this connection, "perceive with surprising accuracy the distinction between honest, dedicated communists and those who arouse disgust among the people who are toiling for a piece of bread, who enjoy no privileges, and who are barred from positions of authority."

These words of Lenin's are sufficient to brand those cynics who, setting themselves up as his disciples, go about shouting that ethics is a bourgeois concept and that revolutionists—namely communists in power—may dispense with any ethical motivation of their actions.[1]

In 1921, when the Soviet regime was getting more firmly established, Lenin saw that there was much abuse of power and at the tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party he ordered a purge (later, the term and the concept as well

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[1] Lenin also listed ex-Mensheviks among the people to be removed from the Russian Communist Party. The reason for this was their political flexibility, which he termed opportunism, adding, however, that not all forms of flexibility can be called opportunism.

were to be misused by his successors). At that time 170,000, or 25 per cent, of the party members were expelled. Lenin wanted to expel over 200,000. "And I shall never tire of saying," Lenin added, "that demagogues are the greatest enemies of the working class." Speaking of the communists' tasks, he said: "Our activity and our procedures must be open for the entire population to see, so that they may say: 'Yes, this is better than the old regime . . .' Our party, which is small in comparison with the entire population, aims at changing everything in such a way that the workers will say: 'It is not you who are praising yourselves, it is we who are praising you, we are telling you that you have obtained such results that no one in his right mind will want to go back.' But we have not yet reached that goal," Lenin said in 1921.

The precursors of the Russian Revolution were men and women of great, indomitable faith and dedication. But there were also other heroic builders of the Revolution. I am not speaking here of the soldiers, the protagonists of the miraculous defense against a coalition of governments and powerful armies, but of the voluntary defenders of their fatherland, which they believed to be Socialist and which they wished to pass on to future generations. Much has been said and written of the courage of the regular soldier, but what about the nameless man without military rank who obeys the dictates of his conscience, not orders from above? I speak of those peasants in the Soviet Republic who, after their return from the war, exhausted and famished, put themselves at the disposal of the local Soviets. And I am speaking too of the "little commissars" scattered over the immense country in chaotic conditions with the assignment to establish and defend order and the equitable distribution of the scarce rations. Those anonymous little commissars, although hungry themselves, resisted all temptations and saved postwar Russia; their example won friends for the new regime.

In the fall of 1918 I was clamorously expelled from Switzerland: the word had been spread that I had brought with me

from Moscow 10,000,000 rubles to organize revolts in Switzerland and Italy. The allegation was too absurd for the Swiss government to cite it as justification for the expulsion. The Allies' and Italy's injunction to order me out of the country was one of the reasons stated for my expulsion. At the same time, the entire staff of the Soviet Embassy was expelled. Our return voyage lasted eighteen days. Unable to take any luggage, I had to provide myself with a coat. At that time money was not circulating in the Soviet Republic. There were merely depots of goods distributed to those whose function in society warranted the release. When I pointed out the coat I had chosen, the attendant goodnaturedly objected: "Comrade Balabanoff, why take a sleazy one? Do you want to leave the furs to the bourgeoisie, in case the old regime should come back? You are working for us, you have lived in exile, you have suffered . . . now, you have won . . . why don't you take what is your due?"

Lenin's ethical behavior seemed contradictory, even incomprehensible. Yet, if we keep in mind the psychological motivations, a complementary quality of his actions is revealed. It may seem contradictory, for example, that while fighting for the inviolability of the life and dignity of all human beings, Lenin was responsible for the enactment of capital punishment and, directly or indirectly, for the extermination of many human lives. The persecutions and burning humiliations the Bolshevik government inflicted upon countless people appear no less incompatible. More surprising still is the fact—as we have seen above—that Lenin expected absolute honesty and unselfish dedication from the communists in the pursuit of their civic duties, while, at the same time, he not only tolerated but exacted from those same communists the use of dishonest means when they had to deal with political adversaries—that is, people who were not Bolsheviks and could not be made into Bolsheviks.

Lenin was far from hiding or glossing over this mode of thought and action; he emphasized it and imposed it on his

collaborators. Every statement or action of his is made with the mental reservation: ". . . to serve Bolshevism." From his youth on, Lenin was convinced that most of human suffering and of moral, legal, and social deficiencies which torment and degrade humanity were caused by class distinctions. He was also convinced that class struggle alone—or, in his conception, the dictatorship of the proletariat—could put an end to exploiters and exploited and create a society of free and equal men. He gave himself entirely to the attainment of this end and he used every means in his power to achieve it.

Given this mode of reasoning, Lenin never had to compromise with his conscience. He acted like a physician whose guiding thought is the good of the patient. Did he not realize that the tactics he initiated were the major coefficient in the creation of conditions he censured so severely? Was it possible that he, who was in the habit of tracing events to their causes, who was a past master in logic and dialectic, did not see the psychic and moral deformation of the people guided by the fatal maxim: "The end justifies the means?"

Departure from the U.S.S.R.

If all the details of my last meeting with Lenin have remained vividly in my memory, it is due not so much to the impression I received then and there as to the reflections and conclusions that followed. As I recall Lenin's words and the tone of his voice my conviction is confirmed that—contrary to appearances and public opinion—he was deeply troubled by the heritage he would bequeath his successors and by the deficiency of the human material that was to carry on his work. The growing awareness of this situation was the tragic element in his life.

Having decided to leave Russia and the communist movement I went to Lenin, not merely to take leave but to lend official character to my definite break with Bolshevik Russia.

I returned all the documents and credentials issued to me by the government and asked for a simple identification paper.

"What?" Lenin said, "an identification paper? You are better known than I!" Lenin referred to an episode at the Kremlin entrance. As he accompanied me one evening, he was stopped by a guard and asked to show his identification papers, while I, with a smile of recognition, was allowed to proceed without formality.

"But if you so desire, I shall give it to you with all my heart," Lenin added. This wording, which in Russian carries the meaning of warm, personal friendship, surprised me; Lenin was usually cool and reserved. My surprise became astonishment when I read the travel paper Lenin had made out for me.

"The President of the People's Commissars of the Socialist Soviet Republics asks all institutions and individuals to give Comrade Angelica Balabanoff every assistance required" ("every assistance" was underlined). Moreover, I was introduced as an old Party member and as the most eminent militant representative of the Communist International. That "most eminent militant representative" jarred with my decision to leave the movement and the country because of the incompatibility of my principles and methods with those of the man who had issued the paper.

Lenin noticed that I was disturbed. "You are difficult to please, Comrade Balabanoff," he said. "If we had not allowed you to leave, you would have been dissatisfied. But now that we give you authorization, you are dissatisfied all the same. What can I do to please you?"

"Nothing," I replied. "Any other comrade would have given ten years of his life for a statement like the one you have just issued. To me, it makes little difference. If you think I have done good work, I have merely done my duty; if you think I have done better than others, again, I have done nothing more than my duty. You cannot give me what

I desire. I would like to have the moral and political possibility to remain in the country of the Revolution. But . . ."

"Why are you leaving then, why don't you stay?"

"You know . . . perhaps Russia does not need people like me . . ."

"She needs them, but she does not have them," Lenin said in a sad, grave voice. These were the last words I heard him say.

The day of my departure—I had been away from home all day to settle various matters—I learned on my return that Lenin had phoned three times. I guessed that he wanted to offer me money and since I did not wish to accept, I phoned his secretary while he was out.

"Vladimir Ilyich," the secretary said, "wanted to know if you needed anything. He wanted to make your travel as comfortable as possible."

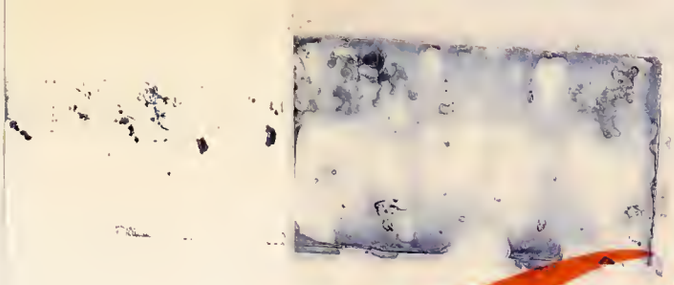
"Thank Comrade Lenin for me and tell him that I have made the necessary arrangements. I shall need nothing. Give him my greetings." I went abroad in a special railroad carriage, escorted by a government official.

This last encounter with Lenin comes often to my mind and his words: "She needs them, but she does not have them," ring in my ears. If, at the time, I had been able to perceive fully the tragic meaning of these words, I would have stayed, not because I believed I could change the situation, but to show Lenin my solidarity and comprehension.

If I had remained, I would have condemned myself to the most cruel torture, unending moral torture, compared with which physical death holds little terror. An endless chain of suffering would have been my share; I would have been considered an accomplice in the crimes against humanity, a traitor to socialism. I could not have faced those to whom I had implicitly pledged loyalty by becoming a Socialist. Such moral torture was not unknown to me. I had experienced it already during the Bolshevik slander campaign against the Italian Socialist Party.

Had I stayed in Soviet Russia, none of my statements, protests, and resignations would ever have reached the public. In time, as Russia became a military power with imperialistic aims, the situation would have become more serious. I would have been compelled to live like one of them, surrounded by flatterers and enjoying privileges of all sorts, deserving the curses of the countless victims. To endorse all this by my presence would have been the worst punishment, worse than physical suffering and death. It gives me immense joy to be able to appear as I am, with clear conscience, it is a piece of luck for which I envy myself.

The Lenin of that last encounter is always before my mind, and this vision keeps me from expressing a final judgment about him. His apprehensions and his titanic efforts to avert disaster seemed all too clear to me then, and the memories are vivid. . . .



Angelica Balabanoff was born in Tschernigoff, Russia, and received her doctorate from the Université Nouvelle in Brussels. Her many books include "Memorie di una socialista," which has been translated into Swedish, Norwegian, Yiddish, and Spanish. She has also written for socialist newspapers in Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Norway, and the United States. She now resides in Rome.

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