

NIKOLAI LENIN

One of the last photographs taken of the leader of the Bolshevist revolution and head of the Russian Soviet Government from November, 1917, until his death on Jan. 21, 1924, at the age of 53 years. His real name was Vladimir Ilyitch Ulianov

THE PASSING OF LENIN

Conflicting estimates of the character, career and historical importance of the man who led the greatest social revolution of the present age

I. FANATIC AND ANTI-SOCIAL EXTREMIST

By PITIRIM SOROKINE*

TWO months ago, very soon after my arrival in this country, at a dinner party attended by some very prominent American scientists and scholars, a great many questions concerning Russia were put to me. Among them was the question concerning the condition of Lenin. "Lenin's case is hopeless and he may die any moment. The longest he may live is one or two years," was my answer. "Why? The newspapers say that his health is improving and that he soon will be able to resume his political activity." I smiled and said: "A man who is in the last stage of progressive paralysis, who for more than two years has been unable to write, speak or move—such a man may return only to the earth which produced us all."

When the newspapers informed us of the death of Lenin, one of those present at that dinner reminded me of my statement. I made this "prophecy" on account of the characteristics of Lenin's illness, privately given me in Moscow, in 1922, by two of the most eminent specialists in medicine who had been invited to treat him. Whether Lenin was a victim of the dread disease which they suspected, or of some other form of progressive paralysis, his helpless condition was known not only by the Communists, but by a great many Russians.

The acute stage of Lenin's illness began at the end of 1921. At one of the conferences at that time his speech was so confused and illogical that his companions were obliged to interrupt him and to remove him in the middle of his speech. Later, two or three of his alleged speeches at the meetings of the metallurgical workers and other meetings were pub-

lished in the Bolshevik newspapers, but we knew that he did not attend these meetings and that his speeches had been written by other Communists and read as though they were Lenin's speeches.

From this time on a rumor spread among the Russian people that Lenin had gone mad, that he was running to and fro in the Kremlin, with his hands pressed to his head, and crying: "Great God! What have I done with Russia and with the Russian people!" Soon after the event above recorded he was taken from Moscow to Gorky, the nationalized estate of a Russian manufacturer, S. Morosov, situated near Moscow. A very high wall was built around the house and an idyllic and peaceful environment of flower beds, kitchen gardens, dogs, goats, birds and beehives was created for this peaceless man. The new wall hid Lenin from the world and the world from him. His real history was finished. Here this half-idiotic man, who could neither speak nor write, nor even understand anything, except for a very few moments during a period of comparative improvement, spent his last two years in a hopeless and helpless condition. "God

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himself is punishing him." In this way the best elements of the Russian people understood his condition during his last years. Now this agony is finished. It was an agony which was symbolic and significant.

LENIN'S SINISTER PERSONALITY

What kind of a human being was Lenin? I have no doubt that there are a great many people of the same type as Lenin who worship him as a god or a "savior of mankind." It is clear that many naïve and stupid men, judging from the sonorous words of eulogy pronounced at his death, consider him to have been the greatest positive hero of his time. I am sure, also, that among future historians there will be some "wise" scholars who, speaking in the terms of Taine, "will make out of this crocodile a divinity."

Let us put aside all these fantastic conceptions and try to analyze Lenin from a more prosaic but a more scientific point of view. From the biological and psychiatric aspect his nature is clear. Mania grandiosa, optimism despite the most terrible conditions prevailing among the Russian people during the years of his rule, obsession by belief in the imminence of a world revolution, incapacity to understand the real results of his actions—these traits are the characteristics of a progressive paralytic in the last stages of this illness. This means that Lenin from the time of his return to Russia was an ill man.

Look at Lenin's face. Is it not a face which might have been taken from the album of the "inborn criminals" of Lombroso? Extreme cruelty, expressing itself in pitiless massacres, in relentless resolution to destroy all the world for his own personal reasons, is stamped upon these sinister features. Lenin's complete absence of all moral, religious and social principles, his absolute cynicism beautified with sonorous phrases about "bourgeois prejudices," and so forth, betray the characteristic stigmata of an anti-social human being. His wild energy in destruction, his practice of "direct action," his fanatic efficiency in the spreading of hatred and his complete incapacity to follow any creative activity are further exemplifications of Lenin's anti-social and dangerous propensities.

Study Lenin's works. In his first book, "The Development of Capitalism in Russia," as well as in his latest pamphlets and articles, we find only dull, narrow and unoriginal repetitions of two or three of the principal ideas of Marx, followed by much rude scolding of his opponents. One-sidedness, inability to grasp the essential features of a given situation, the betrayal of intense bitterness and hatred—such are the principal features of his books and articles. These characteristics were especially clear in his last speeches and articles. I remember two articles written by him against me in 1921, published in the Pravda and in a magazine called "Under the Standard of Marxism" (No. 3). In these articles Lenin denounced me as an "ideologist of reaction," as a "servant of the clergy," as a "defender of slavery," as "leader of all reactionary intelligentsia and of the counter-revolutionary peasants," and so on.

His own and his followers' egotistical nature was very clearly expressed by the statement made by Bukharin to one of my friends in 1921: "We achieved our purpose. We entered history and left our trace on it. All other things are not important." But Lenin's alleged devotion to the interests of the working classes, his alleged desire to liberate them, his alleged high ideals—how can all that be reconciled with the true nature of this fanatic visionary? Any serious student of human nature, however, can easily explain this contradiction. All these flamboyant "speech reactions" and the mad "super-idealism" expressed in them are nothing but "beautifying veils" with which this type of man usually disguises his subconscious primitive animal impulses and betrays himself as well as other people. In such types of so-called super-idealists the most dangerous anti-social extremists are latent.

In normal times such men are not very dangerous and cannot gain any serious influence. In the pathological epochs of revolution, however, men of this type rise to the apex of the social pyramid and become the leaders of the disorganization and destruction of all social life. This explains why Lenin, with his pronounced tendencies toward ruthless repression and bloodshed, became the hero of the second

period of the revolution in Russia and why the Russian revolutionaries chose as their leader a physically ill and mentally unbalanced man. The results of the activities of Lenin and his companions completely confirm this interpretation. Destruction of all economic life of Russia, superhuman sufferings of the people, mental and moral bankruptcy, complete neglect of the interests of the people, especially of the workers and peasants, their despoilment of all political rights, and bloodshed—endless bloodshed—such are the objective results of this “devotion to the interests of the people” and such are the achievements of this “savior of humanity.” This valuation sounds severe, but it is true.

SOVIET GOVERNMENT DOOMED

What will be the effect of Lenin's death on the stability of the Soviet Republic? All evidences indicate that it will accelerate an already inevitable débâcle. Lenin's death occurred at a very critical moment. I refer not only to the friction which is going on within the Communist Party, but to the general situation of Russia at the present time. When asked my opinion of the stability of the Soviet Government, I replied: “It may fall any moment, but probably it will agonize for some time; scarcely longer than two or three years.” This statement may appear paradoxical at this moment when the Labor Government of Great Britain has actually recognized the Soviet Government, when other Governments are preparing to do so, and when we are told that the “Soviet Government is stronger than it has ever been.” My view is based on the following considerations:

1. Ninety-five to ninety-nine per cent. of the Russian population hates the present Government more intensely than it hated that of the old régime.

2. Economic conditions imperatively demand that the Bolsheviki give necessary concessions in the sphere of political life and juridical guarantees. If they decline to do this the economic crisis will bring about the overthrow of the Soviet régime. If the Communists choose the first alternative they will be beaten in the first real election that occurs, and this will lead to

the complete defeat of the Communist Party.

3. The Russian population is gathering its forces after the exhaustion produced by the World War, by revolution, famine and disease. It cannot now be commanded as it was commanded from 1918 to 1922.

4. The objective results of the revolution, which are now quite clear, are essentially inimical to the Communist Government. The unprecedented growth of religion, the feeling of nationalism, the deep animosity to communism and socialism, the approval of the ownership of private property, and many other developments of national thought, cannot be reconciled with the principles on which the Soviet Government is based.

5. The Soviet Government during the last years has spent all the nation's wealth—all the gold of the State funds, about 2,000,000,000 gold rubles, and all private and church wealth. Now it is poor. It can get money for its huge expenses only by robbing the peasantry by pitiless taxes and duties. This policy is increasing the animosity of the peasants to the Soviet régime.

6. More than half the Bolshevik governmental machine is composed of the old Czarist bureaucrats, Generals, officials and autocrats. These “radishes,” as they have come to be known in Russia, because they are red outside and white within, are awaiting the first happy occasion to dismiss the present rulers.

7. The “Red” Army is in reality “white” in sympathies. It is now a national Russian army, with the same feelings toward the Government as that which animates the peasantry.

8. The Communist Party represents now the “river ice” in the Spring. It is split, not into two or three factions, but into many. Its leaders are physically exhausted. Some of them are sick men. Trotsky is reported to be afflicted with cancer and, after inner conflicts with other leaders, to have gone into retirement. The party has lost its previous wild energy, mad enthusiasm and feverish hopes to create a new order of society. Like Lenin, it is entering into the last stage of its “progressive paralysis.” A part of its members are now good “bourgeois,” who try to main-

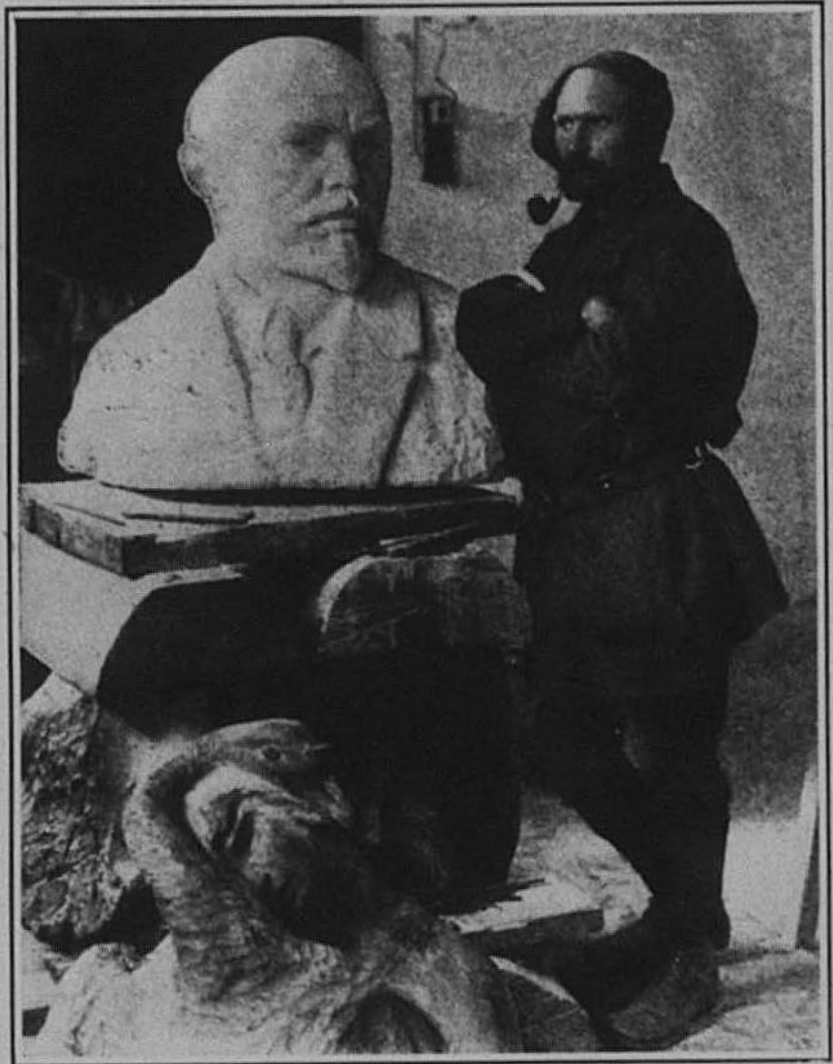
tain relations with the old groups and who with them may yet demolish their "Left" comrades. Another part is demanding the return to the "militaristic communism" of 1918-20, which is impossible. A third part demands the real democratization of the political system, which can lead only to the end of the Communist Government. There is, lastly, a manoeuvring "Centre" ruling Russia now. This state of degeneration and disintegration cannot exist a very long time.

LENIN'S DEATH BOUND TO HASTEN FALL

The death of Lenin is one of the factors that will reinforce and accelerate these processes. Its effect will not be immediately perceptible, but its influence will ultimately be very important. Lenin was the only leader who had exclu-

sive authority among the members of the Communist Party. His existence prevented deep and sharp friction among them. He was the force that kept them together and did not permit them to devour one another.

On the other hand, Lenin was the only man who had a certain popularity among the Russian people. This comparative popularity was due to some extent to his Russian origin. Though the non-Russian leaders of Communism are scarcely worse than Lenin, the psychology of the Russian masses led them to forgive the Russian Lenin for many crimes which they did not forgive to the rulers of alien blood. Lenin's existence and leadership gave the Soviet Government the semblance of Russian dictatorship and Russian power. Kalinin, the so-called "President" of the



Eroza, the Russian sculptor, standing beside a large bust of Lenin which he has nearly completed

Soviet Republic, during his travels across Russia was often reproached by the peasants with the fact that the Soviet Government was composed of non-Russian men. "You are mistaken. You forget our Lenin," was his usual answer.

This justification is now impossible. Everybody in Russia knows that Stalin is a Caucasian, that Dzerzhinsky is a Pole, that Trotsky, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Radek and Litvinov are of Jewish origin. The Russian leaders, Rykov, Bukharin, Piatakov and Tchitcherin play secondary rôles. The non-Russian stock of the present oligarchy is clear to everybody in Russia. The non-Russian character of the Third International is known to all Russian people also. Such a Government, in the present great reinforcement of the national feeling

of the Russian Nation, is, in the eyes of the latter, a "foreign Government." This oligarchy of aliens has aroused and is arousing deep dissatisfaction even among the Communists of Russian stock, who have also become nationalists.

It is easy to understand, then, why the death of Lenin will have a serious effect in the future, why the present Government is losing all ground and why the disintegration of the Communist Party is increasing and will inevitably increase. The

facts that I have given explain to some extent my conviction that the Soviet Government cannot endure. The time is drawing near when this conviction will be a reality which cannot be denied even by those who now cherish the most erroneous ideas about the present situation in Russia. The loss of Lenin will prove to be not only an irreparable loss to the Soviet Government but a disaster which, combined with other factors, will lead to the overthrow of the Bolshevik régime.