



LENIN

This sketch was made by Mr. Cesare in Moscow. It is the only portrait for which the late dictator of Russia is known to have posed, —and perhaps the only portrait he ever autographed. It has already been reproduced in "The New York Times"



WAS LENIN A FAILURE?—A DEBATE

I—LENIN, THE DESTROYER

PITIRIM SOROKIN

LENIN'S only service to mankind was that he made such a tragic mess of his own ideas that he discredited them forever, according to Professor Sorokin, who presents a scathing denunciation of the policies of the late dictator of Russia. He fastens upon Lenin blame for all the ills that have befallen his country since the Revolution, and sums him up as a pathological fanatic and an agent of destruction, with no new ideas and no message for humanity,—a half-mad leader of brutal rebels.

kind. Only when a statesman succeeds in the realization of his purposes and these prove to be useful to the masses,—economically, biologically, morally, and intellectually,—can it be said of him that he was great and good.

From this objective point of view it is quite easy to appreciate the figure of Lenin and the results of his life and activity. Did he produce any new scientific idea and theory? Anybody who knows his books and articles must answer this question negatively. Beginning with his first book: *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* and ending with his last books, *State and Revolution*, *The Renegade Kautsky*, *Imperialism as a Stage in the Development of Capitalism*, and with his articles and speeches,

WE ESTIMATE a doctor, an engineer, an architect, a painter, not so much according to his subjective desire as according to the objective result of his activity. It is not enough to have a desire to cure an illness or to imagine a wonderful machine to be a good doctor or a skilful engineer. The same may be said of statesmen. Even a madman may have a profound desire to be the Saviour of man-

Lenin never presented a new theory, a new ideology, or a new idea. All his books, articles, and speeches were nothing but a dull, monotonous repetition of four or five ideas of Marx and two or three other authors. Philosophic and economic materialism; rude atheism; class struggle; dictatorship of the proletariat; blind belief in the revolutionary method of social reconstruction, in the usefulness of forcible nationalization or communisation of production; belief in compulsory equalization of economic standards; finally a naïve conviction that the spontaneous development of capitalism would lead to a socialistic paradise on the earth; that the hatred and bloody struggle but not the altruism, mutual aid, and cooperation of the individuals and classes are the real creative forces,—such were the principal ingredients in Lenin's ideology. Is this ideology original? No. Can his mentality be styled as a rich one? On the contrary it is very poor. It is the ideology of an intellectual beggar.

But was Lenin, perhaps, a successful practical actor who by his genius was able to put these ideas into practice and to improve in this way the biologic, economic, mental, and moral state of the people, especially of the labor classes? Again the objective results of Lenin's dictatorship give us quite a definite answer to this question.

The objective results of Lenin's activity were, briefly, as follows:¹

Seventeen million men and women perished in the Revolution. Out of this "meat of the Revolution" about two million were the victims of the Civil War (from these about 500,000 were the victims of the red terror); the last fifteen million were the victims of starvation and diseases called forth by the Revolution. This loss means not only quantitative diminution but qualitative impoverishment, because the victims represented in average the best elements of the population.

All economic life in Russia was destroyed. Russian industries in 1918-21 were reduced to 10 or 15 per cent of their pre-revolutionary activity, and agriculture reduced to 20 or 25 per cent. Even now after the abandonment of the communistic system of 1921, Russian industries represent only 20 or 25 per cent, and agriculture 40 or 45 per cent of the pre-revolutionary period.

¹ All figures which I give are official Bolshevist figures.

This means the utmost economic impoverishment of all classes. The average wage of a worker before the Revolution was about 22 gold roubles a month. During these years it fluctuated between 2 and 10 roubles. The average yearly income dropped from 87 roubles in 1916-17 to 36 roubles in 1921-23. Instead of 19,000 locomotives and 476,000 railroad cars in 1916, in 1922 Russia had only 7,000 locomotives and 195,000 cars.

In the sphere of finances, on January 1, 1917, Russia had a state fund of about two billion gold roubles and 9.27 billions in paper. On May 1, 1923, all the gold fund of Russia, as well as almost all private and church wealth had been spent by the Bolsheviki, whereas the quantity of paper-money had reached 6,076,000,000,000 roubles, which cost only about one hundred million gold roubles.

The terrible famine, unparalleled in the history of Russia (even the famine of 1601-3 was not so awful), starvation, disease, superhuman suffering, appalling mortality, great diminution in the birth rate and biological deterioration and destitution among the survivors, especially the younger generation,—such are the further results of this “successful activity.”

But, alas! That is not all. Similar results can be observed in other spheres of the social life. In the sphere of morality we have had the unseen increase of criminality and licentiousness. Murders, thefts, bribery, profiteering, and other crimes increased by many fold. The criminality of the children in Petrograd in 1921 was seven times higher than before the revolution. The thefts on railways in 1921 were 150 times more than before the revolution, and so on.

Disintegration of the family, increase of divorces (from one divorce out of 500 marriages before the Revolution to one divorce out of eleven marriages in 1922), sexual licentiousness, venereal diseases, and so on,—all this is a further result of the activity of Lenin and his companions.

The destruction of the schools and a whole system of public instruction and education is another of the “benefits” of this “liberator” of humanity. Instead of 450 million gold roubles spent for public instruction and education in 1914, in 1922 there was spent only 36 million gold roubles for this purpose.

Side by side with quantitative destruction, the school system

has been destroyed qualitatively. The best teachers and professors were executed, banished, imprisoned, and dismissed. Instead of them there were appointed the "red professors" and "red teachers" who have had no ability, no experience in education and teaching. If the population itself had not acted in the sphere of education in spite of the "brakes" put on by the communists for education and instruction outside of the communistic schools, Lenin and his band would surely have succeeded in the liquidation of literacy in Russia.

Finally, what has happened in the sphere of liberties and freedom? Nothing but a complete annihilation of all liberties of all classes of the Russian population excepting the communists themselves (372,000 out of 129 millions of the Russian population). The liberty of the press was and is completely annihilated. All newspapers, excepting the communistic papers and magazines, have been forbidden. Not only books and pamphlets, but even your visiting card you could not print without a special permission.

The liberty of unions, meetings, speeches, religious gatherings, was withdrawn also. Only the communists themselves have had these rights. Any guarantees of rights and belongings, any security of life disappeared. Any real election or attempt at self-government and autonomy, any realization of the principles of democracy were declared to be "bourgeois prejudices" and persecuted.

Let the readers not think that these limitations have been confined only to the aristocratic and capitalistic classes. They have been applied to the peasants and workers as well.

Instead of liberation, there was created an unlimited despotism, autocracy, and tyranny. But this is not all. The people were transformed into the slaves of the government. Up to 1922 they had no right to choose their occupation and profession, their lodgings, their food, their dress, to travel without the permission of the government, to read the books and newspapers which they wanted; briefly, instead of freedom there was created such a system of slavery as you can find only many, many centuries ago.

No capitalistic exploitation could be compared with the exploitation of the Russian workers and peasants by this small

communistic group and by their allies, which has taken place during these years. Even now the Russian peasants are exploited, six or seven times as effectively as during the czarist régime.

These results are evident to any man who has lived in Russia during these years and knows the real situation. Not even the Napoleonic invasion of Russia, nor all the wars, famines, epidemics, and misfortunes which Russia had experienced in twenty centuries were so destructive as six years of the dictatorial activity of Lenin and his followers.

History has its own irony. As the climax of this colossal failure we have Lenin's own rejection of his system and his theory,—the substitution for the communistic system of 1918–1920 of the “New Economic Policy” in 1921, which is simply the primitive capitalistic system carried on by the communists themselves. What does it mean, if not a complete bankruptcy of communism itself, if not an unmistakable *testimonium pauperitatis* of Lenin's activity!

Instead of communism now we have in Russia an unprecedented growth of individualism and the complete discrediting of communism and socialism. Instead of the annihilation of the instinct for ownership and private property we have now its reinforcement and triumph; instead of atheism, an unprecedented regeneration of religious feeling. Instead of the extirpation of nationalism as a result of the communistic propaganda of internationalism, we have an unprecedented spirit of nationalism and patriotism. These conditions are quite the opposite to what Lenin tried to achieve. I cannot imagine a more striking evidence of his failure.

For a man who knows that Lenin from the moment of his returning to Russia in 1917 was in the last stage of progressive paralysis, who knows that he was even then abnormal, that this abnormality at the end of 1921 was medically testified,—for such a man all Lenin's psychology and behavior is quite comprehensible on pathological grounds. Half-mad and ill, he was suited to be at the head of a government distinguished by wild destruction, unlimited bestiality, cruelty, and animosity. The generous phrases and catch-words with which he tried to “beautify” all the inferiority of his nature, his anti-sociability, mad-

ness, and wild activity, are nothing but usual "veils" with which such individuals try to betray themselves as well as other people. Any serious psychologist, psychiatrist, or behaviorist knows this fact very well. Only an ignorant and naïve people on the one hand, and individuals of mad, anti-social, and inferior type (who are very numerous amongst the right and left extremists, radicals, and "super idealists") on the other, are deceived by these "gorgeous speech-reactions"; for them only Lenin is "the saviour of mankind," "the liberator of humanity," "the great reformer," "the new Jesus Christ," and so on. I have no desire to convince them because they need less to be convinced than cured.

Lenin's only positive service is that he himself discredited his own ideas of communism and socialism more completely than anyone else could do. But he scarcely desired such a result, and other communists and socialists will scarcely be thankful to him for such a merit. Truly, history has its own logic and irony. In the fact that the deadly blow to communism was administered by the communistic leader there is indeed something providential and symbolic.