LENIN

The Compulsive Revolutionary

Stefan T. Possony

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LENIN

The Compulsive Revolutionary

BY

STEFAN T. POSSONY

London

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To the memory of
Michael Golbinder
and
Ernst Possony

PREFACE TO BRITISH EDITION

I am grateful to Mr Robert Payne who induced me to re-investigate the circumstances of Lenin's last illness and death. I am also obliged to Leonard Rush, M.D., and to John F. Duff for technical advice on medical and legal matters. The secretarial help of Miss Marianna Priest and Miss Heidi Rieder is gratefully acknowledged. As usual, my greatest thanks go to Regina Possony for her invaluable research.

PREFACE

THE reign of Lenin, the first revolutionary tsar of Russia, lasted from November, 1917, to January, 1924. During these seventy-five months he was incapacitated for almost twenty of them, and he operated at reduced efficiency for about ten more. In all, his effective rule lasted less than four years; yet in this short span of time he influenced the course of world history more profoundly than any other ruler of the twentieth century.

Lenin was a thinker, a political boss and a strategist. As a thinker he combined Marx with the Russian revolutionary tradition and integrated the new amalgam with Machiavelli and Clausewitz. As a political boss, Lenin invented new political techniques and organizations and put in motion a world-wide totalitarian movement. As a strategist, he introduced novel combinations of violent and non-violent combat, conquered a great empire, and conceived the multi-dimensional war of the modern age.

Lenin started communism – or Russia – on the road to world domination. He begot the victories which Stalin, his successor, won twenty years after his death. By way of historical parallel, Lenin may well be compared to Philip of Macedon, who prepared for the victories of Alexander the Great; but Lenin's role also resembled that of Aristotle, who functioned as Alexander's intellectual guide.

The great world struggle between freedom and totalitarianism which Lenin initiated has lasted for more than four decades. Presumably it will continue for several more generations, and it may terminate in nuclear war. The outcome of the conflict which Lenin bequeathed to mankind will probably for several centuries determine the fate of the human race.

The type of man Lenin was, the intellectual contributions he made, and the causes of his success are still difficult to ascertain four decades after his death. Many details of his life have remained undisclosed and there is little information available about his family background. The propagandists of Moscow are still drawing the curtain of prudishness over his emotional life. Not all of his writings, and only few of his letters, have been published, and much of this output has undergone considerable 'editing'.

Lenin's court biographers affect the style of Scheherazade or Carlylian hero-worshippers, and his opponents labour the devil theory of history. But saint or devil, Lenin was a man of remarkable intellect and strong will. His thinking was ideological and dogmatic, but his actions were pragmatic and effective. His roots were in nineteenth century Russia, but his immense urge to act for the sake of action was typical of the rootless and irrational Europe of

the twentieth century. As a leader of men he intended to emulate Chernishevsky's 'new man': 'like theine in tea, like the bouquet in fine wine . . . the prime source of energy . . . the salt of the salt of the earth.' He dreamt of a new life and, like Nietzsche, he saw himself as the redeemer of mankind. Lenin flew high but, unfortunately, in the wrong direction.

During the last months of his consciousness Lenin surveyed his life, and he recognized that destruction had been his outstanding achievement. Tsarism and capitalism were gone. He regretted nothing, but he knew that his constructive efforts had failed: the socialism of his dreams had not yet materialized. Physically paralysed but still lucid, he clung to the belief that socialism was inevitable.

Lenin died a keenly disappointed man. At the moment of his death, true to the Hegelian scheme, the negation, which had been his revolution, was itself negated by counter-revolution. He was spared of learning that this counter-revolution was carried out in his name – with the tools he had fashioned, and for the purposes of that totalitarianism which (as in the fable of the sorcerer's apprentice) he had intended to invoke as a means, but too late found them to have become an end in themselves.

Lenin's life had been devoted to practising the maxims of expediency. His failure proved the incompatibility of immoral methods with 'noble' results. Lenin's heirs were faithful to the means, lost sight of original purposes, and ended by worshipping dictatorship for its own sake. The pattern of history was repeated once again. It is a pity that Lenin never studied the dialectics of ethics and political morality. If he had done so, this born leader might have prodded mankind forward on the road to progress.

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MY thanks go to the National Archives and the Army Library, Washington, D.C.; the Library of the British Foreign Office and the Public Records Office, London; Oesterreichisches Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna; Schweizerisches, Sozialarchiv, Zuerich; Internationaal Instituut voor sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam; War Documents Section, Defence Agency, Tokyo; the Danish Embassy, Washington D.C., for allowing use of their materials; to Albert P. Hinckley, Washington, D.C. who made it possible for me to start the project; to the Editors of *Life-Time-Fortune* who supported my early researches in connection with the series of articles which Alan Moorehead wrote on the fortieth anniversary of the Russian revolution; to the Foreign Policy Research Institute, University of Pennsylvania, and its directors, Robert Strausz-Hupé and William R. Kintner, who enabled me to carry on; to my patient friends, and *quondam assistants*, Julius Epstein, now at Hoover; Helga Grebing, Munich; Ruth Harman, London; Stephen H. Johnsson, formerly of Washington, D.C., now at Hoover; Ernst Kux, Zuerich; Herma Landau, London; Hiroshi Sano, Tokyo; and Edward E. Smith, Palo Alto, California; and to the members of the Hoover Institution, Xenia J. Eudin, Irene Hoggan, Karol Maichel, Agnes F. Peterson, Tamotsu Takase, and Marina Tinkoff.

My special thanks go to Franz G. Lassner, formerly of Washington, D.C., now at the Hoover Institution, for his enormous help in research and reproduction logistics, for his unearthing of valuable German documents and especially for ferreting out the ways of using the enormous collection of German Foreign Office microfilms to best advantage.

I owe a particular obligation to my various girls-Friday who were struggling valiantly, and through endless hours, against my bad hand-writing, and who feared, as I did, that the rewriting would never end – Florence S. McCall, Shirley Musselman, Eva Ermeler, Roberta M. Nasra, and especially Sylviane Lunn, without whose organizational talent and limitless patience the assembly line would have broken down.

I benefited from the good counsel of such experts as Isaac Don Levine, Richard Wraga, Wlodzimierz Baczkowski and Wolfgang Leonhard, and from the pioneering labours of my predecessors, David Shub and Bertram D. Wolfe, as well as Leonard B. Schapiro.

The sound advice of Professor Witold S. Sworakowski, Assistant director of the Hoover Institution, and his profound knowledge of the Institution's enormous holdings, enabled me to take full advant-

age of the untold and unique treasures painstakingly collected in the Hoover Tower.

The generosity and forbearance of W. Glenn Campbell, the vigorous Director of the Hoover Institution, made it possible for me to complete this arduous task. Dr Campbell not only provided me with ample administrative support but also had the wisdom to listen knowingly and smilingly to about twelve monthly reports announcing that the manuscript was 'about ready'.

I want to thank Jameson G. Campaigne, Jr., my dependable and skilful editor, and Henry Regnery, my co-operative publisher, to whom I also owe gratitude for the success of a previous book.

Regina Possony, my chief linguist, principal assistant, and loving wife, shared with me the main burdens of research. Without her skill in reading handwritten documents in various languages, her persistence in wading through reams of barely digestible Communist memoirs, her psychological feel for the personality types that appear in this story, and her overall stimulation and intuition, I would have missed many important facts and insights into human relationships.

Five bookkeeping items: I transliterated toward accuracy, simplicity and custom. Documents are identified by collection and date. Unless otherwise indicated, all dates are in the Western calendar. Persons are called by their best known appellations, e.g. V. I. Ulyanov is referred to as Lenin, and his wife appears under her maiden name of Krupskaya. Gorki, the site of Lenin's retreat and death, is spelled with an 'i' throughout; this spelling is meant to differentiate it from the writer Gorky.

Stefan T. Possony

Stanford, Calif.

January 1, 1964

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INTRODUCTION

LENIN once predicted his own fate when he noted that great revolutionaries, after their death, are often transformed into 'harmless icons'. The 'sanctification' of Lenin's name, which Stalin instituted for personal political reasons, was carried to such extremes that it disgusted even Lenin's widow. 'To invent what did not take place, what in no way corresponds to reality, to put into Ilyich's mouth words he never uttered . . . is inadmissible,' she once complained.[1] But it was only in the dusk of her life, when most of the followers of Lenin had been eliminated, that she dimly sensed that genuine Communists, like other human beings, are better served by historical truth than by fraud.

The historian dedicated to reconstructing the lives of persons and the course of events as they really were must pierce through many layers of *beatific* fables; in some cases, he also must fight political distortion and outright falsification.

The task is rendered triply difficult in the presentation of Lenin's life. First, Stalin deliberately and skilfully fashioned a legend about Lenin which he used for thirty years to manipulate and purge certain pieces of evidence. Secondly, many of Lenin's operations were of an ultra-secret and conspiratorial nature. Even if documentary traces were left in existence, which is not always the case, the Soviet government has not been anxious to release this sort of data. In fact, it has often employed deception to disorient research. Thirdly, during the past five years or so, some useful biographical information has been trickling out of the Soviet Union, but it has become apparent that the documentation at Moscow is by no means complete. There remain surprising gaps, on both the very early and the later years of Lenin's life.[2] It is only since the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 that the Party has reconsidered (to a limited extent) the value of historiography. The long neglect of historical research still causes the Party historians themselves to not always be certain of their basic information on events, personalities, and dates. Such neglect has been disclosed in some reasonably frank discussions in Russian journals.[3]

The great movement to 'debunk' a history of kings and statesmen, empires and nations, capitalism, democracy and freedom – a neces-

[1] N. K. Krupskaya, April 1937, about a film script on Lenin. *Istoricheskii Arkhiv* (1958), No. 4, p. 73.

[2] It would seem as though not even all *Russian* archives have been searched thoroughly for documents related to Lenin, his family, and friends. See *Istoricheskii Arkhiv* (1958), No. 3, p. 230.

[3] See, for example, M. V. Fofanova, 'Posledneye podpolye. V. I. Lenina,' *Istoricheskii Arkhiv*, No. 4, Moscow, July-August 1956, pp. 166-172.

sary and useful movement which owes much to the crusading spirit of idealists eager to build a 'classless society' – has stopped short of delving into many of the disturbing facets of revolutionary history. Naturally, historical materials can be woven into fairy tales to be told to children and naïve believers. The stories concern the dignified bearded socialists who advocated and initiated revolution because they were inveterate seekers of justice and truth; those who, out of sheer altruism, sought to save mankind from the dire tragedies of inequality and conflict; those who acted as the legitimate leaders of morally pure masses because they alone understood the laws of social development; those who were honest and humane, but also hard and forceful – these are the tales 'full of sound and fury, but signifying nothing.'

A mystical or chiliastic movement must have its heroes, legends, apostles, saints, and even gods, but if the modern world is to evaluate seriously such a movement's worth, we desperately and urgently need solid historical information. What mistakes were committed? How and why? Where did judgments go astray? Were the best leaders selected? Was the selection procedure an appropriate one? Did the theory stand the test of reality? Has the validity of the objective been confirmed?

For obvious reasons, the Communists, almost from the inception of their rule, terminated serious work on their own history. Its transformation into myth may have pleased Vilfredo Pareto and Georges Sorel, the intellectual ancestors of fascism, but Marx would have regarded Soviet political mythology as a dangerous 'opiate for the people'. Lacking the vigour of truth, the Communist creed has stagnated and degenerated into an apologia for the personal power of a bureaucratic tyranny. But there are signs that the more responsible and ideologically honest Party leaders are beginning to realize that they can no longer rely on fiction if they are to be effective in their future decisions.

I suspect, therefore, that though this book will be greeted with hisses and howls, the Communists actually will study it with great care. (This has been the fate of some of my previous writings.) But many non-Communist utopians will instinctively be critical of my iconoclastic interpretations: even the repeated discovery that the most loudly self-proclaimed promoters of terrestrial paradise were, in reality, power-politicians, elitists, cynics, haters, cheats, liars and murderers may be experienced as a great emotional shock. As Shakespeare put it, 'Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds'.

Some readers will accurately observe that Lenin's behaviour pattern was not basically different from that of innumerable political precedents. An argument dealing with whether his actions were

somewhat worse or somewhat better than the performance of other power practitioners is quite futile. The point is that, intellectually, Lenin was a counterpart of Cesare Borgia – not of Moses, Buddha, Mohammed, or Jesus. Lenin was more successful and far less ephemeral than Borgia because his political acumen was greater; because his know-how exceeded that expostulated by Niccolò Machiavelli on the basis of Borgia's model operations; and because the spectrum of resources and techniques at his disposal was far broader than that available to the Renaissance prince. But Lenin's bones were the bones of a conqueror and his flesh the flesh of a voluptuary of power.

The sociologist Karl Mannheim once asked, 'Who is going to plan the planners?' Not wishing to disprove the feasibility of a dream society, Mannheim left his own question unanswered. Lenin's life suggests that those who pursue the shadows of utopia are forced far deeper into Machiavellianism than politicians who aim modestly at improving society by patchwork or by overcoming specific defects and crises. Biography, according to Disraeli, is 'life without theory': it shows man as what he is, namely, a human hobbled with disabilities. Lenin's biography convincingly refutes the notion that utopia is feasible without the existence of supermen. Lenin himself realized in the end that the perfect society – which, incidentally, he was unable to visualize with any clarity – cannot be constructed, even by the most ruthless of mortals.

I do not feel that I have done any disservice to Lenin. The dexterity of his strategy, the skill and flexibility of his tactics, the virtuosity in his orchestration of simultaneous complex operations, the expertness of his conspiracy, the impact of his leadership, his endurance against adversity, the acuity of his intellect, and the tragedy in his downfall – all appear in bold relief. His immorality and even criminality are starkly etched, but so is his political genius. For me, the Lenin portrayed in this book is an impressive and formidable opponent. Moreover, irrespective of whether Lenin is regarded as a saviour or a scourge, his was a unique life. Enthusiasts and detractors alike will benefit from a fuller insight into the real man. The true drama of his life serves his memory better than the self-serving manipulations of his alleged followers; and perhaps the time has come to save him from adulation as well as from incomprehension. As Carlyle said of Sir Walter Scott, 'When he departed, he took a man's life along with him.'

The holdings of the German, Austrian, and, to a far lesser extent, Japanese foreign offices, combined with the vast resources of the Hoover Institution (including the invaluable archive of the Paris branch of the Tsar's political police) and more detailed data recently

published in the Soviet Union, have enabled me to construct a more complete and a more fully documented story than was heretofore possible. Yet I have not the delusion that all of my interpretations and reconstructions will stand the test of time. I have used the available evidence as massively as I could and interpreted it on the basis of logic, as well as knowledge of, and experience in, revolutionary operations. The full opening of Russian archives and the discovery of new significant documentation within the free world undoubtedly will necessitate corrections, and critics will not fail to suggest alternate interpretations. The leftist idealogue will resent my realism and lack of reverence. The rightist partisan will deplore the demise of many clichés and simplifications. Pierre Bayle was correct when he said, '*La perfection d'une histoire est d'être desagréable à toutes les sectes.*' In this spirit, I am planning, hopefully, to take emotional reactions in my stride.

ALEXANDER DIMITREVICH BLANK (1802-1873)

m. ANNA IVANOVNA GROSCHOPF

ANNA
m. VERETENNIKOV

LYUBOV
m. ARDASHEV (I)
m. PONOMARYEV (II)

SOFIA
m. LAVROV

KATERINA
m. ZALEZHSKY

MARIA ALEKSANDROVNA (1835-1916)

DIMITRI

NIKOLAI VASSILYEVICH ULYANOV (1765-1838)

m. ANNA ALEKSEYEVNA SMIRNOVA (1790-?)

VASSILY

FEDOSIYA

MARIA

ILYA NIKOLAYEVICH (1831-12 Jan. 1886)

ANNA (1864-1935)
m. MARK YELIZAROV

ALEXANDER (31 Mar. 1866—20 May 1887)

OLGA I (1868)

VLADIMIR ILYICH (22 apr. 1870—21Jan. 1924)
m. NADYEZHDA KONSTANTINOVA KRUPSKAYA
(27 Feb. 1869—27 Feb. 1939)

OLGA II (1871-1891)

MARIA (1878-1937)

DIMITRI (1874-1943)
m. A. I. NESHCHERATOVA

NOTE: Victor, Lenin's nephew has not been included in the family tree because his paternity is not certain. His brother Nikolai (1873) died a few days after his birth.

LENIN'S real name was Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov. He was born on April 22, 1870, at Simbirsk, a small, sleepy town on the Volga river, now named Ulyanovsk in his honour. His father, Ilya Nikolayevich Ulyanov (1831-1886), a graduate of Kazan University, climbed the bureaucratic ladder steadily and diligently. Ilya began his career, in 1855, teaching mathematics and physics at the Institute of Nobility in Pensa. In addition to his teaching job, he served as a meteorologist, having been appointed to both positions by the celebrated mathematician N. I. Lobachevsky.[1] It is said that some of Ilya's observations were published in a French scientific publication. Between 1863 and 1869 he taught at the gymnasium in Nizhni-Novgorod. After a period as regional school inspector in Simbirsk (1869-1874), Ilya was promoted to the position of director of schools in Simbirsk *gubernia*. He thus reached the upper ranks of the medium civil service, the promotion being accompanied by a patent of hereditary nobility. After years of modest circumstances Ilya had become well-to-do, and he moved his family into a spacious middle-class house, where the Ulyanovs stayed until after Ilya died of a stroke,[2] or possibly a heart attack, in 1886, at the age of 55.

Nikolai Vassilyevich Ulyanov (1765-1838), Lenin's paternal grandfather, reportedly was born a serf. He became a successful self-made merchant, a 'capitalist' of sorts in the active trading city of Astrakhan. Records indicate that shortly before his death he acquired a one-and-a-half storey house'.[3] Very little is known about his wife, Anna Alekseyevna Smirnova (1790-?), except that she was of Kalmyk ancestry and twenty-five years younger than her husband. At the age of sixty-six, Nikolai fathered his second son, Ilya. There were two older sisters, Fedosiya and Maria, and the eldest child, Vassily. Maria married a certain Gorshkov, a middle-class merchant.

After his father's death, Ilya was brought up by his brother, Vassily, who is generally believed to have been very poor, although it is said that he gave money to Ilya on two occasions: during the first months of Ilya's marriage and shortly before his, Vassily's, death in 1878. It is also reported that a priest helped the family after old Ulyanov's death. Whether or not the priest was a relative—or even

[1] *Istoricheskii Arkhiv* (1958), No. 2, p. 31ff.

[2] This is Anna Ulyanova's version, 'Souvenirs sur Ilitch', *Lénine tel qu'il fut, Souvenirs de Contemporains*, Vol. I, Moscow, Editions en Langues Etrangères, 1958, p. 13.

[3] Many data on Lenin's ancestry are found in *Molodiye Gody V. I. Lenina, po vospominaniyam sovremennikov i dokumentam*, ed. A. I. Ivansky, (2nd edition; Moscow: Molodaya Gvardiya, 1958). The reference to the house appears on p. 7f.

if the family was religious—is open to speculation.

Ilya knew nothing about the history of his family, and remembered his father only vaguely. The family name was uncertain and was listed variously as 'Ulyaninov' or 'Ulyanin'. Ilya adopted 'Ulyanov'. Despite his alleged plebeian background, Ilya was educated in a school for children of officials and aristocrats. (Soviet historiography has persistently endeavoured to prove Lenin's proletarian origin.) Whatever his background, Actual State Councillor His Excellency Ilya Nikolayevich Ulyanov was not an opponent of tsarism. His daughter Anna, in fact, stated bluntly: 'Father never was a revolutionary.'[4] Ilya never made any utterances regarding 'social ideals', certainly not in the presence of his children and pupils. He had grown up under Nikolai I, and the regime of Alexander II, especially at its beginning, appeared to him to be an enlightened era. The assassination of Alexander II upset and saddened him, for he strongly disapproved of terrorism.

Communist historians suggest that Ilya was a revolutionary, running a sort of party headquarters in his home, where his two sons made fiery speeches. This hardly concurs with his function as inspector and regional school director. The schools were run by the Zemstvos, local and often liberal self-governing organs, and the Ministry of Education saw to it that the schools were kept in line. As one of the Ministry's field officers, Ulyanov checked to determine that the instructors were not teaching in a manner contrary to the Tsar's desires. Persons whose opinions were suspect hardly became prominent in the inspectorate of the Tsar's educational bureaucracy.

There exists no record of Ilya ever protecting students accused of radical activities. He seemed to have been religious, and he reported to his superiors village priests who lacked zeal in catechism instruction. A firm disciplinarian, he never was questioned on his political beliefs, and was given bonuses and awarded the Order of St. Vladimir. Clearly, though he probably was no zealot, he was a thought-control expert and a faithful servant of the Tsar.

Lenin's mother, Maria Aleksandrovna Blank (1835-1916), was an attractive and cultured lady. Although she did not attend the gymnasium, she was certified as a private tutor at the age of twenty-eight. She proved to be a capable manager of the family under trying conditions, and was a highly devoted mother to all of her children.

Lenin's maternal grandmother, Anna Ivanovna Blank née Grosschopf, was the daughter of Johann Gottlieb Grosschopf, a St Petersburgh businessman born in Lübeck, and Anna Oehrstedt from Upsala. The Grosschopf sons were highly successful: Johann became a military officer; Gustav Adolf owned an estate and served as

[4] Ibid., p. 37.

director of customs in Riga; Karl Friedrich attained the high rank of vice-director in the Department of Foreign Trade, inherited his father's expensive house in one of the best quarters of the capital, and was a collector of *objets d'art*. After Anna Blank's early death, Katarina Essen, her younger sister, brought up the Blank children, including Maria who became Lenin's mother. Like all Grosschopfs, aunt Katarina probably used German as her main language.

Lenin's maternal grandfather, Alexander Dimitrevich Blank, was born in 1802, allegedly in Odessa and of Ukrainian origin. Blank, of course, is not a Ukrainian name. Since it is known that he spoke Russian poorly and preferred German, the theory of his Ukrainian origin is best discarded. Evidence indicates that Blank was born a Jew, and that he served as a feldsher (medical technician) in the army.[5] After he was converted to Christianity, probably to Lutheran protestantism, he was allowed to study medicine at the University of St Petersburg. Subsequently, he worked as a physician in Smolensk *gubernia*; then for seven years he served as a police physician in the capital. After a one-year vacation, he was appointed chief of department in a hospital financed by Duke Maximilian von Leuchtenberg, a member of the Tsar's family. Later he moved to the Urals and served as hospital inspector in Zlatoust and Perm.

Blank was described as quarrelsome and headstrong. In 1847 he retired to Kokushkino near Kazan where he bought an estate, lived as a country squire, and became a member of the nobility. The purchase of this estate, of course, transformed Blank into the owner of the serfs that were attached to his land.[6] While in retirement he wrote a medical book in which he expounded the virtues of a German water-cure treatment; he was said also to have been interested in diet as a factor of health.

At Kokushkino, Blank lived with a son, Dimitri, and five daughters – Anna, Lyubov, Sofia, Katerina and Maria. The household was managed by Katarina Essen, his sister-in-law. Blank died, quite well-to-do, when he was seventy-one.

Maria, the second youngest, was brought up in the stern German tradition. Her aunt inculcated discipline, love of work and reading, and three languages. A quiet and serious-minded girl, she was her father's favourite.

[5] David Shub, 'Po povodu stati N. Valentinova i pisma v radaktsiyu "Istorika",' *Novyi Zhurnal* (New York, 1961), No. 63, pp. 288-291. Shub's article is in answer to N. Valentinov, 'O predkakh Lenina i yego biografyakh', *Novyi Zhurnal* (New York, 1960), No. 61, pp. 217-236. *See also*: David Shub, 'O predkakh Lenina', *Novoye Russkoye Slovo* (New York, April 23, 1961), p. 3. Valentinov's arguments why Blank could not have been of Jewish origin are entirely unconvincing.

[6] Valentinov, op. cit., p. 221.

The Blank girls' family life was not soft, and except for Maria, they all married at early ages. Anna, the eldest, who was neurasthenic and as cranky as her father, and who liked to surround herself with artists and writers, married a man named Veretennikov, a teacher who became a school inspector and a colleague of Ilya Ulyanov. The next daughter, Lyubov, first married a certain Ardashev by whom she had nine children. After his death she remarried, this time to a retired person by the name of Ponomaryev. Sofia is known to have married Lavrov, a rich landowner who had a large estate near Stavropol on the Volga; after her marriage she terminated all communication with her family. Of Katerina, it is recorded that her husband was a teacher by the name of Zalezhsky.[7]

This large family should have presented Lenin with a considerable number of cousins, but barely anything is known about these relatives. With perhaps one exception, they did not become Communists.[8]

PARENTAL COURTSHIP

Ilya Ulyanov met Maria Blank at Pensa in 1860 at her sister Anna's house. Ulyanov was rooming with V. I. Zakharov, a language instructor at the Institute of Nobility. The two young men were both acquainted with Maria and were equally drawn to her; the courtship competition appears to have been a stormy one. Zakharov was a revolutionary who assigned his pupils articles by Chernishevsky, the foremost radical of his time, and who taught the young noblemen that aristocrats were not worthy of being called humans. He maintained that Ulyanov, because he was too religious and peaceful and worked too much, would not change the world. Maria apparently was attracted to him, but when Zakharov was dismissed from the school and left town, she married Ulyanov in 1863. The couple then moved to Nizhni-Novgorod.

Maria soon regretted her choice, for Ilya, who was busy with several jobs including one in the local Institute of Nobility, was rarely at home. He had difficulties with some of his pupils, displayed moodiness, and found himself bored with his wife. Replying to Maria's complaints, sister Anna criticized Ilya's negligence and his lack of interest in 'togetherness', but Maria realized that it was the

[7] Valentinov, op. cit., p. 219f.

[8] For details of Lenin's German relatives, *see* George V. Rauch, 'Lenin's Lübecker Ahnen', *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Lübeckische Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, Bd. 40, 1960, pp. 98-101.

fate of many wives to be lonely. She made an effort to control her nerves and not to cry in bed, because she knew that 'if she were to leave him, it would be as though a light would go out in his life'. The marriage was on trial, but in 1864, a daughter, Anna, was born.

Nevertheless, Ilya's absences continued to burden his wife. Maria was a number of times jealous without reason and she became ever more irritable and moody. She abandoned music, stayed in bed late, and neglected her household chores. From the time they moved to Novgorod, the Ulyanov couple did not share a bedroom, Ilya sleeping in his study and Maria in the bedroom with her child. Perhaps Maria found her husband repulsive to her, for it is reported that when she helped him dress she felt that he was smaller than she was, that she thought him to be weak, and that she greatly disliked the smell of his clothes after his daily work. But she also pitied him: when once she tenderly greeted her returning husband, he perplexedly asked, 'What is the matter? You are so nice to me tonight.'[1]

Zakharov also was living at Nizhni-Novgorod. Not surprisingly, Maria met him again. Zakharov told her that an 'educator' (the position her husband held at the Institute of Nobility) was a spy, obliged to report on his pupils. This upset her so much that she pleaded with Ilya to leave his job. The children, she said, would never trust him. Ilya asked her for the source of this nonsense and she replied, 'Zakharov'. 'Aha, Zakharov,' said Ulyanov. Maria mimicked the 'Aha', blushed, and walked away. The marriage had reached a point of crisis, but Ilya ignored the outburst and Maria, pregnant again, did not leave him. A deep change, however, had taken place. Henceforth Maria was glad when her husband left the house.

The tense domestic atmosphere affected the baby, who was very restless and fearful. Maria later attributed the blame for her daughter Anna's nervousness on these marital difficulties, but she gradually learned to live her own life.

On March 31, 1866, a son, Alexander, was born. On April 4th, while Maria was still convalescing in bed, she was called to the door and informed by a visitor that an unsuccessful attempt had just been made against the Tsar's life. Horrified, she almost dropped her child in her excitement, for the Tsar, she was told, had been assaulted by the incurably sick D. V. Karakozov and N. A. Ishutin, both former students at Pensa – both pupils of Zakharov. It is not known if Zakharov had sent the messenger, but the pathetic teacher-

[1] On many of these details *see* Marietta Schaginjan, *Die Familie Uljanow* (Berlin: Kultur und Fortschritt, 1959).

revolutionary disappeared: he evidently averted arrest through suicide.[2]

[2] The plot was supported by nobles from Pensa, including P. D. Yermolov, who financed the operation.

THE SIBLINGS

Lenin is usually described as the third child. This is not accurate, for after Anna and Alexander, there was a baby girl, Olga, who must have been born defective or sick. Almost immediately after her birth it was believed that she would not live long, and she died after a few months, late in 1868. The mother was heartbroken. But Ilya had additional troubles. He lacked energy and felt tired: at thirty-six or thirty-seven, his brain no longer 'was supplied with blood', and his teachings had become dull.[1] He sent his wife and the two children to visit his family in Astrakhan, and in their absence he recovered. When Maria returned to Nizhni-Novgorod, the two 'found each other in a real sense'. Ilya was appointed inspector of public schools at Simbirsk (1869) and on April 22, 1870, Maria gave birth to her fourth child, a boy, who in the orthodox and tsarist tradition was christened Vladimir – literally translated: 'Rule the world.'

In 1871, another girl, again named Olga, was born, but she lived only to twenty years of age. Nikolai, born 1873, died after a few days. Dimitri (1874-1943) was the next born; he became a physician and found his way to what was probably to be the most enviable position the future Soviet government had to offer: Director of Recreation and Rest Homes. Finally, there was Maria, the youngest sister (1878-1937), who studied in Russia, Belgium and France. Diligent and alert, she knew several languages, and during 1917-1929 served on the editorial board of *Pravda*, was a member of the Central Control Commission on the Fourteenth Party Congress, and in 1935 held membership in the Central Executive Committee of the USSR. During Lenin's prolonged illness, his youngest sister served as his nurse.

Like Maria, the eldest sister Anna also was very close to Lenin, and was at his side the many times he needed her. She was a gifted girl who had inherited her father's mathematical talents. Having finished her gymnasium studies at sixteen with a gold medal, she was an active revolutionary long before Lenin, and held party positions from 1898 onward. Anna apparently disliked Lenin's wife

[1] Schaginjan, p. 184.

and often left her own husband, Mark Yelizarov, to follow Lenin abroad, though she invariably returned to her own home. Anna worked and wrote for almost all of the papers and magazines which Lenin controlled, and after 1917, acted as secretary of the editorial board of *Pravda*. During 1918 and 1921, she worked with the Department for Education and concluded her career working in the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute.

Throughout his life, Lenin relied upon the help of the women of his family. These women – his mother and his two sisters, and later his wife and his mistress – were devoted admirers, eager to advance his career. Lenin composed endless lists of things 'to be done', and in following his instructions his women often made considerable sacrifices while assuming great risks.

All the Ulyanov siblings, in varying degrees, had rebellion in their blood.

CHILDHOOD

At the time of Lenin's birth the Ulyanovs hired a *nanya*, Varvara Grigorevna Sarabatova, a peasant woman from the Pensa area, who nursed young Vladimir. He became attached to her and Varvara stayed with the family, dying in 1890 at the Ulyanov house in Samara.

Vladimir did not walk until he was almost three years of age; it is reported that he at first fell frequently and often hurt his disproportionately large head. After he had learned how to use his feet, however, he moved about incessantly, often as though in a rage. He was a wild, unruly child who liked to destroy his toys as well as those of his playmates. He invented strange games whose rules could be varied according to his moods and successes. Both his urge to lead and his ability to impose his will – by violence if necessary – manifested themselves early. Vladimir was also highly intelligent and alert, learning to read at the age of five – one year later than his even more precocious brother Alexander.

At eight, Vladimir started to play chess. When he reached puberty he became something of a prankster and indulged in a good deal of physical exercise – fishing, swimming, skating, hiking and, later, hunting. He spent his summer vacations at Kokushkino estate, which at the time of Maria's marriage had been divided equally among old Blank's five children.

It is said that the Ulyanov children never witnessed a quarrel between their parents: apparently Ilya and Maria had reached a tacit

understanding. The father was constantly on inspection trips and was often absent for weeks. Yet Ilya was able to instil in his children a high sense of devotion to duty, a great diligence, and a respect for status. He does not seem to have been harsh, although he undoubtedly was distant and without warmth. The mother took a close interest in her children, tutored them, and reportedly tried to teach Vladimir to play the piano, although he never mastered this art.

According to sister Maria, Lenin's character resembled that of their mother. His physique, stature and features – the Mongolic cut of the eyes and the form of his skull – were inherited from his father, from whom he was also endowed with his logical mind, love for work, drive, energy, vivacity and quick temper.

The Ulyanov children were outstanding students. In August of 1879, at the age of little more than nine years, Vladimir entered the gymnasium at Simbirsk. With his extraordinary memory – a most important resource of a political leader – he proved himself to be a brilliant pupil who consistently won high grades. A report card of his last year in the gymnasium shows that his grade in religion was better than in logic. This is of special interest, because it is alleged that shortly before his father's death (when Vladimir was fifteen), having been angry at his father's insistence on religious observances, he tore off his cross, threw it on the floor and spat on it. Had he done this his father would have reprimanded him sternly – but Vladimir scored a high grade in religion about one year and a half *after* his father died. Thus the early religious rebellion of Vladimir is dubious.

The death of father Ilya on January 12, 1886, was unexpected, occurring within minutes after he had made a strange appearance at the dinner table, as though to say goodbye.[1] The survivors were only mildly affected, since Ilya's death brought about no significant changes in the life of his family. For a while, before the pension for the Actual State Councillor's widow and children had arrived, finances were a bit strained. But matters soon straightened out, and the children continued to establish impressive records at school.

ALEXANDER

Within a year, tragedy struck again: brother Alexander, a biology student at the University of St Petersburg, was involved in an

[1] For more details on Ilya's death *see* V. Kanivets, *Alexander Ulyanov*, Moscow, Molodaya Gvardiya, 1961, p. 104f. Ilya felt unwell on January 11, when his illness was diagnosed as an upset stomach.

attempt on the Tsar's life. Alexander was arrested on March 13, 1887, tried, and on May 20, 1887, was executed by hanging.

Alexander had been studying the natural sciences, especially chemistry and biology, since 1883. An outstanding student, he earned an academic award for a paper on worms. Sister Anna also was a student at Petersburg University. Each was living on a comfortable monthly allowance of forty roubles. Alexander was concentrating on his scientific studies, allegedly because he felt that scientific knowledge pointed the way to the solution of social problems, but shocked by his father's death and the unnecessarily harsh police measures against a student demonstration, he suddenly displayed an interest in politics.[1] His father's death apparently aroused guilt feelings which were exacerbated when he participated in a protest demonstration and, unlike the other students, was not arrested by the police. He began to study revolutionary literature and considered publishing a socialist library; allegedly he actually did translate a few philosophical passages from Marx. Soon he was surrounded by a few kindred souls. The political orientation of these youngsters was not uniform, for some of his friends were Poles who wanted national freedom, while his Russian comrades wanted to destroy despotism. Most of the 'Russians' were Cossacks and Ukrainians; there apparently was a tenuous link with the old Ishutin group.

Alexander envisioned himself as a 'populist', which might be described, though somewhat inaccurately, as an agrarian socialist. The group, so it was said later, included several Marxists (i.e. proletarian socialists), yet according to contemporary police findings, it was entirely oriented towards the populist *Will of the People* tradition. The customary version is that the group's programme constituted a transition between populism and Marxism, but this is not borne out by police evidence.[2] The youngsters actually did adopt the old *Will of the People* programme, but Ulyanov wrote an additional set of principles – specifically for the group – which was imbued with the ideas of political liberty

Ideological distinctions were not yet significant and the group agreed that protest and propaganda were impractical and that words and deeds did not coincide among Social Democrats. By contrast, *they* would succeed by terror, by killing Tsar Alexander III. By 1887,

[1] A. I. *Ulyanov i delo 1-go marta 1887 g.*, Moscow, 1927, as quoted in Peter Scheibert, 'Über Lenins Anfänge', *Historische Zeitschrift* (1956), Vol. 182, p. 559.

[2] Major sources include General Alexandre Spiridovich, *Histoire du Terrorisme Russe 1886-1917* (Paris: Payot, 1930), p. 14ff, and especially Lt.-General Schébéko, *Chronique du Mouvement Socialiste en Russie, 1878-1887*, 'confidentiel et exclusivement personnel' (St Petersburg: Ministry of the Interior, 1890), pp. 622-640.

there was little revolutionary enthusiasm in Russia: the number of active revolutionaries was small, the number of those who were considering methods of terror was still smaller, and the number of those who actually plotted terroristic acts came to less than a dozen. Ulyanov was the most outspoken proponent of 'armed struggle'.

The group called itself *Terror Section of the Will of the People* and Ulyanov was its first leader. The Polish members procured chemicals sufficient for more than six bombs and Ulyanov prepared the dynamite outside the capital in the house of a midwife, mother of a girlfriend of one of the terrorists. He constructed three bombs, stuffing them with strychnine, while the terrorists practised bomb-throwing and carefully reconnoitred the road on which the Tsar was expected to travel. The bomb was to be hurled by a certain Ossipanov, formerly a student of Kazan University. Ulyanov briefed him carefully, hoping that Ossipanov would have an opportunity to explain the programme of the revolutionaries in court. Apparently, Ulyanov did not expect to be brought to trial himself.

The police, however, had been alerted by an intercepted letter and they patrolled the streets, noticing on successive days the same young men walking on Nevski Prospect, St Petersburg's main street, with heavy packages. They investigated and found the bomb in a hollowed-out book carried by one of the strollers.

Ulyanov was supervising the operation from a distance. On the days preceding the attempt he allegedly continued his studies of sea spiders; but he also concerned himself with the chemistry of explosives. For good measure we are assured that he also leafed through Marx's *Das Kapital*;[3] but if this happened, it escaped the attention of the police, who had already been informed of the planned assassination. Anna was arrested in her brother's room, while Alexander, in turn, was found hiding in the apartment of a friend. Incidentally, Bronislav Pilsudski, in whose room the programme had been multigraphed and who together with his brother Joseph, the later Marshal of Poland, had procured the chemicals, also was indicted and convicted. Joseph was forced to testify.

Mother Maria Ulyanov received a letter informing her of Alexander's imprisonment. Vladimir read it first and commented: 'This is a serious matter, this can end badly for Sasha.'[4] The family was ostracized and Lenin experienced bitter disappointment when he tried to secure a carriage to drive his mother to the station. Maria was permitted twice to visit Alexander in prison. He asked his mother to pay his debts and to forgive him: one has duties toward the people as well as toward the family.

[3] Kanivets, p. 95.

[4] Ibid., p. 221; *Melodiye Gody*, p. 233.

On April 19, 1887, the trial was held. Alexander addressed the court and criticized the government: terror was needed as a riposte to the 'violence of the state', and neither he nor his comrades were afraid to die. They would be followed by other fighters: despotism would be overthrown in the end. The plotters were not advocating a particular policy but had united to prevent the government from instituting further reactionary measures. They wanted 'to force the despotic regime to grant political freedom to the people'. Alexander added that he had not run away because he preferred to die for his country. Time and again he accepted the blame, but even the judge did not believe the accusations he heaped upon himself. Alexander was sentenced to death, but had he asked for clemency his sentence undoubtedly would have been commuted: the Tsar preferred repentance to execution.[5] Yet Alexander refused to beg for mercy, and thereby rendered his own execution inevitable. Anna was banished to Kokushkino.

When the news of Alexander's execution reached Vladimir, he heard it with astonishing calm: 'Another way is necessary'; a significant, though apocryphal, comment. The statement hardly indicates that in the youngster's mind 'Leninism' already was preformed. But Lenin *was* a master in finding 'other ways' – this dictum could serve as a motto for his life.

[5] To the transcript of self-accusation, the Tsar appended a marginal note: 'This frankness is touching.' (*Molodiye Gody*, p. 227). On the Tsar's inclination to clemency, *see also* Kanivets, p. 198.

TWO BROTHERS

Legend has it that Lenin vowed to avenge his brother's death. Systematically, it is said, he interrogated I. N. Chebotaryev, a friend of Alexander's, to learn the nature of the plot and the causes of its failure. But Lenin was not the romantic type; he had little patience with heroics. He never became involved in a plot to kill the Tsar or other high officials. Although he instigated violent acts when later he was in power, terrorism was not the revolutionary way of life he chose for himself at this time.[1]

Vladimir displayed considerable detachment from his brother's troubles even though the hours following Alexander's arrest, his

[1] Lenin's early rejection of terrorism may have been less firm than is generally asserted. Apparently he preserved enthusiasm for the traditional forms of terrorism until 1893. (See Richard Pipes, *Social Democracy and the St Petersburg Labor Movement, 1885-1897* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963], p. 48).

trial, and execution constituted a period of extreme anguish for the Ulyanov family. Lenin remained very close to his mother, who was suffering greatly under the ordeal. The family was shunned by its neighbours – yet Vladimir, while Alexander was surrendering his life, registered for final examinations, quietly passed a series of rigorous tests and finished school, earning a gold medal.

Alexander's psychology differed markedly from Vladimir's. Lenin early admired and imitated his older brother, but their bonds loosened after their father's death. Alexander was given to tears and silent suffering; Lenin was harsh and loud. Alexander, unable to lie, detested mendacity and cowardice, while Vladimir was often untruthful and lacking in physical courage. Alexander was morbid, sentimental, humble and compassionate; all of these qualities Lenin lacked. It is recorded that Alexander courted a distant cousin and planned to marry her. Lenin in his early years showed no interest in girls. Alexander had numerous friends; Vladimir was not given to friendship. When Alexander became the head of the family, he frequently rebutted Vladimir for rudeness to their mother. Lenin continued in his precocious ways.

Alexander's interests were channelled toward the natural sciences, while Lenin was attracted by social studies, and directed arrogance and sarcasm against his brother whose interest in the sex life of worms he mocked. Alexander told his sister, when both were students in St Petersburg, that though Vladimir was very capable, 'we will never become close friends, as a matter of fact, not at all'.[2]

It has been suggested that there were political differences between the two brothers, Alexander being a populist, while the young Lenin showed an early interest in Marxism. This interpretation is almost certainly false: Lenin probably did not even know that Alexander was involved in politics. Lenin learned of the plot with complete surprise. The primary difference in their personalities was revealed through Alexander's participation in the plot, his behaviour in court, and above all, his refusal to ask for mercy. Lenin rarely was inclined to take risks. He avoided assuming responsibility for the deeds of others and even for his own. Usually he was the first to disappear from dangerous scenes. Alexander suffered from guilt feelings; Lenin apparently was singularly free of this problem. Lenin disliked Dostoyevsky, Alexander's favourite author. Alexander, in fact, closely resembled Dostoyevsky's Raskolnikov. Alexander's actions imply that he was driven by strong suicidal impulses.

The circumstances of his upbringing would seem to be conducive to a placid career in science or government for Alexander. He

[2] Leopold H. Haimson, *The Russian Marxists and the Origins of Bolshevism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1955), p. 95.

scarcely witnessed revolting scenes of cruelty and exploitation. The causes which propelled Alexander to terrorism presumably were deeply rooted in his nature.

It is of interest to investigate the Ulyanovs's familial behaviour. Perhaps there existed a state of general rebellion against a stern, rejecting father: we do have indirect evidence that sister Anna rebelled against the old man, as did Alexander in his refusal to attend church. But the mother, who had grown up under an extremely tyrannical father, and who appears to have been mildly manic-depressive, was probably the conditioning factor. She apparently never rebelled openly against her father, but she did rebell against her husband in identifying herself with the revolutionary activities of her children. It is not known whether, even after the death of her eldest son, she ever admonished her surviving children to desist. She did become morose, and Anna took great pains to avoid discussion of 'conspiratorial' matters in her presence.

STUDENT

With his brother dead, seventeen-year-old Lenin established himself as head of the family. The school principal, father of Alexander Kerensky, whom Lenin was to overthrow in 1917, protected him from possible expulsion due to his brother's actions, but the gold medal which Lenin had earned upon completion of his school work was denied him. He applied for admission to the law school at Kazan University; upon acceptance he and his family moved to Kazan.

Lenin immersed himself in his law studies, avoiding the revolutionary plots planned to avenge his brother. On December 4, 1887, he happened to participate in a student meeting, which presumably was protesting against a lack of academic freedom. Lenin played no leading role but upon leaving the meeting was asked, like more than one hundred other students, to identify himself. After two days in jail he was excluded from the university. Customarily such a penalty was applied against notorious rabble-rousers. In this case, the penalty clearly was undeserved – undoubtedly meted out because of his kinship to Alexander.

Lenin moved to Kokushkino, situated about twenty miles from Kazan. His sister Anna was there already, and for some time Vladimir and Anna were by themselves, making full use of the excellent library that their grandfather Blank and their late uncle Dimitri had collected. Shortly afterwards, the remainder of the family joined the exiles, living comfortably as country squires. Their

mother[1] received a pension of 1,200 roubles annually, or about fifty dollars a month – approximately the equivalent of 300 to 400 dollars with the purchasing power of 1962. Kokushkino provided free quarters and free food, and there may have been an income from farming.

At that time, 100 roubles a month was a very comfortable middle-class income in any Russian city, but the financial situation of the Ulyanov family was even better: Uncle Vassily had left to Ilya a legacy with which, perhaps, the Ulyanovs bought their house. In any event, Ilya, though he had not accumulated a large fortune, left behind enough for the establishment of a 'family fund', which was skilfully administered by his widow. The Simbirsk house was sold at a profit, and there was later an inheritance from the Blank side. As we shall see, Mother Ulyanov bought an estate for 7,500 roubles, and sold it again without gain or loss, although it probably yielded an income for a time. There was sufficient money for Lenin not to need to earn any before he was twenty-seven, and Dimitri before he was twenty-eight. Maria, who had chosen no profession, made five trips to Europe, and attended courses in Belgium, France and Switzerland for several years. Her mother sent money whenever Maria requested it, this outlay causing no strain on the family's finances. Mother Ulyanov also made two or three European trips,[2] travelling first class.[3] Sister Anna married a good provider. Lenin frequently obtained money from his mother; all the brothers and sisters were assisted by the old lady when they were removed from her, in jail or in exile. In brief, the Ulyanov family was wealthy enough to allow its offspring to become professional revolutionaries.

Concentrating on his law studies, Lenin determined to discipline himself further. He smoked for a while but then gave it up, according to one version, because his mother told him it cost too much, and according to another, because his mother was very worried about his health. It is said that he stopped playing chess because it required too much of his time, but this renouncement occurred much later.

The police reported favourably on Vladimir's activities in Kokushkino. Still, his application for readmission to the University was rejected. In the fall of 1888, Lenin was permitted to return to Kazan. The family moved back with him, except Anna, who was allowed to follow only later. He twice requested permission to go abroad, once for study and another time for medical purposes, but was refused. His sister Anna related that Lenin entered a Marxist

[1] *Molodiye Gody*, p. 305.
[2] Valentinov, *Novyi Zhurnal*, op. cit., p. 225.
[3] *Istoricheskii Arkhiv* (1958), No. 2, p. 13.

circle, which Nikolai E. Fedosseyev had organized, and sought to master the theories of Marxism. No witness of this effort has ever come forward; Fedosseyev had a 'circle' at Kazan, but Lenin was not acquainted with him, as Anna herself admitted.[4] According to the police, Lenin associated at Kazan with Lazar M. Bogoraz, described as a 'notorious revolutionary'.[5] The tie with Fedosseyev is unsubstantiated, as is Anna's assertion that during that period Lenin studied *Das Kapital*.[6] Anna was an eager contributor to Lenin mythology; her testimony is particularly suspect.

In the spring of 1889, Ulyanov moved to Alakayevka, a village near Samara, and soon the entire family joined him. This was a purely professional manoeuvre: fearful that Lenin's schooling was blocked permanently and that he would be unable to practise law, his mother decided to establish him as a farmer.[7] She sold the Simbirsk house, and perhaps her share in the Kokushkino estate, and for 7,500 roubles purchased a 225-acre farm, which included a mill and a manor house. The Alakayevka farm was operated by hired labour and managed by Lenin, an episode of capitalist indulgence which has been kept in the dark. Although he gained some practical knowledge, after a half-year stint Lenin moved to Samara. He went to Alakayevka again for five summer seasons, spending there three or four months a year;[8] the property was sold in 1897.

In November, 1889, Lenin petitioned the educational authorities for permission to take examinations as an external student.[9] The police rejected the application but a second petition was approved in May, 1890. Lenin, who never was readmitted as a regular student, passed his examinations at the law school of St Petersburg University. In May 1891, his sister Olga, while a student at St Petersburg, died of typhus complicated by a skin disease; she apparently had been in poor health for some time. On a later date (October 17, 1895) Lenin reported to his mother that Olga's grave was in order, including 'the cross and the wreath'. In November of 1891 Lenin was awarded his law degree. He received the certificate of loyalty and good

[4] *Molodiye Gody*, p. 295ff and 300.

[5] Letter of September 7, 1910, by the Director of the Police Department to Foreign Bureau, Paris. The political affiliation of Bogoraz is not known. (Document in Hoover Institution.) *See also* police report of April 3, 1888 (Old Style) in *Molodiye Gody*, p. 265f.

[6] *Lénine tel qu'il fut*, Vol. 1, p. 25.

[7] *Molodiye Gody*, p. 321.

[8] Ibid., p. 459. According to brother Dimitri, Lenin read at Alakayevka, during an unstated time, Ricardo with the help of a dictionary (Ibid., p. 314). He is also said to have been singing there lyrical songs and was accompanied by his sister Olga (Ibid., p. 317f).

[9] A student who did not attend classes but was allowed to take examinations.

character necessary for admission to the bar, returned to Samara and joined the law firm of A. N. Khardin, who was described as a 'liberal'. In August 1892, Lenin was admitted to the lower courts and in September 1893, moved to St Petersburg, where he joined the law firm of M. F. Wolkenstein, another 'liberal'. It is reported that he lost all but one of the suits which he handled for the firm.

WHEN DID LENIN BECOME A MARXIST?

Several versions of Lenin's intellectual development have been advanced. Communist historians assert that Lenin was a full fledged Marxist by 1887: at seventeen he supposedly was an expert reader of *Das Kapital* and an organizer of Social Democratic cells. It is also said that he inherited Alexander's copy of *Das Kapital* and began its study immediately, so that by the time of his first arrest he already was a learned revolutionary. Yet Lenin said that he read *Das Kapital* first in January 1889, about a year after his arrest. He had then been in Kokushkino where, almost two years earlier, Anna may have transported Alexander's copy.[1] It is possible that Lenin read *Das Kapital* in January 1889 at Kazan. But a real study of this work requires months and even years. In any event, this first study hardly transformed him into a 'Marxist' as the term is understood today. It is said that he translated the *Communist Manifesto*[2] while in Samara, and that he distributed the translation which, it is claimed, has not been preserved. Undoubtedly, Lenin was anxious to learn German, so it is highly probable that he then became familiar with the *Manifesto*; but from what is known of the development of his facility with the German language, we must doubt that at nineteen or twenty he was as yet able to translate this text. If the story has any factual basis, he may have rewritten or corrected an existing translation, but it is most unlikely that his handiwork was circulated among 'illegal' circles, for he did not have any reproduction equipment.

Marx was respected by Russian revolutionaries of all shades. The *Communist Manifesto* was considered by Nechayev to be a key text; Bakunin was its first translator. *Das Kapital* was translated by

[1] N. Valentinov, 'Vstrecha Lenina s Markizmom,' *Novyi Zhurnal* (New York, 1958), No. 53. On pp. 189-208, interesting data on Lenin's intellectual development are supplied.

[2] *Lénine tel qu'il fut*, Vol. I, p. 80.

Danielson, a populist, and published in Russia during 1872;[3] the second volume was issued in German in 1885. Marx and Engels had few contacts with Russian 'Markists' but supported the populists, in the hope that perhaps Russia could achieve socialism without first passing through capitalism. The leading populists considered themselves to be pupils of Marx. The lines between the various revolutionary groups were not yet sharply drawn.

Lenin first embarked on the road to revolution by becoming 'irreligious'. He had superficially read Chernishevsky's *What Is To Be Done?* when he was fourteen, but after Alexander's execution he carefully reread it. It is therefore probable that Lenin actually became 'irreligious' at seventeen (and not at fifteen as his widow asserted). His high school grades in religion might be explained by a critical interest which arose from his experience with his brother's execution and from his attentive reading of Chernishevsky. He returned to Chernishevsky's book for several weeks in the summer of 1888; presumably he continued to study the remainder of Chernishevsky's works,[4] writings which Lenin believed had influenced Alexander. Indeed, hundreds of Russians became revolutionaries because of the teachings of Chernishevsky.

N. G. Chernishevsky came from a family of priests. He was born in 1828 at Saratov, began writing in 1853, was imprisoned in 1861, exiled to Siberia in 1863, allowed to settle in Astrakhan in 1883, and in 1889 returned to Saratov where he died a few months later. His death deeply disturbed Lenin. Chernishevsky was a materialist similar to Ludwig Feuerbach, a positivist like Auguste Comte, and a determinist, emphasizing the 'complete human being'. He was a socialist who insisted upon a communist interpretation of the equality of rights. One of his heroes says: 'My linen, your linen; my pipestem, your pipestem; my wife, your wife.' His models of socialist institutions and private co-operative organizations were patterned after Fourier, Owen, and Louis Blanc. Opposed to 'erotic

[3] In her letter to Marx of February 16, 1881, Vera Zasulich stated that the book was confiscated but that the few copies which were saved were being read avidly by *'la masse des gens plus ou moins instruits de notre pays.'* The book, she added, enjoyed great popularity in Russia. *See Marx-Engels Archiv.* ed. D. Ryazanov (Frankfurt, 1926), I. 316.

[4] 'Thanks to Chernishevsky,' Lenin reportedly stated, 'I became first acquainted with philosophical materialism. It was he, too, who first showed me the significance of Hegel. . . . From him derives my understanding of the dialectical method, after which it became much easier to grasp the dialectic of Marx. . . . I read Chernishevsky "with a pencil" in my hand, making long extracts and drafts. These notes I kept for many years. . . . I even wrote a letter to him and was very upset when I did not receive an answer.' (Report by V. V. Vorovsky on a conversation with Lenin, *Voprosy Literatury*, 1957. No. 8, p. 133, quoted in *Molodiye Gody*, p. 285f.)

problems', he vowed, 'I will love but once in all my life'. The ideal men are those able to 'realize the correct principles'. 'Such persons are few in number but through them the general life blossoms and without them, it would be choked. They are few in number but they enable all other men to breathe, for without them, those would be stifled. Honest and good men exist aplenty, but those of whom I am thinking are rare specimens.' In Thomas G. Masaryk's words: 'what the monk had been for the Church,' the ideal man 'was to be for the new society.'

In a postscript to the second edition of *Das Kapital*, Marx termed Chernishevsky a 'great Russian savant and critic'. It is not quite clear whether Marx thoroughly read Chernishevsky, who was profoundly influenced by John Stuart Mill, a writer whom Marx detested. Presumably Marx referred to Chernishevsky because he wanted to show his interest in Russia. Yet Chernishevsky was anything but a Marxist. He wanted to base socialism on ethics, and the new order upon a new set of moral values, most notably, a novel relationship between man and wife; he was opposed to the class struggle. He asserted that knowledge provides essential energy to politics, industry (including the methods of production) and human life. Chernishevsky was logical and rationalistic, but nondialectical-unhistorical. In 1872 a copy of *Das Kapital* was dispatched to his Siberian exile, but Chernishevsky, although he frequently commented on major works sent to him, never made mention of the book. Highly interested in the British economist David Ricardo, he should have looked at the work of Ricardo's successor, Marx. But apparently he did not take the time to study the weighty tome.

Chernishevsky's plans were vague and his reform proposals timid. He was a shallow thinker and an indifferent writer. His intellectual development was arrested after he reached Siberia and, although he wanted to compile a world encyclopedia, he did not read a single work on natural science after the age of twenty-two. Thus, intellecually, Chernishevsky merely was a cypher. Lenin learned from him that a 'thinking and decent person must be a revolutionary'; in the hero of *What Is To Be Done?* he found the human model towards which he was forming himself.[5]

[5] Dietrich Geyer, *Lenin in der russischen Sozialdemokratie* (Köln: Böhlau, 1962), p. 40. Geyer thinks that Valentinov exaggerated Chernishevsky's influence on Lenin. The exact measure of intellectual influences is not easy to take. *See* N. K. Krupskaya, *Reminiscences of Lenin* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959). Krupskaya relates that in Siberia Lenin had an album with pictures of political convicts, and she stressed that there was a picture of Chernishevsky and also a picture of Emile Zola because of his stand in the Dreyfus affair. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the first journal *Iskra* (1859-1873) stood under Chernishevsky's ideological guidance and was

Lenin pursued his reading with D. I. Pisarev, the nihilist writer, and A. N. Dobrolyubov, Chernishevsky's student. (Lenin's father possessed a collection of issues of the magazine *Sovremennik*, which published much of Dobrolyubov's writings.) Dobrolyubov averred that 'if platonic love of woman is ridiculous, a thousand times more ridiculous is platonic love of country, people, justice . . . The idyll, that is the enemy'. Those who protest but do not act and those who act ineffectually because they shrink from realistic and forceful action, lying instead on their beds 'planning' – those phony revolutionaries must be despised. Following a novel by Goncharov, those ineffectual, typically Russian personalities were called 'Oblomovs'. Throughout his life, Lenin applied this expression to liberal, democratic, and ethical socialists.

In Kokushkino, Lenin had access to much of the informative 'legal' revolutionary literature which had been published in Russia since the 1850's.[6] We do not know whether he took key books from Kokushkino to Kazan and then to Samara. Even if he could have done this, he was too busy with his formal studies to devote much time to such extra activities.[7] Lenin presumably knew from his mother about Ishutin and his organizational ideas, and it is likely that there existed at Kokushkino full documentation on the case. Whether Lenin learned anything about Sergei G. Nechayev, founder of the Society of the Ax, is conjectural, but the Nechayev story was well covered in magazines to which Lenin had access. The foremost socialist thinker of the period, N. K. Mikhailovsky, had in his

avidly read by the Ulyanov family (Krupskaya, p. 521). *See also* Haimson, op. cit., p. 97ff, where Lenin's interest is documented. Chernishevsky and Dobrolyubov were described as Alexander Ulyanov's *livres de chevet*. In 1908, Lenin was planning to contribute an analysis of Chernishevsky's philosophy to a collective work about him. Between 1909 and 1911, he re-read Chernishevsky and made notes on books written on that author by Plekhanov and Y. M. Steklov. *See* V. Y. Zevin and A. G. Khomento, 'Pomyetki V. I. Lenina na Knige Y. M. Steklova "N. G. Chernishevsky, yego zhizn i dyeyatelnost (1909)",' *Literaturnoye Nasledstvo, Revolutsionniye Demokraty, Novyye Materialy* (Moscow: Akademiya Nauk, 1959), pp. 9-78. Vorovsky also quoted Lenin as saying that Chernishevsky was his 'favourite author'. (*Molodiye Gody*, p. 285f). *See also* Nadezhda K. Krupskaya, 'Lenin and Chernyshevsky,' Appendix III in *Memories of Lenin* (1893-1917), London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1942.

[6] 'I read articles which had been printed in journals like *Sovremennik, Otechestvenniye Zapiski, Vestnik Yevropy*. Those magazines contained the most interesting and best articles which had been printed during the past decade on sociological and political problems.' As to fiction writers, Lenin was very much interested in Nekrassov. He commented about his stay in Kokushkino (December 1887 to fall 1888): 'Never again in my life, not even during imprisonment in Petersburg and in Siberia did I read so much as during the year after my expulsion from Kazan.' (*Molodiye Gody*, p. 285.)

[7] Ibid., p. 285.

writings analysed the ideas of Nechayev, and Dostoyevsky and Goncharov had presented the story in fictionalized versions. Mikhail A. Bakunin, in turn, was portrayed in a famous novel by Turgenev. Lenin undoubtedly was familiar with this literature, at the very least through hearsay. Upon his mind were impressed Nechayev's slogans: 'Everything for the revolution. The end justifies the means.'

It is likely that late in 1888 Lenin read George Plekhanov, the first prominent Russian Marxist writer, who had originally been a populist. The study of Plekhanov may have induced Lenin to look at *Das Kapital*. Plekhanov's *Our Disputes*, essentially a criticism of conspiracy and secret organizations, acquainted Lenin with the ideas of the Russian revolutionary tradition and of Auguste Blanqui, the French preacher of direct action. Plekhanov discussed M. A. Bakunin (and Chernishevsky), opposed the terrorism of the *Will of the People*, criticized the Jacobinism and Blanquism of P. N. Tkachev, and favoured the new approach of Karl Marx.

Thus, through primary and secondary sources, Lenin familiarized himself with Russian revolutionary thinking, learning about conspiratorial and organizational techniques before he began reading and understanding the writings of Marx. Perhaps it is true, as Lenin said later, that he became a 'Marxist' in the fall of 1889; but it was the Russian literature which prepared him for becoming a revolutionary. Although he knew about Marx from Plekhanov and may have read the *Communist Manifesto* very early in life, during the 1886-1892 period he was primarily absorbing the experiences of Russian revolutionaries.

In 1883, Plekhanov, together with Vera Zasulich, L. G. Deutsch, and P. B. Axelrod, founded abroad the first purely Social Democratic group, *Liberation of Labor*.[8] (The three founders originally had adhered to populism and terrorism.) In Russia that year the first Social Democratic group was founded by Blagoyev, a Bulgarian, and by Vassili Kharitonov. Social Democratic cells were formed in Minsk, Vilna, and Kiev in 1883 and 1884. In 1885, the Blagoyev group, whose membership was scattered in the wake of Alexander Ulyanov's *attentat* in 1887, published a magazine, *Rabochy*. The first Social Democratic group in St Petersburg was formed in 1885 by N. V. Vodovozov. Through the late 1880's Social Democratic organizations existed at Moscow, Odessa, Tula, Saratov, Kazan and Samara. Although prior to 1891 none of these were of any significance, Lenin

[8] How much were these people really committed to Marxism? Plekhanov made contact with Engels only in 1890. The lateness and superficiality of this contact between the first Russian and the first European Marxist are difficult to explain.

had ample opportunity to 'get organized' if he only chose to do so.

WHAT IS RUSSIAN MARXISM?

The early Russian Marxists experienced considerable intellectual travail: the prophet himself was quite uncertain as to the degree of applicability of his oracular theory to Russia. Vera Zasulich, in 1881, asked him to reveal to his Russian disciples what he thought about the future of the agrarian commune – one of the crucial questions separating the 'Marxists' from the 'populists'. The 'Marxists', she wrote to London, allege that the commune is bound to perish. Though Marx did not consider this question in *Das Kapital*, his followers assert that he would have affirmed the commune's doom if he had concerned himself with Russia. Zasulich wanted to know exactly what Marx was thinking about the future of the commune. Was Russia forced to pass through *all* phases of capitalism before it could attain socialism? How long would it be before Russian capitalism would reach the stage of European capitalism? If citizen Marx was unable to write a detailed dissertation on the subject, could he at least render to the Russian socialists the service of writing a letter which Zasulich would translate and publish in Russia?[1]

Marx, who was on friendly terms with the populist Peter Lavrov and who had a set of the latter's paper *Vperyed* (1875-76) in his library, found it difficult to reply. He wrote four drafts totalling about 10,000 words, finally penning a short apologetic letter stating that he could not produce an answer suitable for publication. He was ill and already was reneging on a promise, made several months earlier, to clarify the matter. This promise, incidentally, had been given to the St Petersburg executive committee of the *Narodnaya Volya* which was then preparing the assassination of Alexander II.

Marx told Zasulich that the 'fatalité historique', which he had discovered, applied only to Western Europe. In a letter to a Russian editor he had argued the identical point in 1877, but the letter had never been dispatched. *Das Kapital*, he added, contained no statement for or against the 'vitality' of the rural commune. (He probably meant 'viability'.) Still, he was convinced that the commune could serve as the base of social regeneration in Russia, *provided* it were allowed to function properly and develop normally.[2] Naturally, both he and the recipient realized that this qualifying clause negated the point.

[1] *Marx-Engels Archiv*, op. cit., p. 317.
[2] *Marx-Engels Archiv*, op. cit., p. 314f.

Already in 1875 Friedrich Engels had written in a polemic against P. N. Tkachev that the commune was apparently moving to its dissolution but that it might be saved in a higher form, *provided* there were a proletarian revolution in Western Europe. Engels specifically denied that the Russian peasants were closer to socialism than were the European workers. This implied that Engels did not consider the commune to be an easy bridge for Russia's passage to socialism. Actually, he even argued that the *mir* (commune) was the foundation of 'oriental despotism.'[3]

In his drafts of the letter to Zasulich Marx showed himself to be increasingly undecided or confused. He apparently wanted to say that in Russia the stages of capitalism could be passed through quickly, that the archaic commune could be reconstituted in a more advanced form. Such a belief implied that the commune as it existed would have to be dissolved; the argument was omitted from the letter. Marx also indicated that he did not know the 'Marxists' about whom Zasulich was speaking: the Russians *he* knew held opposite views. This statement probably signified that Marx's Russian contacts did not consider the commune to be doomed. This remark he also dropped. Eduard Bernstein later disclosed that Marx and Engels were in fact quite sceptical about the commune but were unwilling to impart their doubts to the populists, whom they believed to be genuine revolutionaries. In fact, after Plekhanov left the populists to go abroad, Marx criticized the gentlemen who opposed revolutionary activity and aimed to achieve the millennium 'by means of the dullest of dull doctrinaire views'. This was certainly not bestowing the blessing of apostolic succession on Marxism in Russia.[4]

The interesting point is that Zasulich, Plekhanov, Axelrod and Deutsch literally forgot that Marx had replied to the query posed by Zasulich. They did not even recall his answer when, years later, David Ryazanov asked them about Marx's response and they denied that Marx had ever commented. This incident characterizes the authenticity of Russian Marxism, though, admittedly, Marx offered no sensible message to his admirers.

By 1883, Zasulich had begun to consider the gradual dissolution of the commune as 'inevitable', though she felt that some 'remnants' might continue to be useful. During the nineties, the Marxist group under Plekhanov's leadership was outspokenly critical of the commune, rejecting the romantic notion that this decrepit institution could possibly act as a forerunner to socialism.

A second cleavage between Marx and the Russian revolutionaries

[3] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, Vol. 18 (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), p. 563.

[4] *See also* ibid., Vol. 19, pp. 107-112, 407-424.

concerned political-revolutionary action. Marx co-operated with Bakunin within the First International but broke with him after the collapse of the Paris Commune in 1871. The breach, though due partly to personal reasons, occurred primarily because of a topical disagreement: Marx opposed revolution through conspiracy. The contemporary evaluation of this dispute, as generally accepted by European socialists, held that Bakunin was a 'conspirator by profession' who longed 'to make revolution' and who believed that the revolution could be achieved entirely by the thought and will of 'revolutionary man'. This doctrine would play into the hands of reaction. Marx, by contrast, was intent upon identifying 'the laws of the organic development of all historical phenomena'. He was anything but a conspirator, and already before 1848 opposed the initiating of revolution by a 'ferocious devotee of fulminating mercury' (*Knallsilber-Wuetrich*). Marx disliked the pretentious 'Rinaldo Rinaldini concept of politics' which characterized Bakunin.[5]

This interpretation would seem to eliminate 'professional revolutionaries' from the Marxist fold. But Marx was inconsistent. The Russian writer Paul Annenkov assisted in 1847 at a debate between Marx and Wilhelm Weitling, a German 'maker of revolution'. Marx asked Weitling: 'Tell us, you made so much noise with your Communist propaganda . . . and attracted so many workers, depriving them of their jobs and bread; with what arguments do you defend your social revolutionary agitation and on what basis do you want to place this agitation in the future?' Weitling replied that he was using those theories which were most likely to open the workers' eyes and transform them into self-reliant activists.

Furious, Marx argued that it was fraudulent to incite the people without first producing a firm basis for revolutionary action. Arousing unattainable hopes would never lead to the salvation of the sufferers, Marx believed, but would instead entail their perdition: empty propaganda presupposes both an enthusiastic apostle and idiots listening to him with their mouths open. Marx added wistfully that Weitling's tactics perhaps were applicable to Russia, where conspiracies (*Vereinigungen*) were feasible and did in fact exist among 'absurd apostles and absurd disciples'.[6]

It is impossible to determine whether those Russians who called themselves Marxists actually were Marxists or even whether Marx, had he been a Russian, would have become and remained a Marxist. Almost every Russian revolutionary was indebted to Marx, but practically none could be genuine followers because of conditions

[5] 'Karl Marx,' *Die Neue Zeit* (1883), I, 447. The article presumably was written by Karl Kautsky.

[6] 'Eine russische Stimme über Karl Marx,' *Die Neue Zeit*, I, 238f.

existing in Russia to which his doctrines were irrelevant. Lenin was an authentic Marxist in that he extracted from Marx's philosophy the basic concepts pertinent to his operations in a country in which constitutionalism and democracy appeared infeasible.

The insistence on the Marxian figleaf also was due to cultural reasons: to be really acceptable to progressive Russian intellectuals, a political doctrine had to be 'scientific' and 'Western'. The dogmatism of the Russian revolutionaries precluded the cynical use of ideologies as mere façades. Instead, these men argued as true believers. But, while most revolutionaries lived in a realm of fiction, Lenin was a genuine revolutionary in that he was able, and forever ready, to use ideas functionally, in order to respond to the exigencies of concrete situations. He tailored interpretations to realities which he viewed through the eyes of an activist. He used Marxism in the way a military commander uses maps.

FEDOSSEYEV

The allegation that Lenin joined at Kazan the Social Democratic circle headed by Nikolai Efgrafovich Fedosseyev (1871-1898) has been previously mentioned.[1] Between 1886 and 1887, Fedosseyev, a pupil of the Kazan gymnasium (from which he later was expelled), participated in a populist self-education circle. It was not until 1888 that he founded a Marxist student group, but by then Lenin had left Kazan, so that Lenin and Fedosseyev did not meet.

According to another version, Lenin joined a Marxist circle headed by L. M. Bogoraz and supervised by N. A. Motovilov. This story is supported by police records which, however, do not mention Motovilov. Among the members of the Bogoraz circle was A. M. Peshkov, later known as Maxim Gorky. Motovilov was exiled from Kazan in 1887, and Gorky and Lenin did not meet. Nor did Lenin meet P. N. Skvortsov, the local Marxist theoretician who was publishing widely and who introduced Fedosseyev to Marxism. It is entirely likely that Lenin occasionally met Bogoraz or other revolutionary students. Police records state vaguely that he continued to be in contact with 'unreliable persons',[2] but no recorded details exist

[1] N. E. Fedosseyev, *Stati i pisma*, Moscow, 1958; Ts. K.R.K.P. Komissiya po istorii Oktyabrskoi revolyutsii i R.K.P. (b), *Fedosseyev Nikolai Efgrafovich, Odin iz pionerov revolyutsionnogo Marksizma v Rosii (Sbornik vospominanii)*, Moscow, 1923; and S. V. Shcheprov, *Vydayushchiisya revolyutsioner* N. E. *Fedosseyev*, Moscow, 1958.

[2] *Molodiye Gody*, p. 303. Concerning the fact that Lenin did not meet Fedosseyev at Kazan, *see* A. Ulyanova-Yelizarova, *V. I. Ulyanov (N. Lenin)*, Moscow, 1934, p. 24.

for the period prior to the summer of 1895. In any event, these contacts did not induce him to become an organized member of a circle, certainly not of a Marxist cell at a time when the Marxists had barely begun to differentiate themselves from the populists. Lenin himself discounted stories about his early revolutionary activity.

Lenin's sister stated that her brother was aware of the existence of Fedosseyev's circle, and knew some of the participants, but she specifically denied Lenin's membership in this group; she did not mention any other cell.[3] Lenin, wishing either to be readmitted to the university, or to obtain permission to go abroad, had to be discreet about his connections with revolutionary study groups. Or perhaps he simply was not interested.

At that time, revolutionary self-education was the fashion and, as an aid to individual study, reading lists or revolutionary bibliographies were compiled for distribution among students. Impressed by what may be termed 'literary logistics', Fedosseyev went one step further, collecting Russian press clippings concerning Marx and Marxism, putting the data (which went back to 1860) into systematic order, and thus providing an index to Marxism. He established facilities for the reproduction of forbidden or hard-to-obtain books, and distributed bibliographies, synopses, and reviews of books and articles, including a list of the works by Marx and Engels.

Gorky regarded the Fedosseyev catalogue as outstanding, calling it the 'font of wisdom'. There is little doubt that Lenin's early Marxist knowledge was derived in great part from Fedosseyev's work. Many years later Lenin told Gorky that the 'catalogue' had been in his hands in 1889, adding that 'no one could have put together a better guide.'[4]

Intelligent, well-read and linguistically as capable as he was, Fedosseyev would, nonetheless, have been unable to compile this documentation alone. He probably received the material from Skvortsov or Motovilov,[5] the leading socialist intellectuals of Kazan. These men, in turn, may have received aid from Professor N. I. Zieber, whose dissertation was devoted to *Das Kapital* and who became the first Russian academician to lecture on Marx. Forced to leave Kiev University in 1875, Zieber died in 1883 after suffering from mental sickness. It is more than likely that the catalogue, for the most part, consisted of materials given to Fedosseyev by

[3] *Molodiye Gody*, p. 300.

[4] N. Valentinov, 'Vstrecha Lenina s Marksizmom', *Novyi Zhurnal*, Vol. 53, New York, 1958, p. 206.

[5] Fedosseyev, *Stati i pisma*, pp. 32 and 35. Fedosseyev also received Marxist literature from Pavel Levashov who was living abroad. (Shcheprov, p. 19.)

Skvortsov and that the summaries of German texts were originally assembled by Zieber.

In 1888, Fedosseyev, at the age of seventeen, was highly active in organizational work. A prodigious worker who read voluminously, he utilized most of his time setting up revolutionary groups and circulating propaganda, expending great energy on the development of a social Democratic programme. Fedosseyev rejected terror and, contrary to other Marxists, called for an alliance between workers and peasants.[6] When interrogated about the programme, he stated that it consisted of a theoretical and a technical part, and a third section dealing with the use of propaganda.[7] The first parts were not found, but the last section was uncovered. It divided audiences, for purposes of propaganda, into cultured classes, peasants, workers, soldiers, and 'the people'. It also asserted the necessity of organizing both for propaganda and combat, stressing the need to spread ideas by print. In prison, Fedosseyev commented that, in his judgment, propaganda was to be directed above all to the workers. He added that legal as well as illegal means were required, and that he was about to work out a scheme for the party's 'inner organization'. 'Leninism', then, was in the making before Lenin.

In the fall of 1889 Lenin was alleged to have joined a Marxist student circle in Samara. This claim is probably false, for Lenin was devoting most of his time to the study of law as well as the business of farming. He was not even in Samara, but on the farm. Unquestionably, he was reading a great deal. Perhaps he met one or another 'Marxist', but he probably avoided revolutionaries in order not to jeopardize his readmission to the university.

Sister Anna related that in Samara Lenin was familiarizing himself with the operations and conspiratorial techniques of the old *Will of the People* group. Samara was full of former Siberian exiles who could have served as instructors. A. I. Livanov was identified as one person who taught Lenin. Another was N. S. Dolgov, a former member of Nechayev's group and a student of N. P. Ogarev's writings. (Ogarev, a close friend of Alexander Herzen, was one of the originators of the combat party concept.) The sister disclosed that Lenin studied the trials of the old revolutionaries; thus, he may then have become familiar with the Nechayev case.[8]

In 1891, at Samara, Lenin met Maria Petrovna Yasneva, a revo-

[6] Plekhanov began opposing terrorism during 1879-1881, notably the notion that tsarism could be overthrown by assassinating the Tsar, because it prevented the revolutionaries from accomplishing their real mission of agitation. He did not want a 'staff without army', nor a party without foundations and influence among the people. *Cf.* Leopold H. Haimson, op. cit., p. 37f.

[7] *Shcheprov*, p. 25.

[8] *Lénine tel qu'il fut*, Vol. I, p. 30.

lutionary school teacher who was nine years his senior. It is stated that Lenin was presented to her as an 'outstanding democrat'.[9] After their first meeting, Lenin walked Maria home – the first time that a romantic interest is reported in his life. (Maria later married V. S. Golubev, a former populist, a compiler of revolutionary bibliographies, and conductor of the populist self-education circle where Fedosseyev began his career.) Maria continued relations with Lenin for some time and in 1893 introduced him to a revolutionary group in St Petersburg. She finally became a terrorist 'judge' in the Bolshevik police. In 1891, Maria was still an ardent populist: she was a pupil of P. G. Zaichnevsky, a leader of *Land and Liberty* and intellectually akin to Tkachev. Zaichnevsky, considering reforms to be mere palliatives, advocated violent revolution made by a dictatorially run centralized party: 'We shall cry "to the axes" and we will strike the imperial family without sparing the blows.' He uttered one line which must have appealed to Lenin throughout his life: 'Who is not with us, is against us.' Maria reported that she talked to Lenin about 'seizure of power'.[10] Lenin did not dispute her position but asked *who* was to seize power. The people, he argued, were not homogeneous, but rather consisted of different classes. Lenin's points were quite conventional: his argumentation did not disclose that he had become a full-fledged 'revolutionary Marxist'.

When did this conversation take place? Lenin went to St Petersburg in March 1891. It is likely that he met Maria in November 1891, after his return to Samara. He had passed his examinations and was petitioning for admittance to the Samara bar. He began working in a law firm only in the spring of 1892 and thus had time for romantic evening walks during this period.

It follows that Lenin's so-called Marxist activities have been predated and exaggerated: Lenin's *serious* study of the Russian economy and of Marx's teachings hardly began before the summer or fall of 1892.

LENIN BECOMES ACTIVE

There was good reason for the sudden upsurge in Lenin's political interests. The harvest of 1891 had been poor and conditions became worse, so that before the 1892 crop was gathered, a severe famine hit Samara province. About fourteen million people in the Volga area were affected; typhus and cholera were rampant. Government mismanagement was as widespread as hunger and disease: barely

[9] Ibid., p. 137.
[10] Ibid., p. 139.

one-twentieth of the sum required for relief was made available. But an order forbidding the exportation of grain was generally disregarded, probably because the shipments were indispensable to the financial stability of the Russian government.[1]

Lenin was travelling about on legal business. He observed that, as the peasants fled the villages and went to the cities, they transformed themselves into industrial workers or proletarians. In his preoccupation with the peasant problem, Lenin was still following the main stream of Russian revolutionary thinking. But gradually, as he came to recognize the faults of the populists, he broke his ties with the non-Marxists. It is reported that in the fall of 1892 he began to write about the famine, supposedly arguing that 'famine performs a progressive function'. 'Talk of feeding the starving is nothing but an expression of the saccharine sweet sentimentality so characteristic of our intelligentsia.' He apparently discouraged his friends from assisting in the relief actions which might have stabilized the bourgeois order. According to Lenin, the impulse to help the victims arose from bourgeois class interest.[2]

What was bad for the government was good for the revolution – this was the primitive logic which Lenin was learning. If the starving were not fed, the peasants would lose their faith in the Tsar, and the revolution would be hastened. He was beginning to comprehend the importance of the overall social order; this, undoubtedly, was a reflection of Marxian thought. But his callousness about the famine shows that the traditions of conspiracy were quite alive in him. Plekhanov, by contrast, advocated that the guilt of the government be exposed and a constitutional movement uniting liberals and democrats be created to agitate for a constituent assembly. Such moderation, however, did not fit Lenin's psychology.

Lenin's early manuscripts, most of which have not been preserved, probably illustrated a confrontation between Marxism and populism. One paper, in fact, is said to have been a dialogue between a populist and a Social Democrat, a likely theme for a person in intellectual transition and travail. Lenin's firm commitment to Marxism indeed presupposed insight into the populist ideology which he had rejected. The confrontations did not take place exclusively in his mind: in his efforts to understand Marxism, he was assisted by others who had already penetrated the mysteries of Marx. Notably fruitful was his association with Isaac Christoforovich Lalayants who, during 1888-1889, had participated in Fedosseyev's group at Kazan. Together

[1] Haimson commented: 'In this respect, the famine of 1891 offers a striking parallel to the famine of 1932-33.' There also were striking parallels with the famines which occurred under Lenin's rule. Haimson, op. cit., p. 49.

[2] Scheibert, *Historische Zeitschrift*, op. cit., p. 561f.