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LENIN THROUGH INDIAN EYES

K.P.S. MENON

Foreword by
V. K. R. V. RAO

VIKAS PUBLICATIONS
DELHI • BOMBAY • BANGALORE

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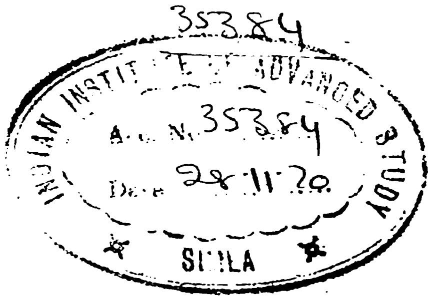

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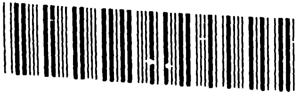

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PRINTED IN INDIA

At Delhi Press, Rani Jhansi Road, Jhandewala Estate, New Delhi and published by Mrs Sharda Chawla, Vikas Publications, 5 Daryaganj, Ansari Road, Delhi-6

FOREWORD

There have been few individuals in the history of mankind who wielded social and political influence of such great quality and magnitude as Lenin did not only in his own country but all over the world. There have been still fewer men whose influence and message has had a timeless and enduring quality. Lenin was and continues to be a source of inspiration to the oppressed and exploited humanity struggling for social and economic emancipation all over the world. There had been innumerable struggles and revolts of the oppressed classes through the human history—revolts which were abortive and unsuccessful through lack of leadership, ideology, and organization. It will remain Lenin's everlasting glory that he was the leader of the first successful revolution of the workers and peasants in Czarist Russia. He emerged as the leader of the victorious October Socialist Revolution which caused profound awakening and ferment among the toiling masses all over the world. Here was a man who combined deep compassion for the working humanity with bitter hatred and ruthlessness towards the exploiting classes, great daring with the skills of a strategist of political warfare, and unerring practical sense with great theoretical sophistication.

Above all, Lenin had unshakeable faith in the nobility of his cause and in the ultimate victory of the working classes.

Lenin is remembered, however, not only for leading a victorious political revolution, he is also remembered for initiating the process of reconstruction of a new society. The few years that he lived after the Revolution provide eloquent testimony to the fact that his mission was not only to destroy the old order but to create a new. He showed his genius not only in leading the political assault on the tyrannical Czarist regime but also in mobilizing the resurgent but inexperienced and untrained masses of workers and peasants for the defence of the first Workers' State and for economic and social reconstruction. The passage through numerous trials and tribulations of the infant socialist state into a formidable world power, the emergence of many more socialist states, the liberation of the peoples of the colonies in Asia and Africa and their active striving for socialist order—these great developments following the demise of Lenin represent the grand culmination of the vision that Lenin conceived even as early as in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Lenin was thus not merely the architect of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics which has now attained the position of a major world power, with only one other world power, namely, the United States of America, holding a comparable position. He is also not merely the successful leader of a socialist revolution and the creator of the first socialist state in world history.

He is also one of the greatest figures in human history, who proved equally adept in the world of thought and the world of action. An idealist who never lost touch with reality, a revolutionary who knew and practised the distinction between strategy and tactics, a leftist who had the courage to denounce and control what he called left-wing deviationists, a socialist who saw the value of and insisted on the retention of the country's cultural inheritance from its non-socialist past, Lenin was a many-sided individual with a rarely-seen integration of personality. Among the few individuals who have left their personal imprint on human history, Lenin takes a ranking position both by the depth of the impact that he made as also by the extent to which it has covered the world's surface and population.

The centenary birth anniversary of Lenin should not be an occasion for mere eulogizing but should be used for serious self-questioning and heart-searching by all those who are interested in the life and teachings of Lenin. Those who claim to be his followers need also to recognize that the world of today is in many ways vastly different from that of Lenin's lifetime. Many of his ideas are, therefore, bound to be inapplicable for the world of today. The enduring element of his message should be therefore sought not so much in his programme and prescriptions as in the universal causes which he espoused with extraordinary energy, single-minded devotion, and selfless service. "My life is my message", said Gandhi and the same can perhaps be said for Lenin also as for all great leaders. For Lenin's

life was a life of passionate and unmitigated commitment to the cause of emancipation of the oppressed and exploited of the world. We must remember that vast masses in the continents of Asia, Africa, and Latin America are still not emancipated from the scourge of poverty, hunger and economic insecurity; that the masses in vast parts of the world are still not free from the exploitation of man by man; that while the division of the world into ruling and ruled nations may be fast becoming a thing of the past, the division into affluent and poverty-stricken nations is still a living reality which thwarts the integration of the whole of mankind into a fraternity sharing equally the fruits of scientific advance and material progress. The most fitting tribute which can be paid to Lenin on his birth centenary, therefore, is to re-dedicate ourselves to the cause of emancipation of the suffering and deprived which was dearest to Lenin's heart.

It is delightful to read the scintillating essays in which Shri K. P. S. Menon has unfolded the many facets of Lenin's personality and explained the permanency of his place in world history. I commend this little volume to all those who seek an introduction to Lenin before delving deeper to know more about him.

V.K.R.V. Rao
Chairman
Lenin Centenary Celebrations Committee
India

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE BULK OF THIS book consists of articles which I wrote on the occasion of the centenary of Lenin's birth to various newspapers and magazines such as the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, the *Indian Express*, *Link*, the Madras *Mail*, the *National Herald*, and *Yojana*. One article, "Lenin and India," was contributed to a Soviet journal, *Culture and Life*. The book opens with my broadcast over the All India Radio on "Lenin, the Architect of the Soviet State," on Lenin centenary day. The article, "Lenin's Style," is based on a talk which I gave in Bombay at a seminar on "Lenin as Speaker and Writer." The last article, "The Lenin Centenary in India," is based on my address at the International Lenin Seminar in Moscow under the auspices of the Union of Soviet Socialist Societies for Friendly and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. The only change made in the articles is a deletion here and there to avoid overlapping.

To the All India Radio and to the journals in which the articles in this book originally appeared, I convey my grateful acknowledgements.

K.P.S. MENON

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I

LENIN, THE ARCHITECT OF THE SOVIET STATE

IT HAS BEEN SAID that one of the most uncouth features of our age is the rise of the one-dimensional man with the one-dimensional mind. Lenin was the reverse: he was a man of many dimensions. He was at once thinker, scholar, writer, politician, diplomat, administrator, iconoclast, and constructive statesman.

Perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of Lenin was the perfect fusion between knowledge and action. 2500 years ago, Confucius said: "To act is easy, to know is difficult." History is full of incidents which prove the wisdom of this saying. Many a revolution has proved abortive because men acted but did not know. Such was the case with the Pugachev Revolt in Russia in 1773. "It was a typical Russian revolution," said Lenin, "wild and senseless."

"Wild and senseless," too, was the conduct of Lenin's own brother, Alexander Ulyanov, who was involved in

an attempt to assassinate the Tsar and was executed. In the fortress of Peter and Paul in Leningrad, formerly St. Petersburg, I saw the dark cell in which Alexander had been kept, pending execution. In front of the cell is a photograph of his mother weeping and his brother, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, still in his teens, comforting her saying: "We must choose another path." That path was Marxism.

Lenin's philosophical outlook was derived from Marx. Both believed in the materialistic interpretation of history. Both stressed the economic factor in the affairs of men. And both believed that all history is a history of class struggles.

Lenin, however, was no blind follower, no unthinking disciple of Marx, any more than Nehru was of Gandhi. He quoted with approval the saying of Engels that "our doctrine is not a dogma but a guide to action." "By losing sight of this fact," said Lenin, "we turn Marxism into something one-sided, dispirited and lifeless; we deprive it of its life-blood... and we undermine its connection with the definite practical tasks of the epoch, which may change with every new turn of history." If Lenin had lived today, he would have recognized, as the 20th Congress of Communist Party of the USSR did in 1956, that the most important practical task in this atomic epoch is to prevent war and to save civilization.

Lenin adopted from Marx not merely the philosophy of communism but the strategy for a communist revolution. Marx held that in such a revolution the proletariat should take the lead.

Unfortunately, Russia did not have much of a proletariat. Even in 1917 the number of industrial workers in Russia came only to 11½ million out of a total population of 175 million. Marx therefore thought that Western Europe, and especially England, which he himself knew better, was a more fertile field for revolution.

Lenin, however, was not prepared to take everything Marx said as gospel truth. If he had done so, he would have hesitated to launch the Revolution in Russia. He knew his Russia better than Marx. He knew that the Russian proletariat, small as it was, formed good material for revolution. Its character is best reflected in the stories of Maxim Gorky, the herald of the Revolution of 1917. There we see desperate characters, full of an abounding vitality, overweening egoism and an impotent rage against society.

Such men and women answered to Lenin's description of Pugachev's rebellion, "wild and senseless." But Lenin knew that their wildness could be harnessed to the task of the Revolution, provided some sense could be put into their heads. Not sense in the sense of horse-sense — they were by no means lacking in it — but sense in the sense of knowledge, especially knowledge of the mechanics of revolution. Lenin himself had read extensively and pondered deeply over this subject. For a quarter of a century, Lenin poured out a stream of pamphlets, booklets and books preparing the minds of men for the Revolution. And when he knew that the time was ripe, he launched it. His timing was perfect.

"The 25th October," he said, "would be too soon; the 27th would be too late." And so he gave the signal on the 26th.

In launching the Revolution Lenin relied primarily on the workers of Russia. But he thought that the workers could not be left to themselves. "By their own efforts," said Lenin, "workers can only arrive at a trade union mentality. For the establishment of a new order, they must be led by a small highly trained group of intellectuals, acting as the vanguard of the Revolution."

Lenin insisted on strict discipline on the part of his comrades. "Learn from Germany," said Lenin, "Germany embodies a ferocious imperialism, but she also embodies the principles of discipline, organization, harmonious cooperation, appreciation of modern machine industry and the strictest audit and control."

Lenin set up a state characterized not only by ideological fervour but by certain qualities which were conspicuously absent in pre-revolutionary Russia, such as unity, discipline, a sense of dedication and zeal for work. The apparatus of the Party and the Government was designed to foster these qualities and to suppress their opposites. At the Third Party Congress the decision was taken to prohibit the emergence of separate political groups with separate programmes. To us, used to the western concept of parliamentary democracy, this might seem undemocratic. Yet, seeing the way in which democracy has been reduced to a caricature in many countries by the growth of groupism, defectionism and sheer opportunism, one cannot throw

stones at a system which, in spite of counter-revolution, civil war, foreign intervention and two world wars, raised Russia, in the brief span of half a century, from a backward State to a super-power, super not only in military might and industrial output but in education and culture as well. For this tremendous achievement, which has had, and is continuing to have, repercussions throughout the world, the credit goes to one man, more than any other, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

The Soviet people are well aware of the debt which they owe to Lenin. At the ceremonial session of the USSR Supreme Soviet in Moscow on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the Revolution, I heard Mr. Brezhnev describe him thus: "An intellectual who turned communism from a utopia into a science; an organizer, unsurpassed in revolutionary strategy and tactics; a man of principle who displayed maximum flexibility in matters of detail; an ardent revolutionary who ridiculed pseudo-revolutionary phrase-mongering; a brave fighter who was yet ready to compromise on occasions; an ideologue who could not tolerate anything smacking of bigotry or dogmatism; and withal a man who was extraordinarily modest with not a trace of vanity or play-acting." This vivid word-picture brings out the qualities which distinguished Lenin, the architect of the first socialist state in the world.

2

TWO DECREES OF PEACE: ASOKA'S AND LENIN'S

TO ORTHODOX COMMUNISTS as well as non-communists, it might seem strange, if not sacrilegious, that anyone should couple the names of Asoka and Lenin. Yet one person had the temerity to do so recently.

This person, presiding at Cuttack, the capital of Orissa, over the inaugural session of the Ninth National Conference of the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society dedicated to the memory of Lenin, referred to the fact that the first decree issued by Lenin, soon after the outbreak of the October Revolution, was the famous Decree on Peace. And it was Orissa which impelled Emperor Asoka to issue his decrees of peace, carved on rock pillars from one end of the country to the other. It was therefore appropriate that a conference in honour of the memory of Lenin should be held in the capital of Orissa.

I must confess that the culprit who made this observa-

tion was myself. It was meant primarily as a compliment to our hosts in Orissa, who had made elaborate arrangements for the conference.

The decrees of peace, issued by Lenin and Asoka, had the same goal: peace. Yet their motivation was different. The two decrees are worth examining, because they reveal different, and not necessarily contradictory, sets of considerations which have inspired man from time immemorial in his endless yet fruitless search for peace.

Asoka's edicts, containing exhortations, admonitions, declarations of policy and administrative instructions, form a most remarkable dialogue between a monarch and his people. Within a stone's throw of Cuttack stands the Dhauli edict, which runs:

> All human beings are my children. What else can I wish for my children other than that they should be happy and prosperous? Let everybody's dealings be free from malice. Let all put in their best efforts. This is what I have stated everywhere — even at distant Taxila.

What better advice could there be even today, after a lapse of 2000 years, for the conduct of men in public and in private than that they should eschew malice and put in their best effort — advice which, in a country like ours, where politicians rule the roost, it is particularly for them to remember?

The circumstances under which Asoka turned from

war to peace are fully described in his rock edict No. 13. In the eighth year of his reign, 270 B.C., he conquered Orissa, then known as Kalinga. A hundred thousand people were slain, many times that number died, and a hundred and fifty thousand were carried away as captives. This caused remorse in the royal heart and Asoka decided to turn, once for all, from conquest of territory to pursuit of Dharma.

The edict purports to have been written primarily for the Emperor's sons, grandsons and greatgrandsons, lest, hearing about his conquests, they might be tempted to undertake similar conquests. Asoka asks them to remember that "the only true conquest is conquest by Dharma." And then comes again the Emperor's stress on the need for hard work: "Let the devotion of all be in the pleasure of exertion, for that is good for life in this world and in the next."

Lenin's Decree on Peace, withdrawing Russia from the First World War, was prompted by a variety of considerations. Lenin's heart too went out to his people for the sufferings they had been undergoing in the First World War. Even after the Revolution, there was a party in Russia which insisted on continuing the war against Germany and on refusing to come to terms with her. To them Lenin said: "We hold so dear the blood of the workers and peasants which has been shed so long in Russia that, however, harsh the terms of peace may be, we are prepared to accept them."

Lenin was a realist. The decision whether a country should wage war or not must be related to her capacity

to do so. In 1917, Russia was not in a position to continue the fight against Germany. She had been bled white during the war, and yet her allies were pressing her to put more and more troops into it. In the Memoirs of Maurice Palealogue, the last French Ambassador to the Court of the Tsar, there is an interesting account of a conversation between him and the Tsar. On instructions from the French Government, he requested the Tsar to increase the number of Russian troops fighting against Germany. The Tsar pointed out that already more Russian troops were in the war than British and French troops put together. Palealogue observed that that was only natural, because Russia's population was far greater than that of France and England. But, said the Tsar, even proportionately to the population, there were more Russian than French and German troops on the front. Palealogue then mumbled to himself that, after all, it was not numbers that counted. Whatever standard one applied, whether literacy or culture or anything else, the Frenchman and the Russian were not in the same class. It was this superior, supercilious attitude which provoked Revolution in Russia. And not in Russia alone.

Lenin did not think that the First World War had any relevance to the genuine interests of the people of Russia. In his eyes, it was an imperialist war—a war between rival imperialisms and nothing more. Or, as Sardar K. M. Panikkar put it, it was simply a "European Civil War," with no wider interests for Asia and Africa.

Though Lenin was opposed to the First World War, he recognized that it had served a useful purpose. To use his own phrase, it had placed the bayonet on the existing order. The existing order having collapsed in Russia, the task of the hour was to save the new order from extinction. In 1918, counter-revolution, backed by foreign intervention, was in full swing; and no fewer than fourteen foreign armies were fighting on Russian soil. It looked as if Russia would be reduced to the size of the Duchy of Moscow before the reign of Ivan the Terrible.

It was this critical situation which prompted Lenin to make peace with Germany. For Russia it was a cruel peace. Under the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Russia was obliged to recognize the independence of Ukraine and Finland, to surrender the Baltic States and that portion of Poland, which had been annexed to Russia in the nineteenth century, to cede to Turkey the Georgian province of Kars and the Armenian province of Ardahan, and to pay an indemnity of one hundred billion marks to Germany. This treaty cost Russia a third of her population, 40 per cent of her industrial plant and equipment, 20 per cent of her iron and steel, and 90 per cent of her sugar.

"Must we ratify this peace, this unheard of peace more humiliating and more predatory than any before?" asked Lenin. He went on to say: "My answer is: Yes, absolutely yes. By signing this peace, we get a breathing space to put our defences in order and get our people to unite and fight."

In other words, it was a case of *retirer pour mieux sauter* (retreat in order to leap better). The time for leaping against Germany came twenty years later; and it was Germany herself, under Hitler, which precipitated it.

Thus the motives which prompted Asoka and Lenin to issue their respective decrees on peace were different. To Lenin it was a political necessity; to Asoka a moral imperative. India, however, has no reason to be self-righteous and to think that she has always followed Asoka. In the annals of Indian history, too, there have been many predatory wars. Indian philosophy itself, even in its highest ranges, has not always conformed to the policy of Asoka, which was based on the gospel of the Buddha. Why, that quintessence of the Hindu scriptures, the *Bhagavad Gita,* is an exhortation to man to take up arms and fight for the right. Not to do so, said Krishna to Arjuna, would be to court infamy in this world and perdition in the other.

One cannot help reflecting how often the names of Asoka, Buddha and Gandhi were taken in vain during the Gandhi centenary year and even earlier. In 1964, there took place in New Delhi an Anti-Nuclear Arms Convention, presided over by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, who said: "India owes it to the memory of Gandhi to disarm unilaterally and to set a noble example to humanity and, if need be, to oppose her enemies like Pakistan and China with a Shanti Sena in the name of true non-violence."

Among the people who aired such theories were some

who had been in favour of "useful military alliances." Some of them were also prompted by their animus against Jawaharlal Nehru and their desire to discredit him, so much so that a participant remarked that the Anti-Nuclear Conference turned out to be an Anti-Nehru Conference. Nehru lashed out against such men who, "in the name of truth and non-violence, put forward a most impracticable and unrealistic proposition." He took them to task for talking about non-violence while cherishing violence in their hearts, and he accused them of using Gandhi's name to misguide the people, knowing fully well that India could not afford to make any unilateral gestures of disarmament with two formidable enemies at her door.

To say that Asoka was an idealist, that Lenin was a realist, and that Nehru was a cross between the two would be to simplify matters unduly. A statesman, as distinct from a politician, must have an element of idealism as well as realism.

In any case, so far as the attitude towards war and peace is conceived, the gulf between idealism and realism has been reduced by the advent of the atom bomb. Now it is generally recognized that a conventional war may grow into a nuclear war and that a local war may grow into a global one. Such a war would mean the end of civilization. The only way of saving civilization therefore is to abolish war itself.

Lenin had a premonition of the total destructive character of future wars and earnestly hoped that the coming technological developments would make war

impossible. If he had lived in 1956, he would assuredly have approved of the declaration of his successors at the historic 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party that war is not inevitable and violence not essential for the transformation of society.

3

LENIN ON PEACE AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

SOMEWHERE I HAVE COME across the term, "portmanteau words." Open the suitcase, and you never know what may come out. Perhaps the most notorious example of a portmanteau word is "democracy." Expedients such as Basic Democracy and Guided Democracy have little in common with Parliamentary Democracy, and that again is different from People's Democracy. And yet the zealous champions of each variety are apt to claim that theirs alone is the right type of democracy.

Peace and Peaceful Coexistence, too, must be included among portmanteau words. They have borne different meanings in different times. Sometimes they may even bear different meanings at different times in the same country. To the world as a whole, Peace and Peaceful Coexistence have a greater significance in the nuclear age than ever before. What was previously a

luxury has now become a necessity.

In an elementary sense, peace means absence of war. That is what it was in the famous Decree on Peace issued by Lenin within a few hours of the Revolution of 1917. Mere absence of war may seem elementary, but it was an imperative need for the Soviet Union in her infancy. Without it the Soviet Union would not have been able to survive. It would have been impossible for her simultaneously to conduct a war abroad and consolidate the Revolution at home, for the Revolution also involved war, a civil war, a war against counter-revolution, supported by foreign powers. Existence, rather than coexistence, was the problem for the USSR in the first years after the Revolution.

Despite the opposition of men like Trotsky, Lenin followed up the Decree on Peace by signing the humiliating Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany and the equally humiliating Treaty of Riga with Poland. Under the former, Russia was stripped of all the acquisitions of the Tsars in two centuries; and under the latter four and a half million people, the Byelo-Russians and the Ukrainians, were obliged to live in Poland. Lenin knew that history would tear up these treaties, as indeed it did in 1939.

The fact that Lenin favoured peace did not mean that he was a pacifist. Nor did it mean that he was opposed to all wars for all time. He had no use for "the reactionary socialists" and the "whimpering petty bourgeoisie" who professed horror of war and bloodshed. He told such people that capitalist society is

"an endless horror" and that it cannot be terminated by "pious platitudes."

Some nations, Lenin said, had been sitting aside from the "bloody world highway of war" and hoped to continue to remain in that blissful condition. Referring to the Norwegian advocates of disarmament, Lenin said that they were saying: "We are a small country. We have a small army. We can do nothing against great powers. We want to be left in peace in our remote corner and continue to indulge in our petty politics." Lenin warned such people that their hope was based on an illusion, for "imperialism draws the small states into the vortex of world economy, world politics and world war." Even the Norwegian advocates of disarmament must have learnt the truth of Lenin's warning on the outbreak of the Second World War, when Norway became one of Hitler's earliest victims.

Having secured the existence of the Soviet Union by the exercise of his iron will, which also represented the will of the workers and peasants of Russia, Lenin turned his attention to the problem of coexistence. He began to have dealings with other countries, however much he detested their ideology. When some fervent communists objected, Lenin said that the only alternative was for the Soviet Union to fly to the moon! The USSR was destined to live for an indefinite period within a system of states which included a majority of capitalist states. "History," said Lenin, "does not run smoothly and pleasantly, permitting the working people of all countries to rise simultaneously with us." Capi-

talism was not going to be dislodged from the world in a day, a year, a decade, or many decades, and the Soviet Union could not possibly live in lordly isolation. Peaceful coexistence with states, following different social systems, was inevitable.

Lenin began by throwing feelers for the recognition of the USSR by other states. He also showed his willingness and, indeed, his anxiety to take part in international conferences. The first conference which the Soviet Union attended was the one in Genoa in 1921. There, under Lenin's instructions, the Soviet representative, Chicherin, made the following declaration:

> Whilst remaining faithful to Communist principles the Russian delegation recognizes that in the present epoch, which permits of the parallel existence of the old and the new nascent social systems, economic co-operation between the states representing these two systems of ownership is imperatively necessary for general economic reconstruction. In consequence, the Russian Government attaches great importance to the first point of the Cannes resolution, which deals with reciprocal recognition of the different system of ownership and the different political and economic systems actually existing in various countries. The Russian delegation has come here not with the intention of propagating its own theoretical views but in order to engage in business-like relations with the Governments and with industrial and commercial

circles in all countries on the basis of reciprocity, equality and unconditional recognition.

With the growth of trade and economic relations with other countries, the term, coexistence, began to acquire a more extensive meaning. It was no longer a question of merely peaceful coexistence, but fruitful. Ideologically, however, the conception of coexistence on both sides continued to be little more than coendurance. Churchill still ranted against "the foul buffoonery of communism" and Poincare against "that howling wilderness of communism, Russia." Lenin, on his part, would make no ideological concessions to his opponents. They might be partners in trade but they continued to be opponents in the field of ideology. Once when some important negotiations were about to start with the USA, Chicherin suggested that it would produce a good impression if the Soviet Union could, out of deference to American susceptibilities, make some modifications in the draft constitution of the USSR which was then being framed. For instance, he suggested that the clause debarring "parasitic classes" from exercising franchise might be left out. Lenin reacted vehemently against this proposal. He said that it showed that it was time Chicherin was sent off to a sanatorium!

Lenin would not allow peaceful coexistence to be endangered by any adventurist acts in the name of ideology. He did not believe in the export of revolution; the whole idea was "unscientific and impracticable." "There are some people," said Lenin, "who believe that

revolution can break out in a foreign country to order. These people are either mad or they are provocateurs. Revolutions break out when tens of millions of people have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to live in the old way any longer. . . . Revolutions are not made to order, cannot be timed to any particular moment; they break out at a moment determined by a whole complex of internal and external elements." This is a truth which callow or over-zealous communists in many parts of the world are apt to forget.

If, as time passed, the term, peaceful coexistence, as used by Lenin, acquired a deeper meaning, so did the term peace. To Lenin peace no longer meant merely the absence of war. He seems to have had an inkling into the mighty scientific discoveries and technological developments which lay ahead and which would make war totally destructive. Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, has written thus:

> That was early in 1918 in Leningrad. Vladimir Ilyich said that up-to-date technology was helping to make war more and more destructive. And the time would come when war would be so destructive that it would become impossible altogether. Vladimir Ilyich referred again to this point in 1920-21. He told me of a conversation he had with an engineer who said that any moment we could expect an invention that would make it possible to annihilate a large army from a distance, and that would make any war impossible. One

could see how fervently Vladimir Ilyich wanted war to become impossible.

When the question of the emblem of the USSR came up for discussion some members suggested putting a sword in the design. Lenin strongly objected to this proposal. "Why a sword?" he asked, "we have no need of conquests. We are against them. We do not attack, though we have to defend ourselves against our enemies, internal as well as external. Our war is defensive, and the sword is not our symbol."

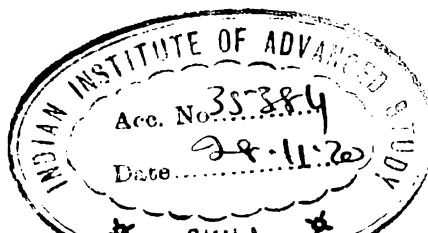
Not the sword, but the sickle and the hammer, representing the art of peaceful production in industry and agriculture, from the emblem of Lenin's land.

4

LENIN AND SOVIET DIPLOMACY

LENIN WAS THE ARCHITECT of Soviet foreign policy even as Jawaharlal Nehru was the architect of India's foreign policy. Each was determined to make a clean start in international relations. Each was anxious to break away from the imperialist tradition, the Tsarist tradition in one case and the British tradition in the other. For instance, soon after the Revolution, Russia gave up the extraterritorial rights and other concessions which the Tsars had acquired in China; and soon after independence India gave up the special rights which Britain had acquired in Tibet as a result of the Younghusband expedition in the beginning of the century. In neither case, alas, did this voluntary gesture conduce to the establishment of permanent friendship with China.

Lenin not only laid down broad principles of Soviet foreign policy, but closely supervised their implementation. It was he who gave Soviet diplomacy its tone



and style, combining national interest with revolutionary fervour.

National interest and revolutionary fervour lay behind the very first decree issued by Lenin within a few hours of the outbreak of the Revolution, namely, the Decree on Peace. The people of Russia had suffered grievously during the war; they had nothing to gain by continuing to fight. The first task of Soviet Union was simply to survive; and she would have had no hope of survival if she had to fight a war externally and at the same time an internal war against counter-revolution, backed by foreign powers. Lenin, therefore, had no hesitation to effect a unilateral withdrawal of Russia from the "imperialist war."

The Decree on Peace was not a normal diplomatic exercise, for it was addressed not so much to the governments as to the peoples of the states engaged in the war. Lenin exhorted them to rise and to overthrow their rulers and to turn the war between nations into a war between classes. Thus it was not merely the interests of the nation which prompted the Decree on Peace but a desire to promote the cause of world revolution.

There have been occasions when governments, not particularly noted for their revolutionary zeal, have also resorted to the expedient of appealing to the people over the heads of their governments. Perhaps the most pitiful example was the statement issued, when Stalin was dying, by John Foster Dulles to the Russian people recognizing them as "the children of the same God who is the father of people everywhere" and assuring them

that "despite the identity of government personalities Almighty God would watch over them." It is hardly necessary to add that this tender appeal produced no response in the hearts of the children of God in the Soviet Union. Before long, however, the Soviet people, on their own account, moved away from the cult of Stalin.

At the end of the First World War, dents began to appear in the traditional methods of diplomacy. Hitherto, secrecy was of the essence of diplomacy, but now President Wilson came forward with a new formula: "Open covenants openly arrived at." Lenin, too, contributed to the demolition of secret diplomacy by publishing certain secret treaties including the Anglo-Russian Treaty made during the war to partition Turkey.

Incidentally, this had a bearing on the development of Mahatma Gandhi's attitude towards the British Government. In the beginning, he had supported the Allied cause against Germany. He was, however, distressed to hear reports of a secret treaty between England and Russia for the partition of Turkey. He asked the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, whether these reports were correct; and the reply was, "You know such reports emanate from enemy sources." This was a perfect example of the art of *suppressio veri suggestio falsi*. Gandhi, however, took the Viceroy's statement at its face value and continued to support Britain. Great was his disillusionment when the secret treaty over Turkey was published by the Soviet Government. This shook Gandhiji's faith in the word of the Britisher.

Whether open covenants can always be arrived at openly is an open question. The results of open diplomacy, as truculently practised nowadays by the protagonists, often with an eye on public opinion at home rather than to influence the other side, are not altogether encouraging.

The peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany, under which Russia was obliged to give away almost all her acquisitions during the two preceding centuries, was also dictated by the paramount need for consolidating the Revolution at home. This was followed by the Treaty of Riga with Poland, which left four and a half million Byelo-Russians and Ukrainians in Poland. These treaties have been described as an attempt to buy time with space. Lenin knew that time would not permit such unfair treaties to stand for ever.

In the meantime, the reconstruction of the country after the ravages of the war, civil war, and foreign intervention presented Lenin with the most formidable problems. In solving them, he did not disdain assistance even from countries like the USA which stubbornly refused to recognize the Soviet Union. While accepting foreign assistance, however, he would brook no internal interference.

In 1919, there was a great famine in Russia; and President Hoover, ostensibly out of purely philanthropic motives, offered to send food for the people of Russia. But the USA and the Allies strove to lay down the most extraordinary conditions. One of the conditions

was that the civil war should stop at once. On the surface, this seemed reasonable, but at that time the Whites were winning in certain regions, and by insisting that the civil war should stop the Allies were trying to ensure the survival, if not the supremacy of the Whites. The Allies also wanted to appoint a Food Commission consisting of their own nominees who would supervise the transportation and distribution of food. Carr, the British historian, has observed: "All the allied governments showed an obvious inclination to treat the Commission as an alternative government which can succeed to power, once the Soviet Government was overthrown." Lenin saw through this stratagem. He refused to accept the offer of economic assistance if any political strings were attached to it. "We must punish Hoover," said Lenin, "we must openly slap his face. We must lay down extremely strict conditions, including arrest and imprisonment for any interference in our internal affairs."

President Hoover's representatives professed to be pained by the Russian attitude. They protested that after all, what they wanted to do was simply to get food into Russia. Litvinov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, replied that "food can be a weapon." A statement, the truth of which other countries have also had reason to appreciate.

Lenin realized the importance of the economic factor in foreign policy. He said that a good diplomat should be a shrewd businessman. "To Britain," said Lenin, "we must send a merchant." Apparently, to

Lenin, too, as to Napoleon, the British were a nation of shopkeepers.

When a Soviet delegation was proceeding to London to promote Anglo-Russian trade, Lenin's instructions were: "Be firm and do not be afraid of a temporary suspension of talks. If they ask two and a half Kopeks bring it down to one and three quarter Kopeks."

Lenin would not tolerate blackmail, however hard-pressed he might be. During the war with Poland, Lord Curzon offered to facilitate an armistice with Poland provided that Wrangel, the leader of the White armies, was allowed to withdraw into the Crimea. Lenin saw through this proposal. "It is a piece of knavery aimed at the annexation of the Crimea." He thought that Curzon was trying to do what Palmerston failed to achieve during the Crimean War in 1853. The outcome was that Wrangel was routed and the whole of Crimea was free.

At the end of the war Poland demanded 73 million roubles in gold as compensation for war damages. Lenin thought that even 30 million roubles would be on the high side. Finally, both parties renounced the demand for compensation for war damages. These are examples of the firmness and shrewdness which characterized Lenin's diplomacy.

The revolutionary fervour of Lenin's foreign policy was shown in his support of peoples striving for independence. "The Russian Revolution," said George Kennan, the American expert on Russia, "unquestionably hastened the disintegration of Europe's colonial

empire and her political influence in other parts of the world." When Afghanistan won her independence after the Third Afghan War, the Soviet Union was the first state to establish diplomatic relations with her.

A few weeks previously, the Indian revolutionary, Mehendra Pratap, who had proclaimed a Republic of India from his exile in Kabul, had an interview with Lenin. Mahendra Pratap aired some of his pet economic theories. He urged that henceforward legal tender should be not gold, silver or paper but different kinds of vegetables. Lenin listened but made no comment. Mahendra Pratap then expatiated on the power of love in the dealings between men and nations. "That is Tolstoyism," said Lenin briefly. Whatever might have been the impression which Mahendra Pratap produced on Lenin, he thought it fit to send the first Soviet Ambassador to Kabul in the company of Mahendra Pratap and his patriotic colleagues. This dramatic gesture was a demonstration of Lenin's sympathy for peoples struggling for freedom and his desire for solidarity among them.

The instructions which Lenin issued to the first Soviet Ambassadors to Afghanistan and Iran are worth recalling. "Our eastern policy," he said, "remains diametrically opposed to that of the imperialist countries. In our policy we strive to promote the independent economic and political development of the eastern peoples and shall do everything in our power to support them in this. Our role and our mission is to be neutral and disinterested friends and allies of the peoples

struggling for a completely independent economic and political development." Soviet diplomats have faithfully adhered to these instructions of Lenin in their dealings with India. It would be idle to pretend that Soviet help has not been of immense benefit to our country in her quest for a completely independent economic and political development. And it would be foolish to drag this matter into the arena of our petty political feuds. There are some matters over which, in the interests of the nation, there should be a national consensus. Indo-Soviet cooperation is one, because of its intrinsic value and also in view of the continuing menace of China.

5

LENIN'S STYLE

The style is the man. I heard this saying first when I was a student at the Madras Christian College. Dr. Pittendrigh, our English professor, explained its meaning to us. He said that if a man was logical in his way of thinking his style would be clear and cogent. If, on the contrary, he was given to loose thinking, his style would also be loose. If he was inclined to beat about the bush his style was apt to be diffuse. And so on.

Two weeks later, Dr. Pittendrigh told us that he had just met a man whose speech was a perfect example of the saying, "the style is the man." That was none other than Mahatma Gandhi who made his first appearance in Madras, which was also one of his first appearances in India after his long exile in South Africa. Gandhiji's style, said Dr. Pittendrigh, was characterized by a simple grandeur.

I myself heard Mahatma Gandhi on that occasion. I, too, was struck by his simplicity. I must confess I was

struck more by the simplicity than by the grandeur of his style. Everything about him was simple: his ideas, his words, his dress, his manner. In my book, *Many Worlds,* I have compared his speech to one of the components of the Gersoppa waterfalls, the Rani, which flows smoothly and gracefully, unlike its sister-waterfall, the Raja, which flows majestically and pompously.

From the descriptions which one has read, Lenin's speeches too were characterized by a simple grandeur. "There was no striving after eloquent phrases," wrote Maxim Gorky, "but every word was uttered distinctly and its meaning was marvellously plain. It is very difficult to pass on to the reader the unusual impression he made. . . . The unity, completeness, directness and strength of his speech, his whole appearance in the pulpit—it was an essay in classical art. Everything was there and yet there was nothing superfluous, nothing embellishing; and if there were any, they were as natural and inevitable as two eyes in a face or five fingers in a hand."

Lenin was a master of words. He never allowed words to master him. He coined a good word for those who allowed themselves to be slaves to words. He called them word-spinners. In his view, left socialist revolutionaries were specially prone to be word-spinners. "They do not realize," said Lenin, "that revolution is a difficult and complex science. For them it is a question of words. The histories of revolutionaries are full of word-spinners; and what remains of them? Only smoke and a bad smell."

Lenin exercised the utmost economy in words. Sometimes, he could conjure up a whole scene or portray a whole character with a single sentence. What could be a better description of Trotsky than Lenin's words: "He is with us, not of us." Trotsky was indeed with Lenin on the outbreak of the Revolution and continued to remain with him in peace and war, but there was a kink in him which set him apart and which developed more and more as years passed, so much so, that Trotskyism has now become an anathema.

If Lenin was concise, he could also be precise. No lawyer could have given a better definition of aggression than Lenin has done in his decree on self-determination, which was passed within a few hours of the Revolution. "The government," said Lenin, "conceives the annexation and seizure of foreign lands to mean the incorporation of a small or weak nation into a large and powerful state without the precisely, clearly and voluntarily expressed wish of that nation, irrespective of the time when such forcible incorporation took place, irrespective also of the degree of development or backwardness of the nation forcibly annexed to the given State, or forcibly within her borders, and irrespective, finally, of whether this nation is in Europe or in distant overseas territories."

Another quality of Lenin's style was the delicious irony. He directed it specially against his comrades who swore by principles but never knew how to put them into effect. "By your side," said Lenin, "there is the capitalist guy, going about his business of being a

robber and making profits, but he knows his job. You have correct principles, excellent ideals—they are written large on you—you are holy men who will enter paradise alive—but do you know your business?"

An article which Lenin wrote in the *Pravda* on 13 July 1912 on the 5th International Congress which was held in London for the suppression of white slave traffic (prostitution) bristles with irony. "Duchesses, Countesses, Bishops, Priests, Rabbis, palace officials and all sorts of bourgeois philanthropists," said Lenin, met solemnly in order to consider the problem of prostitution and came to the conclusion that the only antidotes were religion and the police. When the German Empress visited a maternity hospital in London, says Lenin, the authorities placed rings on the fingers of the mothers of the illegitimate children lest the august lady should have been shocked by the sight of unmarried mothers. The dignitaries assembled in London had no idea of the social causes of prostitution, or that it is poverty that drives women to it. How correct Lenin was! Not long ago, I read in the memoirs of Paleologue, French Ambassador to Russia during the First World War, that in Nevsky street in St. Petersburg (now Leningrad), one of the most beautiful streets in the world, there were no less than ten thousand prostitutes. Now strain your eyes as you might, you cannot find one of that most ancient profession in Nevsky street. This shows the transformation that has come over the economic condition of women in the Soviet Union.

Lenin never posed as a literary man. Yet he had a

keen appreciation of literature. He was conscious of its social objectives and insisted on them. "Ours will be a free literature," said Lenin, "because it will serve, not some satiated heroine, not the bored upper ten thousand suffering from fatty degeneration, but tens of millions of workers—the flower of the country, her strength and her future."

Lenin was against the imposition of undue restraints on writers. "Literature," said Lenin, "is least of all subject to mechanical adjustment or levelling to the rule of the majority over the minority: there is no question that in this field greater scope must be allowed for personal initiative, form, content, inclination, thought and fancy." His judgment of writers was impeccable. At a time when all Moscow seemed to go mad over that exuberant revolutionary poet, Mayakovsky, Lenin had no hesitation to say that he preferred Pushkin. Lenin did not share Leo Tolstoy's philosophical views and yet he admired him as a great artist and humanist. "What a colossus!" exclaimed Lenin. "What a marvellously developed brain! Here's a true artist for you. And do you know something more amazing? You won't find a genuine muzhik until this Count came on the scene."

Lenin's appreciation of literature reflected his sense of history. In this respect his attitude was the reverse of the psychology underlying the recent "cultural revolution" in China. "Abolish everything ancient and foreign" was the motto of the cultural revolution; and young hooligans, prodded by older ones, proceeded to

consign to the flames many of the treasured classics in Chinese and world literature. What did classics matter to them, who were of the same mind as Bazurov in Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, who said that "A pair of shoes is worth more than all the plays of Shakespeare!" But Lenin knew that Shakespeare and shoes do not belong to the same order of things and cannot be weighed in the same balance.

6

THE WORLD WHICH CONFRONTED LENIN AND GANDHI

1870! The year of Lenin's birth. The year following the birth of Mahatma Gandhi. Here are two men who, in different ways, may be said to have changed the history of the world.

This is a statement to which Marxists would demur. They would say that history makes men; not men, history. To them history is a science. Believing in the theory of historical inevitability, they regard all history as the product of vast, impersonal and, in the long run, irresistible forces. But they would admit that the march of history can be hastened or impeded by men of genius. In Gandhi and Lenin we have two men who have undoubtedly accelerated the pace of history.

In order to see how far the world has changed, it is necessary to have some idea of the world which con-

fronted Gandhi and Lenin. A century ago, all Asia and Africa were dominated by the West. An important event of that period was the construction of the Suez Canal. The Suez Canal was at once the symbol and the instrument of Western imperialism and all that was good and evil in it. It reduced greatly the distance between Asia and Europe and brought them within easy reach of each other. It opened the way for the immense resources of Western science, art and literature to come to the East, and Eastern thought and philosophy to penetrate the West. It facilitated the transport not only of goods but of ideas, such as Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity and, in more recent times, Socialism—ideas which have undermined Western dominance.

At the same time the history of the Suez Canal revealed some of the uglier features of imperialism. It was built at a cost of 16 million pounds, but the cost was inflated to 100 million pounds and debited to the Government of Egypt, which could ill afford to pay it; and when bankruptcy threatened Egypt, the finances of Egypt were taken over by England and France, and Egypt was virtually reduced to a dependency. No wonder that, on the nationalization of the Suez Canal, President Nasser exclaimed: "Ah, the Suez Canal! That last instrument of Egypt's subjection!... The Suez Canal was Egypt's canal, built by Egypt, built on the skulls of the ten thousand Egyptian workers who died as they worked on it. Year by year, for many decades, the shareholders have been taking millions as

profit. But no longer! Listen to the decree! The Suez Canal is nationalized! The Aswan Dam will be built with its profits."

During the crisis resulting from the nationalization of the Suez Canal, the Government of the land, which was practically recreated by Lenin, was a tower of strength to Egypt. India, too, condemned the Anglo-French aggression on Egypt in no uncertain terms and used whatever influence she had to prevent the escalation of the conflict into a world war.

Thus the Suez Canal was a microcosm of Western imperialism. No part of Asia and Africa was able to escape its effects. Not even China, which, though she did not lose her independence altogether, became as Sun Yat-Sen, the architect of the Revolution of 1911, said, "not a colony, but a hyper-colony, a colony of all nations." Though China may be reluctant to admit it, it is Lenin's land which, by her example and her assistance, has enabled China to emerge as a world power.

The state of affairs in pre-revolution Russia is best reflected in the stories of Maxim Gorky, with which he burst into fame in the early decades of the last century.

The heroes and heroines in those stories are not positive characters in the Soviet sense of the word. They are positive only in the enormity of their negative traits; their overweening egoism and their impotent rage against society. Among them are a wild gypsy girl, Radda, and her impetuous lover, Loika, who sacrifice both love and life on the altar of their insatiable pride; and the only moral, if it can be called a moral, is: "The

madness of the brave, that is the wisdom of life." In *The Orlov Married Couple* the hero longs to do something heroic, "to reduce the whole world to dust or gather together a few companions and beat up the Jews. It's all the same to me." In *Creatures that Once Were Men*, an Inspector of Schools, who bears a grudge against the whole world, declares: "I will go to America and work my way up until I become President of the USA and then I will challenge the whole of Europe to war and blow it up." In *Twenty-Six Men and a Girl*, a prostitute proclaims her revulsion against men, even like the prostitute in Somerset Maugham's famous story, *Rain*, whom a pious missionary tries to convert to the path of righteousness and is himself seduced: "What blackguards all you men are! I'd like to trample on you; I'd like to maim you; if one of you was croaking I'd spit in his mug without pity." These are the characters whom Russian readers took to their hearts in the last decade of the last century, for they saw the like of them all around them.

Side by side with these desperate characters, there was "the superfluous man"—a favourite subject of Russian fiction in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Gorky has defined a superfluous man thus: "A person to whom life seems cramped, who feels superfluous in society, seeks therein a place and fails to find it and then suffers, dies or eventually reconciles himself to a society which remains hostile to him." "We are the first in work, but the last in position," groans Pavel in Gorky's *Mother*. "Who worries about us? Who wishes

us well? Who treats us like human beings? Nobody!" Again, "There are a lot of people like me," wails Konvalov. "We are folk of a special type, we do not fit in anywhere. A census should be taken of us and laws passed to get rid of us. Very strict laws, because we are no good to anyone, yet we take up space and get in other people's way."

In his book called *My Universities*, Gorky has described the peculiar world in which he found himself. Often he was in despair. Sailing down the Volga from Nizhni Novgorod, renamed Gorky, to Astrakhan, I saw a spot on the bank of the river Kazanka, where Gorky once sat, flinging pebbles into the dark water all night long and in despair at the plight of Russia, saying to himself again and again: "What shall I do?" It was here that he put a bullet into his chest, hoping to reach the heart but succeeded only in reaching the lungs.

The discontent in Russia often expressed itself in the formation of various revolutionary societies, but there was no coordination between them. The young men in particular were in a wild, rebellious mood; and among the students there was considerable intellectual ferment. Gorky found many types of undergraduates—a normal school student who wrote five volumes of short stories, sought equilibrium of body and mind by joining the joiner's trade, and not finding it, committed suicide; another who felt that life without synthesis was impossible and tried to reconcile Marx with Nietzche; a Tolstoyan who had a burning faith in the salvation of the world by the power of love and who, in pure com-

passion, was prepared to rend his fellow men to pieces; believers in God who clinched their arguments by asking: "Do you want to believe in Christ or in Darwin?"; disbelievers who denied that man was made in God's image or that there was a God at all, for "either God does not know how hard life is treating us, or he knows and is helpless, or he can help and does not care"; budding revolutionaries plotting against the Tsar; and counter-revolutionaries, reciting with approval the words of Ibsen:

> The only Revolution that I recall
> That was not altogether a cheat and a fraud,
> One that out-gloried all its successors,
> That, of course, was the Great Deluge.
> But Lucifer was cheated even then,
> For Noah, on the ark, became a dictator!

All these movements and the pent-up feelings behind them, frustration and indignation and anger and the craving for the Promised Land, found their expression in one man, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, and in one world-shaking event, the Revolution of 1917.

Very different was the state of affairs in India. Here, too, there was frustration and indignation and anger and a craving for a better life. However, the attempt at reform in India had been more successful than in Tsarist Russia. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the pioneer among Indian social reformers, met with considerable success in blending the better elements in the civiliza-

tion of the East and the West. In India, religion did not become a tool of the state, an instrument of despotism as the Orthodox Church had done in Russia. Doubtless a hundred social evils had crept into Hinduism, but Hinduism also saw great reform movements like those of the Brahm Samaj and the Arya Samaj which held them in check. The message of the greatest interpreter of Hinduism, Swami Vivekananda, had political overtones: it was almost an attempt to resurrect nationalism through the medium of religion. Swami Vivekananda stressed the need for *abhaya,* or fearlessness, even more than *ahimsa,* or non-violence. "If there is one word," said Swami Vivekananda, "that you find coming like a bomb from the Upanishads, bursting like a bombshell upon masses of ignorance, it is the word, fearlessness. And the only religion that ought to be taught is the religion of fearlessness."

Politically, the British rulers had the sense to see in the Indian National Congress a safety valve for discontent and the cunning to use it as instrument to perpetuate their rule in one form or other. The Congress was confined to the intelligentsia; it had no mass base. Moreover, it was reformist and not revolutionary. What Gandhiji did was to take over the Congress and transform it into a people's organization, infused with a revolutionary spirit in every sense, except that he dissociated it from violence.

Before his advent, the Congress used to be not only reformist but almost loyalist. "Unswerving loyalty to the British Crown," ran the Congress creed, "shall be

the keynote of this instiution." This continued to be so even as late as the First World War. As a student in Madras, I saw with my own eyes how in 1915, when Lord Pentland, the Governor of Madras, graced the Congress session with his presence, the entire audience stood up on his arrival and gave him an ovation and, how the President, stopping the speaker who had been holding forth on the need for repealing the Arms Act, called upon Surendranath Banerjee, the arch orator of the Congress, to move the resolution of loyalty to the government. But within a few years, the entire atmosphere changed. "If the British will not do justice to India," said Mahatma Gandhi, "I shall think it my bounden duty to ask every Indian to rise and destroy the British Empire."

Such words had never before been heard in India. Gandhi, however, still insisted that even while trying to destroy the British Empire, there should be no anger or hatred against the British. The result is that India obtained freedom, and Great Britain withdrew from India, in a more orderly and civilized manner than had happened in history.

Thus the situation which confronted Gandhi in India was somewhat different from the one which confronted Lenin in Russia. That is why the movement for freedom in India, though it was greatly influenced by the Revolution in Russia, took a different course.

The advent of freedom has brought its own problems. Indeed, we are beginning to realize the truth of Andre Gide's dictum: "To attain freedom is nothing; to remain

free is difficult." But this is not too difficult a task for our nation, provided we remain united and work hard, as the Soviet people have done, always placing the country before the province, the community, the party and our own petty selves.

7

GANDHI AND LENIN AS MEN AND LEADERS OF MEN

THIS WEEK WE ARE celebrating the centenary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth, and in a few months (22 April) we shall be observing that of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. The differences between the two men are well known and very well advertised both in India and in the Soviet Union. There are, however, many points of similarity between them as men and as leaders of men. Not that the differences can or should be ignored, but the resemblances are equally interesting.

To begin with externals, neither Gandhi nor Lenin was physically impressive. John Reed who knew Lenin and wrote that remarkable book, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, calls his personality "unimpressive, colourless, uncompromising and detached, without any picturesque idiosyncrasies", and yet "he became the idol of the mob and loved and revered as perhaps few leaders in history have been."

Gandhi too was by no means a beauty. He had large jutting ears, which earned him the nickname coined by Sarojini Naidu, "Mickey Mouse." But read what Jawaharlal Nehru says of him: "In spite of his unimpressive features, his loin-cloth and bare body there was a royalty and kingliness about him which compelled a willing obeisance."

Short-statured men are apt to put on airs in order to buttress their dignity. Who does not know the Napoleonic pose, or the poses adopted by that tin-pot Napoleon of the twentieth century, Adolf Hitler, who made Neville Chamberlain feel in his presence "like a curate entering a pub for the first time in his life?"

Gandhi and Lenin put on no such airs. While they paid no attention to physical appearance, they set much store by physical fitness. Gandhi's autobiography is called *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*; it might also be called "My experiments with diet and other factors contributing to one's health, physical as well as spiritual." Lenin, however busy he was, set apart an hour everyday for exercise. While in prison, he used to do fifty genuflexions before going to sleep in order to keep himself warm, and the prison guard was amazed to see that this man who refused to attend service in prison should be so pious!

Both Gandhi and Lenin kept not only their bodies but also their minds always burnished. Lenin knew a number of languages and was a voracious reader. Gandhi's reading was not so wide; he read deeply rather than widely. Yet he retained his intellectual curiosity

to the end of his life. One has only to remember that during his last imprisonment at the age of 75 he began to read Karl Marx's *Capital* in order to have a better understanding of communism.

It has been said that there is all the difference between the tired man who wants a book to read and the alert man who wants to read a book. Gandhi and Lenin belonged to the latter category. Gandhi has described how much moved he was by the writings of Tolstoy. "*The Kingdom of God is Within You*," he said, "overwhelmed me. It left an abiding influence on me. Before the independent thinking, profound morality and the truthfulness of the book, all the books given me by Mr. Coates [a Christian missionary] seemed to pale into insignificance."

The writings of Marx produced a similar impact on Lenin. Until Lenin appeared on the scene, Marx had, as it were, lain buried in his *Capital*. Marx regarded this book as "the most fearsome missile hurled at the head of the bourgeoisie" and yet the bourgeoisie went on gaily, unperturbed by the thunder of Marx. When a proposal was made by the Board of Censors in Russia that Marx's book, like the writings of Voltaire, should be placed on the list of banned books, the Tsar demurred. He said that *Capital* was written in such a stilted style that it would never appeal to the ordinary man. It was left to Lenin to resurrect Marx to make *Capital* the Bible of the ordinary man in Russia—and not in Russia alone.

Both Gandhi and Lenin had a singular knack of investing old theories with a new force and applying them

in the solution of contemporary problems. The virtue of non-violence or passive resistance had been stressed by a number of prophets from Jesus Christ to Leo Tolstoy, but it was left to Gandhi to turn non-violence into satyagraha, and passive resistance into active resistance against oppression. He, like the prophets of old, preached the gospel of universal love. Herzen, a well-known Russian writer of the last century, said about Christian love that "it may be very strong—it speaks and weeps and wipes its tears, but the trouble is that it does nothing." It cannot be said of Gandhi's doctrine that it did nothing. It undermined the foundations of an empire.

Lenin and Gandhi were animated by a powerful sentiment, compassion for mankind. In their case, compassion did not mean pity. It corresponded to Gilbert Murray's definition of compassion as "a rebel passion." "It is against the strong, against the organized force of society, conventional sanctions and accepted gods. It is the kingdom of heaven within us fighting the brute power of the world."

The spectacle of man, fighting the brute power of the world, never failed to rouse the sympathy and support of Lenin. When there was a textile workers' strike in Bombay in 1908 in protest against the conviction and imprisonment of Lokamanya Tilak, Lenin observed that it denoted the beginning of the awakening of the Indian masses against tyranny. "Nowhere in the world except in Russia," said Lenin, "is there such poverty of the masses, such chronic starvation of the people." When

the abortive revolution of 1905 took place at St. Petersburg, Gandhi, who was then in South Africa, rejoiced. "If the Russian people are victorious," he said, "the revolution in Russia will be a great victory, the greatest event of the present century." And when a far greater event, the Revolution of 1917, took place, Gandhi, despite his horror of violence, expressed his reactions thus:

> There is no doubt that the ideal of the Bolsheviks is backed by the sincerest self-sacrifice of innumerable men and women who have given their all for its realization. Though I believe that nothing gained by violence can last, the ideal sanctified by the sacrifices of such master spirits as Lenin cannot be in vain.

Both Gandhi and Lenin were more than patriots. Proletarian internationalism lay at the root of Lenin's philosophy. Gandhi was not so close a student of international politics, or any kind of politics, as Lenin, or, for that matter, Nehru was, for his primary interest was in spiritual matters. In any case, he was no narrow nationalist. "I want India to rise," said Gandhi, "so that the whole world may benefit. I do not want India to rise on the ruin of other nations." Again, "My love of nationalism is that my country may become free, that, if need be, the whole country may die so that the human race may live."

How different from the attitude of the present Chinese rulers! I recall a conversation between Mao

Tse-tung and Sundstrom, the Finnish Ambassador in Peking. Before he went to Peking, Sundstrom was Ambassador to the USSR. He told me that during his farewell interview with Mao Tse-tung, he asked him whether he was really not afraid of an atomic war. "Not at all," replied Mao. "If there were to be an atomic war, America, with her heavy concentration of industry, would be destroyed. England would be utterly destroyed. Western Europe would perish, so too Western Russia, but China would survive."

Gandhi loved his country with all his heart and all his soul and all his spirit's strength. "I cling to India as a child to its mother's breast," said Gandhi in 1921, "because I feel she gives me the spiritual nourishment I need." Lenin, too, clung to his country. He was destined to spend many years of his life in exile. Looking at his country from afar, he said: "Today Russia is wretchedly poor and weak, but a day will come when she will be, in the fullest sense of the words, powerful and abundant." The Second World War showed how powerful Russia had become since the Revolution; and, with every passing year, Russia is becoming more abundant as well.

To both Gandhi and Lenin, the country meant the people. "To serve a cause without serving the people," said Gandhi, "is a dead thing." Nothing is more remarkable than the complete identification of the two leaders with the people. In order to champion the cause of workers, said Lenin, one must think like a workman, act like a workman and look like a workman.

Similarly, Gandhi said: "I cannot bring about economic equality if I own a number of motor cars or even 10 bighas of land. For this I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor." That is why Gandhiji took the vow of non-possession. That again is why, in September 1921, he took the decision to wear nothing more than the dress of the average Indian peasant, the loin-cloth. It was a superb gesture of identification with the people. Lenin did not go so far: anyhow, the climate of Russia does not tend itself to the wearing of the loin-cloth!

However much Gandhi and Lenin identified themselves with the workers, they realized that the workers needed guidance. Both knew that the intelligentsia had a vital part to play in political life. After all, it was on Jawaharlal Nehru, the leader of young Indian intelligentsia, that Gandhi cast his mantle as his "political heir" and not on any of his other followers, some of whom had a greater reputation as ruthless men of action.

With all their affection for the workers, Lenin and Gandhi had no use for their hugger-mugger ways. They insisted on strict discipline. Their meetings were always orderly and business-like. They were always punctual and would not condone unpunctuality on the part of others. Lenin was not known to be late at a single meeting, and Gandhi, too, unlike some Ministers nowadays, took great care not to keep his audience waiting. While both men necessarily lived in the public eye, they loved privacy. Lenin insisted on

absolute silence when he was working. Gandhiji set apart a weekly day of silence when he could call his soul his own.

In their personal lives, they set an example to their followers. Both lived a life of austerity. Gandhi's abstemiousness is well known. Not so well known is the fact that Lenin too never drank or smoked, though his followers did not exalt non-drinking into the fetish of prohibition which it has become in India. Both led dedicated lives, dedicated to the cause of humanity and in particular — to use an ugly modern euphemism — of the underprivileged sections of society. In their eyes, no sacrifice was too great for this cause. Lenin's heroism, said Gorky, was "that heroism which Russia knows well, the unassuming and austere life of self-sacrifice of the true revolutionary intellectual who, in his unshakable belief in the possibility of social justice on earth, renounces all the pleasures of life in order to toil for the happiness of mankind" — a description of which every word is applicable to Gandhi too.

In his pursuit of Truth, Gandhi had little time for beauty. Nehru has said that Gandhi had a greater appreciation of beauty in nature than in art. "I know," said Gandhi, "I have earned notoriety as a philistine in art." But he explained his position thus: "If I had not taken the vow of a satyagrahi for the deliverance of my country, I would have occupied myself with songs. But now there is no help for it; I have taken upon myself this mission. In this life I shall not be able to submit myself to anything else, but that does not mean

that I look down on the arts which are an essential part of human culture."

Lenin's appreciation of art and music was perhaps greater than Gandhi's. Yet he too was afraid that this might distract him from his life's work. "I know nothing that is greater than the Appassionata [of Beethoven], I'd like to listen to it everyday. It is marvellous, superhuman music. But I can't listen to music too often. It affects your nerves, makes you want to say stupid nice things and stroke the heads of people, while living in this vile hell. Now, you must not stroke anyone's head; you might get your head bitten off. You have to hit them on the head without mercy, although our ideal is not to use force against anyone. Our duty is infinitely hard."

How hard his duty was was again emphasized by Lenin in a talk which he had with M.F. Andreyevna. "What else can we do, dear Maria Andreyevna?" said Lenin. "We have no alternative but to fight. Do we find it hard? Of course, we do. You think it is not hard for me? It is, and very hard too. But look at Dzerzhinsky. He is beginning to look like nothing on earth. There is nothing to be done about it. It is better to suffer than to fail."

Gandhi would have agreed that it was better to suffer than to fail. But in his view suffering in its highest form was self-suffering. He believed that the spectacle of a virtuous man suffering for a righteous cause, without causing suffering to others, would strike a chord in the heart of the oppressor and that eventually he would

relent and virtue would triumph. The snag in this theory was brought out by Bernard Shaw who said that he did not know that the vegetarianism of the cow would appeal to the tiger. Gandhi retorted that he did not think that the Englishman was all tiger and no man. During the martial law regime in the Punjab in 1919, which culminated in the gruesome massacre of Jallianwala Bagh, some Britons did indeed behave as if they were all tiger, but the British people as a whole showed that they had something of the man in them by repudiating the tiger and condemning it.

The British had good reason to understand Gandhi and to be grateful to him. "My goal," said Gandhi once, "is to transfer ill-will from persons to objects." The result was that the struggle for freedom was conducted with the utmost fervour, but with little fury against the British people or even British officials. And Great Britain was able to withdraw from India with far less ignominy and bloodshed than the Dutch from Indonesia and the French from Indo-China and Algeria.

To sum up, Gandhi and Lenin had many qualities in common: simplicity, austerity, compassion, courage and self-sacrifice. Above all, they had a gift for identifying themselves completely with the people and of moving masses of men into action. Such men, as Chernyshevsky said of Rakhmatov, one of the finest of his heroes, are "the best among the best, the movers of the movers, the salt of the salt of the earth."

8

LENIN AND INDIA

WHEN I HEARD THE name, Lenin, for the first time, I was a student at the Madras Christian College. We heard that there had been a revolution in Moscow, led by a man called Lenin, just as we had heard a few years earlier of a revolution in China, led by a man called Sun Yat-sen. At that time, Russia was far, far away, and we did not realize the significance of the Great October Revolution.

In the early years of this century, there were hardly any Indian correspondents abroad. Indian newspapers were fed by Western news agencies, mostly British. Their attitude towards the Revolution was consistently unfriendly. Reading between the lines, however, we felt that it was a tremendous explosion, the effects of which would not be confined to Russia. We also instinctively felt that since the Revolution was against imperialism it might somehow help the movement for Indian independence which, with Mahatma Gandhi's

advent on the Indian scene, was taking a new turn.

In those days our young minds were moulded by our teachers: and between teachers and students there was a more intimate relationship than now. Our professors in the Madras Christian College were all Englishmen. Indians, however eminent they might be, could only be lecturers; they could not aspire to the rank of professors. This corresponded to an even more galling discrimination which existed in the army where British officers held the King's Commission, whereas Indians had to be content with an inferior variety called Viceroy's Commission.

Our professors were able, high-minded men. Among them there were liberals and conservatives. The liberals welcomed the overthrow of the autocratic Tsarist dynasty, but the conservatives shed tears over the fate of the Tsar, especially as he was a cousin of the British King, George V. When, however, Lenin took charge of the Revolution and showed that this was going to be no simple political revolution, but a veritable social and economic upheaval calculated to undermine and eventually to destroy the capitalist system and usher in a new chapter in history, all our professors, liberals as well as conservatives, turned against it and made it out to be a diabolical event, fraught with incalculable mischief for Russia and the world. In particular, Lenin was their *bete noire*. It was clear that it was his genius which had brought off the Revolution. He was a man of iron will, who showed that "one man with conviction is equal to a thousand men with only opinions."

With the progress of the Revolution, the wrath against Lenin and his Party and Government became almost a mania. Winston Churchill fumed against "the foul baboonery of communism" and Poincare denounced "that howling wilderness of communism, Russia". This anger was reflected in the newspapers which were filled with stories about the atrocities of the Revolution and canards about the nationalization of everything, including even women!

Among Indian newspapers, however, there were some notable exceptions. One was that patriotic newspaper from Poona called *Kesari.* In that newspaper, the great Indian leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who has been called "the Father of Indian unrest," wrote, in January 1918, an article on "The Russian Leader, Lenin." Tilak laid particular stress on the fact that Lenin was "an advocate of peace." In 1920, he wrote another article in *Kesari,* observing that "the only true devotees of the principle of self-determination are the Bolsheviks."

In this connection it is interesting to observe that the name of Tilak was not unknown to Lenin. Lenin had always been interested in India. When in 1905 the British carried out the partition of Bengal, dividing it into two Provinces, one predominantly Hindu and the other predominantly Muslim, Lenin wrote in his *Notebook on Imperialism* that "the British are dominating India through their policy of divide and rule." In 1906, a British Indian court sentenced Tilak for sedition to a savage term of imprisonment, even though the verdict of the jury was divided, the British jurors having found him

guilty, and the Indian jurors having found him innocent. In protest against this verdict there was a strike by the textile workers in Bombay. At that time Lenin wrote: "Popular India is beginning to stand up in defence of her writers and political leaders. . . . The Russian-style British regime in India is doomed."

What impressed Tilak most in Lenin was his advocacy of peace and self-determination. He noticed that the very first decree which was promulgated by Lenin within 24 hours of the Revolution was one calling on all belligerent government and peoples to end the war. In Lenin's eyes it was simply an imperialist war, a war between rival imperialisms. Our own scholar-diplomat, K. M. Panikkar, called it "the European civil war," involving no wider issues. Lenin, therefore, had no hesitation to withdraw Russia from the war and appealed to the peoples of the world to compel their governments to do likewise.

Another decree issued by Lenin confirmed the right of all nations to self-determination; and he extended it promptly to the peoples incorporated in Tsarist Russia, such as the Poles and the Finns. At this time, President Wilson also proclaimed the doctrine of self-determination, but it could not be extended to the nations groaning under colonialism in Asia and Africa. Even China remained beyond the pale, and it was only the USSR which renounced its extraterritorial rights in China. No wonder Tilak said that "the only true devotees of the principle of self-determination are the Bolsheviks."

The third decree which Lenin passed affirmed the right of the tiller to the land. Echoes of this decree penetrated to the remotest corners of Asia and Africa and roused a hope of liberation in the breasts of millions of exploited peasants and workers.

The Russian Revolution was one of the major factors which led the British Government in 1919 to introduce certain constitutional reforms in India, known as the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. "The Revolution in Russia," said the Report, recommending these Reforms, "was regarded in India as a triumph over despotism. . . . It has given an impetus to Indian political aspirations."

But the Revolution did more. It also gave a socio-economic content to India's political struggle. In one sense the economic aspect was always there, for all the leaders of the Congress and, in particular, Mahatma Gandhi, realized that independence was but a means to the goal, the goal being the elimination of poverty, disease, and ignorance. But it was Jawaharlal Nehru who realized, more than anyone else, that this goal could only be achieved by systematic planning and the reorganization of society. And it was the Revolution in Russia which, more than anything else, opened his eyes to this fact.

My own first acquaintance with Lenin was through the writings of Jawaharlal Nehru. He was deeply affected by the writings of Marx and Lenin.

"A study of Marx and Lenin," wrote Nehru, "had a powerful effect on my mind and helped me to see history and current affairs in a new light. The long

chain of history and social development appeared to have some meaning, some sequence, and the future lost some of its obscurity. The practical achievements of the Soviet Union were also tremendously impressive." Nehru admitted, however, that there were some developments in the Soviet Union which he did not understand. Nevertheless, he affirmed that "the Soviet Revolution had advanced human society by a great leap and had lit a bright flame which could not be smothered, and that it had laid the foundations for that new civilization towards which the world could advance. . . ."

Nehru visited Moscow in 1927 and attended the celebrations of the Tenth Anniversary of the Revolution. By that time Lenin was dead and yet, said Nehru, he was everywhere. Nehru has described the results of his visit thus: "My outlook was wider, and nationalism by itself seemed to me a narrow and insufficient creed. Political freedom, independence, were no doubt essential, but they were steps only in the right direction; without social freedom and a socialistic structure of society and the state, neither the country nor the individual could develop much."

From that time onwards, Nehru strained every nerve to impress, both on the Congress and on the people of the country, the need for working towards a socialistic pattern of society. "I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation and the subjection of the Indian people," said Nehru in ringing tones in the course of his address as President of the

Lucknow Congress in 1936, "except through socialism. That involves vast and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, the ending of vested interests in land and industry as well as the feudal and autocratic Indian States system. That means the ending of private property, except in a restricted sense, and the replacement of the present profit system by a higher ideal of cooperative service. It means ultimately a change in our instincts and habits and desires. In short it means a new civilization, radically different from the present capitalist order."

Jawaharlal Nehru thus moved away from what may be called the Gladstonian or Jeffersonian conception of democracy, to which many of his co-workers adhered and still adhere. "In the past," said Nehru once in Parliament, "democracy has been taken chiefly to mean political democracy, roughly represented by the idea of every person having a vote. It is obvious that a vote by itself does not mean very much to a person who is down and out and starving. Such a person will be much more interested in food to eat than in a vote. Therefore, political democracy by itself is not enough except that it may be used to obtain a gradually increasing measure of economic democracy. The good things of life must become available to more and more people and gross inequalities must be removed."

Nehru remained a firm believer in the parliamentary system. He believed that Parliament could and should become an effective instrument for bringing about the necessary social and economic changes. This, however,

did not tempt him to condemn the Soviet system. "Russia is not supposed to be a democratic country after the Western pattern," he said at the Lucknow Congress of 1936, "and yet we find the essentials of democracy present in a far greater degree among the masses there than anywhere else."

"The essence of democracy," Nehru said once, "is to take the vast masses of people into confidence and produce a sensation in them that they are partners in a vast undertaking of running a nation, partners in the government, partners in industry." This was the kind of democracy which Lenin sought to introduce in the USSR. On the whole Nehru was impressed by "the fascinating unfolding of a new order and a new civilization," which he calls, "the most promising feature of our dismal age."

I have dwelt at some length on Jawaharlal Nehru's attitude towards Lenin's Revolution, because in the first half of the century Nehru represented the spirit of emerging India more than any other Indian. He embodied the hope and despair, the dreams and disillusionment, the fury and the patience of an ancient people struggling, amidst various cross-currents, to emerge once and for all from the age of the Rishis and the bullock-cart into the age of science and socialism. In this sense Nehru *was* India in the twentieth century.

Mahatma Gandhi's attitude towards the Revolution was more complex. As the whole world knows he was an apostle of non-violence par excellence. The spectacle of widespread violence in Russia filled him with

dismay and horror. He did not realize that at the outset of the Revolution there was singularly little bloodshed, and that it was only after counter-revolution, aided and abetted by foreign powers, had raised its head that Lenin and his followers resorted to violence in defence of the infant State, which foreign Powers were trying to throttle at her very birth, for in 1918 no less than 14 foreign armies were fighting on Russian soil. Even while Mahatma Gandhi deprecated the violence of the Revolution, he observed that "the ideal, sanctified by the sacrifices of such master spirits as Lenin, cannot be in vain."

A favourite piece of anti-communist propaganda is to contrast Gandhi with Lenin, exalting the one as an apostle of non-violence and deprecating the other as an addict to violence. It is true that Lenin was not a believer in non-violence, but to say that he was a champion of violence or that he used it indiscriminately is a travesty of truth.

The three foremost figures on the Indian scene in the first half of this century were Mahatma Gandhi, the seer; Nehru, the statesman, and Rabindranath Tagore, the poet. Tagore visited the USSR in 1930 and was greatly impressed by her progress. In particular, he was impressed by the progress of education, on which Lenin had laid the utmost stress from the very beginning. Tagore compared civilization to a lamp. Until the occurrence of the October Revolution, civilization was like an oil lamp which shed its light upwards; only one-tenth of the lamp was illumined, but

the lower nine-tenths remained in darkness. Moreover, it had to bear the soot and the oil which trickled from above. In Russia, said Tagore, for the first time in the history of man the entire lamp of society was beginning to be illumined. It was this simile which prompted me to give the title, *The Lamp and the Lampstand,* to my latest book on the USSR.

In 1930, on the conclusion of his visit to the Soviet Union, Tagore wrote: "Nowhere else in man's history have I seen any lasting reason for good cheer and hope." He retained his interest in the USSR to the end of his life. In his death-bed message in 1940, which Nehru has quoted in his *Autobiography,* Tagore said: "When I see elsewhere some two hundred nationalities—which only a few years ago were at vastly different stages of development—marching together in peaceful progress and amity, and when I look about my own country and see a very highly evolved and intellectual people drifting into the disorder of barbarism, I cannot help contrasting the two systems of government, one based on cooperation, the other on exploitation, which have made such contrary conditions possible."

Jawaharlal Nehru evolved certain principles and laid down certain policies so as to prevent India from drifting again into "the disorder of barbarism." And it was left to his daughter to reassert them and now to implement them in the face of fierce opposition.

The Lenin centenary, which is to be celebrated on a massive scale from one end of this country to the other, will give people of all classes, regardless of their politi-

cal or ideological affinities, an opportunity for demonstrating their respect and gratitude to the architect of the Great October Revolution, whose life and work have left an indelible mark on the minds of the architects of our own independence and also on the masses of the people who, in the last analysis, are the custodians of freedom.

9

INDO-SOVIET CULTURAL RELATIONS

To TAKE A BROAD LOOK at history, Indo-Soviet cultural relations are a development of Indo-Russian relations. This is but natural, because Lenin did not treat history, as Mao Tse-tung does, as " a blank paper on which the most beautiful pictures can be inscribed." (How beautiful they can be was shown during "the cultural revolution" in China.) On the contrary, Lenin said: "Far from rejecting the most valuable achievements of the bourgeois epoch, Marxism must assimilate and refashion everything of value in more than 2500 years of the development of thought and culture."

The relations between India and Russia go back to the fifteenth century when a Russian, Afanasi Nikitin, came to India, fifty years before Vasco da Gama, settled in Golconda and Bijapur, wrote a fascinating account of the customs, manners, and politics of that period and even fell in love with an Indian woman.

And they culminated in the famous correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy, in which Gandhiji described himself as "your devoted disciple" and Tolstoy praised the world-significance of the work on which Gandhiji was engaged in South Africa. In between there were intermittent contacts, such as the despatch of two elephants by Emperor Aurangzeb as a present to Peter the Great (forming a precedent for Jawaharlal Nehru who sent two baby-elephants as presents to the children of Russia in 1956) and the issue of instructions by the Tsar to his officials to give special protection to the Indian traders settled on the Volga. In fact, during the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century, Indian merchants took a prominent part in the trade through the Persian Gulf to the Caspian region and beyond.

With the establishment of British rule in India all such contacts came to a standstill. This is not surprising, because the so called "Russian bogey" was one of the cardinal factors in British foreign policy in the nineteenth century. It was in order to keep this bogey at arm's length that the British Government waged three wars against Afghanistan. And when the Russian bogey put on the red garb of communism it looked the more terrible! By the end of the nineteenth century a veritable iron curtain had descended between India and Russia and this was riveted the more firmly when Russia became Bolshevik.

Yet, across this iron curtain communicated such kindred spirits as Mahatma Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy.

Some Indians of international status even penetrated the iron curtain and visited Moscow. Among them were Rabindranath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru. Tagore was greatly impressed by the spread of education and culture within the short space of 12 years after the Revolution.

Jawaharlal Nehru who attended the Tenth Anniversary of the Revolution was also impressed by the many-sided progress of the Soviet Union. At a time when the Soviet Union was treated almost as an untouchable by the USA and other countries, Nehru stressed the necessity for friendship between India and Russia. "India," he said, "was an Asian State; and the Soviet Union was a state sprawling over Asia and Europe. Between two such states there can be amity or enmity. There is no question of indifference."

These words were written in 1927. But it was not till 1947 when India became independent, that the indifference, if not worse, between the two governments began to vanish. This indifference, be it said, was not shared by the people. The people of India saw in the Soviet Union a tower of strength in their struggle for freedom. And the people of the Soviet Union gave their moral support to the people of India who were trying to break the bonds of foreign domination.

The establishment of diplomatic relations between India and the USSR did not result in the immediate development of cultural and economic relations. Some Indians still suffered from the fear, a relic of British days, that the USSR was out to turn the world red by

hook or crook; and many Russians thought that though India was nominally free she was economically bound hand and foot to the chariot of Western imperialism.

Moreover, to the Russians, Mahatma Gandhi, who led the Indian struggle for independence, was initially a baffling figure. Why, he was baffling even to some Indians! Among them was M. N. Roy. But Lenin had a truer appreciation of the significance of Gandhi. Lenin and Roy had quite an argument about Gandhiji. "Even now," writes M. N. Roy in his *Memoirs*, "we could not agree about the role of Gandhi whose name was just coming to be known in Russia. Lenin regarded the new leader of Indian nationalism as objectively revolutionary.... I held that such an estimation of the role of Gandhi was precluded by his religious and social ideas, which were positively reactionary.... Lenin agreed to differ for the moment saying that experience would enable one to arrive at a correct judgment." History has shown that Lenin's judgment rather than Roy's was correct.

There was a certain phase in Soviet history when M. N. Roy's judgment of Mahatma Gandhi and of our independence movement seemed to prevail. With the advent of independence and the development of Indian, as well as Soviet, policy in the fifties, the old misunderstandings began to disappear. In the United Nations and elsewhere India demonstrated that her policy of non-alignment was a truly independent policy; in Korea and in Indo-China she proved to be a factor for peace; and in her relations with the two blocs, she showed her

anxiety to lessen world tensions. At the historic 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956 the Soviet Union reiterated Lenin's theory that peaceful co-existence was essential. It was also declared that there was no fatal inevitability about war and that violence was not essential for the transformation of society. All this gave greater content to the doctrine of peaceful co-existence. This is best reflected in the relations between India and the USSR.

Between India and the USSR there has since been a great efflorescence not merely of political and economic but of cultural relations. Mutual understanding, or at least a genuine desire for it, is the only firm basis for these relations. That the Soviet Union cherishes this desire was shown markedly in the manner in which Gandhi's centenary was celebrated in the USSR, even as the preparations which are afoot in India for the celebration of Lenin centenary show the high esteem in which Lenin is held, regardless of all ideological distinctions, by the government and people of India.

Russian writers such as Leo Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Turgenev, and Maxim Gorky have had a powerful influence on our writers and intellectuals. So had Tagore in Russia. Our classics, too, were well-known and the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* were translated into Russian. After the Revolution the literary contacts between India and the Soviet Union assumed far greater dimensions. India's classics were translated and published in millions of copies not

merely in Russian but in the other languages of the USSR. Among contemporary books Mahatma Gandhi's *Experiments with Truth* was translated into Russian and a new edition was issued on the occasion of his centenary. Jawaharlal Nehru's *Autobiography* has also been translated into Russian.

Five years ago the Soviet authorities in India introduced certain awards known as the Nehru Awards which are given every year on the occasion of Nehru's birthday to those Indian writers who have best promoted the cause of peace, international understanding, and Indo-Soviet friendship. The Government of India has reciprocated this gesture by introducing similar awards in the Soviet Union for Soviet writers. The eight highest awards carry a free trip to the USSR or India as the case may be and a fortnight's stay there.

Between the Indian and Soviet Governments there is an agreement for cultural exchange, which is revised and renewed every year. There is hardly any field of human activity, with which governments are normally concerned, which does not fall within the purview of this agreement. Side by side with this governmental exchange, there is a scheme, on a necessarily more modest scale, between the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society in India and its counterpart in Moscow for promoting the visits of scholars, writers, scientists, and other cultural workers between India and the USSR.

From Dehra Dun in the north to Neyveli in the south, and from Ankleswar in the west to Barauni in the east, many mighty projects have arisen as monu-

ments to Indo-Soviet cooperation. Among them are some cultural projects as well. One is the Indian Technological Institute in Powai near Bombay, set up with Soviet assistance. Another is the Institute of Russian Studies, one of the best of its kind in the East, which has just been affiliated to the Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Now, indeed, Jawaharlal Nehru's words uttered in 1927 have come true. No longer is there any question of "indifference" between India and the USSR. On the contrary there is perfect "amity" which is reflected as much in the cultural as in the economic and political fields.

10

THE LENIN CENTENARY IN INDIA

THE LENIN CENTENARY YEAR followed close on the heels of the Gandhi centenary year. Gandhi and Lenin were born within a few months of each other: Gandhi in October 1869 and Lenin in April 1870. The celebrations of their centenaries almost overlapped, for the Gandhi centenary year was officially extended up to 22 February 1970, the twenty-sixth anniversary of the death of Kasturba, Gandhi's wife, which occurred when she was in detention with her husband during the war. Some people had feared — and a handful had perhaps hoped! — that after the great celebrations of the centenary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth the Lenin centenary celebrations would be a bit of an anti-climax. But these fears have proved groundless. The enthusiasm with which the centenary of Lenin's birth was celebrated throughout the length and breadth of India exceeded our wildest expectations.

In India a Central Lenin Centenary Committee was formed under the chairmanship of Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao, the Minister of Education. It included distinguished men in different walks of life and representatives of all the prominent cultural organizations of India. This Committee, as well as the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society, with its 700 branches have been taking a leading part in celebrating the Lenin centenary.

The celebrations have taken various forms: meetings, seminars, symposia, mushairas, essay competitions, film festivals, oratorical contests, photo exhibitions, exhibitions of books, and so on. Streets have been renamed after Lenin, his busts and statues have been put up and a Lenin Centenary Stamp has been issued by the Government of India. Men and women of all strata and of all professions, central ministers, state governors, chief ministers, members of Parliament, members of state legislatures, vice-chancellors, writers, artists, journalists, educationists, lawyers and doctors, let alone workers and peasants, have been taking part in the Lenin centenary celebrations.

Some men, who in their own life-time seemed destined for immortality, are soon forgotten while others are remembered for ever. Briefly speaking, the greatness of a man is reflected in the extent to which, and the period for which, he is remembered after his death. Not long ago there took place the centenary of the birth of Lloyd George, who was Prime Minister of England during the First World War and was one of the principal architects of the Allied victory. Yet, the

centenary of his birth passed almost unnoticed, even in his own country.

The reason is that Lloyd George was a clever man but not a great man. The manner in which he intrigued and manoeuvred and ousted his highly respected chief, Prime Minister Asquith, and took his place was unscrupulous. Moreover, even in his old age, he indulged in certain weaknesses of the flesh which his nephew has exposed with unholy glee in his biography of Lloyd George.

Character, and not only achievement, is the criterion of greatness. Unlike Lloyd George, Lenin and Gandhi were men of the utmost rectitude. Their thoughts, words, and actions always ran in a straight line. They set for themselves as well as for their colleagues and followers the strictest standards of conduct both in public and private. It was this which won for Lenin the deepest esteem of his people and earned for Gandhi the title of Mahatma, or the Great Soul.

"Lenin's personal life was such," said Maxim Gorky, "that in a religious age Lenin would have been considered a saint." Perhaps to the people of Asia, where all the great religions of the world were born, saintliness makes a greater appeal than elsewhere. "What conquers and attracts the hearts of Asian peoples," said Ho Chi Minh, who was himself a modern saint cum revolutionary, "is not only Lenin's genius, but his contempt for luxury, his love of labour, the purity of his personal life and simplicity, in short, his moral greatness and nobility."

Apart from character, the practical achievement of Lloyd George, too, is not comparable to that of Lenin. The First World War, which Lloyd George helped to win, pales, in the perspective of history, into insignificance compared to what Lenin achieved. After all that war was, as Lenin put it, "an imperialist war," or, as Sardar Panikkar said, "a European civil war," with no special relevance for the world. Lenin, on the contrary, founded the first socialist state on earth and in doing so translated socialism from an idea into a reality. In this way he turned over a new leaf in the history of mankind.

Lenin has a special claim to the respect and gratitude of the peoples of Asia and Africa. He built a bridge between the two great movements of the twentieth century, the movement for political freedom and the movement for social and economic emancipation. It was he who saw clearly the connection between them and he enriched them both. He stressed the relation between them in many memorable works such as *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism.*

In this connection one recalls Lenin's conversation with one Comrade Kievsky in the early part of the century. Kievsky said that it was absurd to try to introduce socialism in colonial countries or to form workers' parties where there were no workers. He thought that it was not the business of socialists to meddle with the colonies or demand self-determination for them. Lenin observed that Kievsky's attitude was "a caricature of Marxism." After all, said Lenin, the colonial and semi-

colonial nations accounted for a thousand million people. Of them more than seven hundred million people were living in countries like India, China, Egypt, and Persia, where there was no lack of workers. "It is our duty to support their struggle for freedom," said Lenin, "for otherwise socialism in Europe will not be secure."

Soon after the Revolution, Lenin issued a "Proclamation to the Muslim toilers of Russia and the East." "From now on," ran the Proclamation, "your faiths and customs and your national and cultural institutions are declared free and invincible. Arrange your national life freely and without hindrance. You have the right to this. Know that your rights, like those of all the other peoples of Russia are protected by the might of the Revolution and its organs."

The British Government realized at once that his proclamation was calculated to undermine the British Empire. In a telegram to the Viceroy, the Secretary of State for India said: "We have held up this highly inflammatory proclamation of the Bolsheviks. It should be suppressed as long as possible." The Government of India agreed wholeheartedly and described the proclamation as "diabolical." But the Proclamation could not be suppressed for ever. When it became known, it caused a thrill and roused a ray of hope in the minds of millions of suppressed people in Asia and Africa.

But Lenin was not content with issuing proclamations. He followed events in Asia and Africa with great care and sought every opportunity to support the move-

ments for national liberation in the colonies. All the major incidents in the Indian independence movement have found an echo in his writings—the Indian "rebellion," of 1857 which we in our childhood were taught to regard as an Indian "mutiny," the infamous partition of Bengal, the British policy of "divide and rule," recurring famines in India, the arrest and imprisonment of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the general strike in Bombay, the first of its kind in India, which occurred in protest, the massacre of Jallianwala bagh and the atrocities committed in the Punjab in 1919. Lenin had also learnt of the advent of Mahatma Gandhi whom he, unlike M. N. Roy, regarded as "objectively revolutionary."

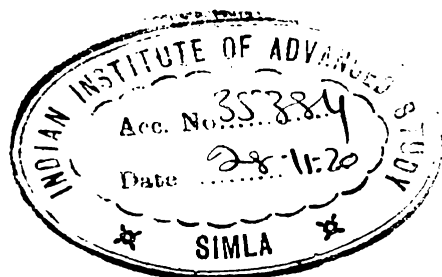
Lenin never wavered in his support of peoples striving for independence. Whenever we met obstacles in our way, Lenin's successors have come to our help. I recalled this aspect of Lenin's legacy at a great public meeting in honour of the centenary of Lenin's birth in Goa. Ten years ago, he would have been a bold man who would have dared to mention Lenin's name in Goa, let alone eulogize him. In Goa the Portuguese were in power, as they had been for three hundred years, and they conducted themselves as if they were there to stay for all time. I recalled how, soon after I became India's first Foreign Secretary in 1948, I summoned the French and Portuguese Ambassadors and gave them identical memoranda, saying that now that the British had left India, it was time for the French and the Portuguese to leave their own pockets such as Pondicherry and Goa. The French Ambassador received the memorandum

courteously and offered to forward it to his government. The Portuguese Ambassador even refused to receive the memorandum: he said that it was not within his power to discuss any matter connected with Portuguese sovereignty, and he returned the memorandum to me. The French Ambassador behaved as a diplomat; the Portuguese Ambassador as a bigot.. The French Ambassador lived in the twentieth century and seemed to have some idea of the winds that were blowing in Asia and Africa. The Portuguese Ambassador seemed to live still in the sixteenth century, when the Pope issued a bill giving half the world to Spain and the other half to Portugal. Eventually, after waiting patiently for fifteen years, the Government of India integrated Goa into India by the merest show of force. Then, there was a great rumpus in Western circles. There was even a move in the Security Council to declare India an aggressor. Indeed such a resolution would have been brought forward in the Security Council but for the fear that the Soviet Government might exercise its veto.

This is but a small example of the unequivocal support which Lenin's land has been extending to the nations of Asia and Africa in their efforts to remove the last vestiges of colonialism and to stand on their own feet politically and economically. The legacy of Lenin is a living legacy; and Lenin has become one of the world's immortals. "Who is there today who does not know Lenin?" asked Jawaharlal Nehru in a message which he sent on the occasion of Lenin's birthday in 1938. "Who does not bow his head when his name is

mentioned?... For crores of poor people in this world Lenin has become a star that lights their way to freedom.... Lenin was born in Russia. But he belongs to the world and we, too, seek our path in that light. It is but proper that we remember this great man and strengthen ourselves with his memory."

It is in this spirit that the people of India have been celebrating the Lenin centenary.



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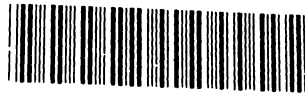
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