

**LENI**  
**GOD OF THE GODLESS**

*Translated from the Polish by* **GREGORY MACDONALD**

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# LENIN

## CHAPTER I

LITTLE Vladimir Ulyanov was sitting very still, thoughtfully watching his mother's preparations. Maria Alexandrovna herself, pale and spiritless, was helping the servant-girl to lay the table. For it was Saturday, when her husband's friends would descend upon them, and she had grown more and more to dislike their weekly assemblies. Her children, except Vladimir, shared her feelings. The girls were tidying up the drawing-room and comparing notes on their father's guests. The elder boy, as usual, had slipped out of the house, cursing them for a gang of brigands. Only Vladimir looked forward to the evening with impatience.

At last Ulyanov came into the room. He was a grizzled, broad-shouldered man, with the narrow Mongolian eyes of his younger son, and he knew that he looked a man of substance in his dark-blue frock coat with gold buttons, especially when the red and white ribbon on his chest held the cross of St. Vladimir, which conferred an authority of its own.

He sat down in an arm-chair, drew up a small table, and set out the chess-men, in readiness for a game with Doctor Titov.

The Doctor always captured the imagination of Vladimir. The lad would have liked to see him go swimming. No matter how deep the water might be, the man would not sink. He would bob up and down like a fishing-float on the surface. A round, bulky man was Doctor Titov.

The father said nothing to Maria Alexandrovna. He knew very well that she did not like his guests. On

the other hand, he did not want to spoil his pleasures by a quarrel with his wife.

But Madame Ulyanova began the conversation at once.

"My dear," she said, "we would both be better off if you gave up those friends of yours. What good can it do you to have that drunken priest, Father Makary, with his rusty old cassock, or Doctor Titov, or the School Inspector, Peter Petrovitch Shustov? That old ramröd!—he's good for neither God nor devil!"

Her husband twisted uneasily in his chair and began to wipe his perspiring forehead with a red handkerchief.

"We've been friends for a long time," he muttered. "Besides, they have very good connections. They can help one along in life. The great ones of the earth have ears, you know, and when my friends whisper a good word about me . . ."

"O Lord!" groaned his wife. "You and your good word! You remind me of Tiapkin-Lapkin in Gogol's *Inspector*. He did that too. He took care to ask the Inspector, when he returned to Petersburg, to tell the Ministers where Tiapkin-Lapkin was living!"

She began to laugh, silently and with bitterness.

"That's no sort of a comparison, my dear," he said reproachfully.

"Yes, it is! It's exactly the same," rejoined his wife. "You're making a fool of yourself, that's all. Why don't you invite some people who really count, young people or men of intellect? For instance, Doctor Dokhturov, or that schoolmaster Nilov, or that marvellous monk, the preacher, Brother Alexis? I met them at Madame Vlasova's. *They* have intelligence. They're worth paying attention to!"

"God forbid!" hissed Ulyanov. There was some fear in his voice, and he waved his hands helplessly. "Those fellows are dangerous types. They are, well . . . political agitators."

"Political agitators!" asked Maria Alexandrovna. "What do you mean by that?"

"Nothing very good," he replied in an impressive whisper. "The Police Commissioner warned me about them. But I forgot to tell you, Maria, that he is calling on us to-day as well."



"What are you going to do next?" stormed Maria Alexandrovna, striking her hands together in exasperation. "We won't hear a single honest opinion expressed to-night. With a policeman present, no one will dare open his mouth. Especially with *that* busybody!"

The husband held his peace, breathing heavily and wiping his forehead.

"For a man in a small way, like myself," he muttered, "it is necessary to have a powerful friend."

But his wife threw up her hands in despair and went out of the room.

Punctually at eight o'clock the guests began to arrive. In a short time they were seated in the drawing-room, where they carried on an animated conversation.

Vladimir had eyes only for two of them. With a sly grin he nudged his sister, Sacha, glancing at the same time towards the Doctor.

His head was round, bald and very red. His eyes protruded abnormally, weak and pale in colour, so as to give the impression that they were actually white. Below them the face fell away into three folds of chin, which lay like so much putty upon a crumpled shirt-front. The domed head, balanced as though casually upon the gigantic rotundity of his body, gave an uneasy sense of disproportion. . . . Some sudden movement might send it rolling down his waistcoat, as he sat on the high sofa, swinging his fat, short legs above the floor.

"An apple on a water-melon," whispered Vladimir to his sister, screwing up his eyes. Sacha pinched his arm and put her hand over her mouth to conceal her giggles.

The lad turned to examine the new guest, Bogatov, the Police Commissioner, about whom there were all sorts of stories in the town, and whose very name was the terror of evil-doers. He was lean but strongly built. His cheeks were covered with fine side-whiskers. The ends of his long, carefully-waxed moustaches pointed upwards almost to his half-closed, cunning eyes. He was lounging comfortably in his arm-chair, constantly adjusting his sword and the decorations hanging at his throat. His splendid appearance was completed by his high, shining boots, and long spurs which clicked softly as he moved.

Vladimir could only gaze at him in admiration. He liked the energy radiating from Bogatov's muscular frame, the self-confidence reflected in every word he spoke and in the least glance of his unscrupulous eyes. At the same time, in the depths of the little boy's heart there arose perhaps some secret animosity, almost hatred. He felt a desire to make this strong and self-confident man uncomfortable, to torment him and to shame him.

The Commissioner, drawing at his thick cigarette, was telling a story. They were all bending forward, with servile smiles of admiration, to hear what he had to say. Ulyanov alone was sitting upright and rigid, anxious not to miss a single word; for as a schoolmaster he had learned the art of listening, and this he had passed on to Vladimir. Father and son were silently taking it all in, noting every word and action of the Commissioner.

Doctor Titov, with his head on one side, vainly attempted to turn his heavy body towards the speaker. Inspector Shustov crowed softly as he fidgeted in his chair. Father Makary, whose eyes were raised to heaven, stroked his long beard with one white and full-fleshed hand, while with the other he pressed against his chest a heavy cross of silver and blue enamel, hanging on a golden chain, with little jewels glittering in the crown of Christ.

"Well, gentlemen," Bogatov was saying in his low clear voice, "Mr. Aksakov belongs to one of the oldest families. He is esteemed and revered by the whole country-side. But when he refused the peasants timber to rebuild the village which had been burnt down they attacked the manor house. They were received with bullets. Two of them were killed, three were wounded and the rest were successfully dispersed. Then they sent a farm-hand on horseback for me. I went to the place without delay. After sniffing about for an hour, I found the wounded and had them brought to me. I tried to get the details out of them, tried to find out who were mixed up in it. They kept mum. 'So you won't answer, my lads?' I asked them. When I'd clouted three of them across the head, and perhaps knocked a few teeth out . . . broke a nose or two . . .

when there was a bit of blood on them . . . they sang a different tune. You know, our Governor doesn't like a noise, troublesome reports to Petersburg, all that sort of thing. He has to put up with letters, inquiries—no end of a fuss. So he takes me aside and says, 'Simon Simonovitch, you're the man who's got to punish the rebels. Teach them once and for all not to cut up against the nobility.' . . . Well, I took some of my policemen along and I did justice according to my lights. The fellows who caused the trouble got a hundred strokes each, and every other man and woman in that village got twenty-five strokes. That was just to give them a lesson. Now everything is quiet and peaceful, like the inside of a church. The rod: that's the best medicine for our peasants."

He laughed comfortably at the end of his story, and the Doctor nodded in agreement.

"You're right, sir. The rod is a cure like cupping. It draws off blood from the head and heart."

"It is a mild, fatherly punishment," Father Makary observed in his sing-song voice, caressing the cross with both hands. "Our peasants are children; they must be punished like children."

"M-yes. Better than hauling them up in courts," added the School Inspector. "Better than gaol. Better than Siberia."

He glanced at Ulyanov as he spoke. Maria Alexandrovna also eyed her husband gravely, and clenched her hands. He was clearly embarrassed. Then he spoke gruffly to his daughter.

"Sacha! Hurry the cook up! Our guests are famished, I'm sure."

Maria Alexandrovna, with a sign for the children to follow her, left the room. The men turned their conversation to the gossip of the town and of the official world. At last the host proposed that they should play cards or chess. Bogatov, Father Makary and the School Inspector began a game of *stoss*, Ulyanov and the Doctor wrangled fiercely over the chess-board; until, at the invitation of the wife, they passed into the dining-room.

The visitors drank quantities of vodka from large

glässes. The meal began with herring, pickled gherkins and pickled mushrooms.

"You are a master drinker, Father Makary," said the School Inspector admiringly as the priest poured more vodka into his large glass.

"With God's help I can manage it still," replied Father Makary with a good-humoured cackle. "There is no art about it when a couple like the Ulyanovs invite you to a meal and serve vodka. I always bring my throat along in case of emergencies."

"Talking of throats," the Doctor mused, "how is it that your Reverence's voice has not dropped to bass, but has remained tenor?"

"Well, you see, I'm not a deacon."

"What's the difference?" asked Ulyanov, a little elevated.

"Quite simple," the priest shrilled. "The deacon, when he drinks, chuckles and roars, Ah! Ah! Ah! As for me, when I've had a few, I take the highest pitch—I! I! I!"

The guests laughed heartily, and Father Makary poured out yet another glass, drained it, threw back his head, and screamed, "Like this! I! I! I!"

The laughter grew more boisterous. Madame Ulyanova, after giving food to the children, saw them off to bed. She remained silent and gloomy, brightening a little only when some marked attention was paid to her. Soon, as the spirits of the company rose, she was completely overlooked; she was quick to notice this, and escaped from the room.

Vladimir did not go to the wing of the house where he slept with his brother. He slipped furtively back and hid himself in the drawing-room, whence he could watch the men at table through the open doors.

"How much can you drink, Father Makary?" Ulyanov asked the priest, slapping him on the shoulder.

"To infinity, and one over," replied the priest, raising his eyes as if in prayer.

"If I may say so, your Reverence puts limits to Infinity," observed the School Inspector with a laugh.

"Exactly, Peter Petrovitch. Do we not read in the words of Ecclesiastes, the son of David, King of Jeru-

salem : ' Eat your bread in merriment, and drink wine with rejoicing, for your deeds please the Lord ' ! "

Vladimir, crouching in the other room, became thoughtful at these words. His mother taught him to pray and took him to church, where people were always praying in front of beautiful gilded ikons. Sometimes the worshippers had exalted faces, sometimes they sighed and groaned. God—a tremendous word, a terrible, lovely, mysterious name. A Being with such a lofty and commanding name as God should be fine, majestic, powerful, radiant. God could not possibly be like his father, or the Doctor, or the Commissioner with his decorations, or the priest in a green cassock, with a beautiful cross on his chest, or even like his mother. His mother flew into a rage from time to time, scolding his sisters or the servant girl—exactly like Vladimir himself when he was angry. A great Being like God must act quite differently. Yet here was Father Makary saying that God approves of gaiety over meat and drink—the very thing about which his mother was always arguing angrily and despairingly with his father. God seemed to Vladimir now less mysterious and less lovable. That sort of a God was rather commonplace after all. Probably He was just like Father Makary or Bishop Leonti. Vladimir made a face at the thought and began to listen again to the talk of the guests.

With his elbows on the table, and nodding his head for emphasis, the School Inspector was recounting one of his experiences.

" I often go the rounds of distant villages where we open day schools," Shustov was saying. " I'm collecting some rather funny material for one of my friends at the Academy. You remember him?—Surov, the hunchback? He passed through the University and is now a Professor at Moscow. A great scholar, that fellow, and no doubt about it; a personal friend of the Minister of Education and a writer of books. I did what he asked, for, you know, a connection like that is a valuable one. And I found materials for him that made his mouth water. Would you credit that in two villages I discovered pagans? Yes, real pagans. They're Orthodox, officially. When the authorities tell them to, they go

fifty versts to church, to make their prostrations. And they make a great shout about them, too. Then they go home to their old gods, in front of which they place bowls with offerings—milk, salt, flour. Ha! ha!”

“Where did you find that, Peter Petrovitch?” asked Father Makary and the Commissioner together.

“At Beyzyk and Lugovya,” replied Shustov.

“I must report it to the Bishop to-morrow,” said Father Makary. “Missionaries must be sent there to redeem them by means of the true Orthodox religion.”

“Before you do that,” shouted Bogatov with a laugh, “I’ll send some mounted police. They’ll convert the idolaters. They’ll baptise them—with whips. Our peasants are savages still. Yes, that’s what they are. Just savages!”

Ulyanov put his glass of beer down on the table. “That’s why we are establishing schools,” he said. “Education spreads quickly. You wouldn’t find any villages now where the people were quite illiterate.”

“Quite so,” said Father Makary. “You can teach them from good books now to value the Church, to reverence the clergy, to pay filial homage to our father the Czar, now happily reigning, and his whole family. . . .”

“Or to know the ways of civilised nations in the West,” put in Ulyanov.

“There’s no need of that!” retorted Bogatov. “They wouldn’t grasp any of it. It isn’t necessary and it might even be dangerous. They’d begin dreaming things. They’d get discontented, rebellious. Remember, friends, the attempt upon the life of Czar Alexander II, that sainted monarch, patron of the peasants. I was in Petersburg at the time. I saw Zhelabov, Perovskaya and the other murderers hanging on the gallows. Then one soul, at least, rejoiced that the hand of the Lord had seized them.”

“The hand of the Lord,” thought Vladimir. “Is it God who hangs people?”

God was more distant than ever from him now—no longer near and tangible. He was not in heaven either, in the mysterious sky, shining with the gold of the sun, the silver of the moon, and with the diamonds of the stars, as old Marta, their nurse, used to describe Him

to the children. He was in some other world, dark, inhuman, almost to be feared and hated. God, wine, gallows—the words whirled around in the boy's brain. Tears came to his eyes, his heart throbbed, he felt a yearning desire for something suddenly lost. He hated Bogatov, he hated God. One clouted peasants, the other hanged them with His own hand. Bogatov flogged peasants who wanted to punish a merciless miser. God hanged revolutionaries who killed a Czar. Well, the Czar must have deserved to be killed.

Now Ulyanov, terrified by Bogatov's reproach, was trying to explain himself.

"What I meant to say was that we could give the peasants lessons how to run their farms as they do in the West."

"Y-es, we might do that," the Commissioner agreed. "But the first thing to do is to employ the powers of the Police, the Church, and the Schools to keep our people loyal to the Czar, in peace and humility. That's a plain duty."

"It certainly is," shouted the Doctor. "Otherwise some new Razin or Pugatchov may lead the people to rebellion. And you have a pretty to-do when you disturb an ant-hill. Ours would be full of devils and witches and wer-wolves, too, leading our simple Ivans by the nose. And our good pious peasants would be roaring about with knives and axes, killing off the good and the bad impartially . . . just to enjoy the sight of blood, to know whether Father Makary's guts are red or blue. Oh, there would be a bonfire then! Our Holy Russia going up in smoke. I know our peasants pretty well. The Tartars ran amok and the whole world trembled. But that's nothing to the way our orthodox Ivan, Alexis or Conrad would carry on. Ugh! It gives me the creeps to think of it!"

The whole group became thoughtful and a little awed. The rows of empty bottles on the table mocked their sudden lack of Dutch courage.

"Yes, Doctor, you're quite right," said the Commissioner, breaking the silence. "It would be a mess. Our peasants can make the dust fly when they want to. I'll tell you something about that."

They all settled down in their chairs more comfortably and lit up cigarettes. Ulyanov poured out more beer as the Commissioner began to recount one of his experiences.

"It was along the Volga, near Samara, only last year. A tribe of gipsies pitched camp. You know what a thieving gang *they* are. When they're about, things, begin to disappear. Sometimes a horse—sometimes a girl's virtue. It's all the same to a gipsy!"

He laughed and settled down comfortably into his chair.

"You can make good the first loss," observed Father Makary.

"Quite so. That's my whole story. Some clever young rogue from this family used to visit the village, where he picked up a girl and cuddled her in the autumn hay. But of course he had his eyes open for more than a pretty face. After he had spied out the land, one night the gipsies stole three of the best horses in the village, slipped across the Volga with them, sold their swag to the Tartars, and disappeared in the steppes like a pack of wolves. Well, the peasants hunted round a bit until they found out where the horses were. They talked it over, consulted with their priest, and then made a raid on the Tartars. They knocked eight of them on the head and took the horses back again. That's where I came in, of course. In the end, eight of the peasants were sent to the quarries.

"You wouldn't believe it, but next year the gipsies camped again on the same spot and the young chap got in touch with his sweetheart. They caught him at it. Lord, that was a game worth seeing. First they accused the girl of being a witch, for an old woman had seen her flying on a broom-stick. They tied a mill-stone round her neck and pitched her into the Volga—into a whirlpool. She went down like a drowned puppy. But they played a different game on the gipsy. They tied his hands together with a length of leather, coated him with honey, and set him dangling over an ant-heap. His toes just touched it. The whole village turned out for three days and three nights to watch the ants gorge on him. . . . Two of the peasants got three years each for that."

"A very severe punishment—too severe!" cried



Father Makary. "What for? Just for the deaths of a gipsy, a whore, and a few Tartars. God Himself must have rejoiced at the idolaters going to hell."

"God! God again!" groaned Vladimir. The name seared his brain. He crept away from his hiding-place in tears. Soon he was in his own room, whimpering and hopeless, on his bed, where his brother found him when he returned after midnight from the town. The brother noticed the boy's tear-stained face.

"What's the matter with you? Have you been crying? You've been sleeping in your clothes."

Miserable tears coursed down Vladimir's cheeks. In a broken voice he told the whole story of the evening, and clenching his fists, he whispered, "God is wicked, wicked."

The elder boy looked thoughtfully at Vladimir. Then he spoke, and with an emphasis which Vladimir never forgot: "There is no God!"

## CHAPTER II

It was at the end of spring when the Volga at last broke its fetters of ice and the first passenger steamers forged their way through the floes. An increasing number of rafts began to drift down the river. Overhead, the last companies of wild geese and of wild ducks passed on their northward flight.

Vladimir's school reports, which he brought home to his parents, made him top of the second form with the highest marks in every subject. His father was more pleased than he would show, and his mother kissed his forehead, saying: "You are my comfort and my pride." But Vladimir received their praises indifferently, without even understanding why he should be praised. He had studied hard only because he was thirsty for knowledge; and knowledge came easily to him. He liked Latin particularly, and he tried to read Cicero on his own initiative, with the help of a dictionary and with the occasional assistance of his brother Alexander. Despite all this, he found plenty of time on his hands. He read extensively, his favourite authors being Pushkin, Lermontov and Nekrasov, but Tolstoy's *War and Peace* he read more than once. He was accustomed to divide the books he read into two categories: there were the feminine, or sentimental and meaningless books, which left behind them nothing but a sound of words; and there were the true books, real books, where he found ideas after his own heart.

And yet he had not been a voracious reader for long. Formerly his chief interest had been skating. He liked the quick movement, the constant control of his muscles, the effort of balancing. After he had finished his homework he would run to the ice with his skates, and when he came home again, fatigued and drowsy, reading was out of the question. He simply went to bed and slept

like a top. But in the past winter he had noticed that skating was occupying too much time which could be used to better advantage in other ways. For a time he hesitated. But at last, having screwed up his courage, he went to his friend Krilov, with whom he finally struck a bargain. Vladimir came home in triumph. He had given up his skates and all that they meant to him; but he had four volumes of Turgenev under his arm.

The fact that Vladimir was doing so well at school, however, did not prevent him from looking forward eagerly to the summer holidays. Then the whole family went to the small village of Kokushkino, which lay among the forests by the river. For Vladimir it was an earthly paradise, not least because it gave friendship to him and to his family. Maria Alexandrovna was especially popular in the village; she doctored everybody impartially with the help of a pharmacopœia and of medicines which she had brought with her from the town.

So also among the village boys Vladimir was a person of consequence. He was quick-witted and adventurous, even unscrupulous, the leader of a "gang" which he dominated by his strength and resourcefulness. He did not make the village boys feel that he was a squire's son condescending to their level and inwardly laughing at them. And Vladimir, on his part, although he was sometimes short-tempered and sometimes distrustful, felt thoroughly at home with the gang—an equal among equals.

Many a time he would come home with a black eye; and when his mother scolded him for it, he would look up at her kindly face and reply: "But that's nothing, Mummy. We played at Cossacks and robbers. Red Ivan hit me in the eye, but I paid him back for it. I wouldn't surrender, and I fought alone against five of them until my robbers came in."

Now that the term was over and the reports were out, all these pleasures awaited Vladimir. His elder brother remained in town, his sisters Alexandra and Olga went away on a visit to their aunts, so this time he alone went with his parents. As soon as they arrived, while the trunks and baskets were being unpacked, he stole from the cottage.

Vladimir ran as fast as his legs could carry him into the forest. The setting sun lit up the highest branches of the trees, which were covered with fresh aromatic leaves, and were already losing their last flowers and seeds. His eyes were refreshed by the bright green of the grass. He drank in the perfume of the wild flowers, white, yellow and blue, which mingled with the heavy scent of the wet earth. Butterflies, humming beetles, and dragonflies were in the air. A variety of birds wheeled overhead, chirping and whistling, ever on the hunt for insects. The lad stopped to admire them. He greeted the forest, the grass, the insects and the birds. Everything seemed to him to be beautiful. Everything was immortal. Mechanically he took off his cap and stared into the deep blue of the sky. "God . . . great God!" he shouted, with gratitude and emotion.

But his own words reminded him of Father Makary and Bogatov. He made a wry face. Then he put on his cap again and made his way through the forest, stumbling over the roots of trees, until he came to the high river-bank overgrown with shrubs of wild strawberry and viburnum. The bank fell away in an almost vertical slope. Below the shrubs could be heard the song and murmur of the eddies, slipping along the narrow sandy bank. The wide river flowed full but smoothly. On the other side were green meadows stretching back from the low sandy shore; but the long spits of sand which the boy knew well were now flooded. With all its multitude of colours the river reminded him of the flowing robes of angels and archangels painted around the cupola of a cathedral. He wanted to jump into its caressing waters and to swim far away towards the sun of ruddy gold which spilt its colour on the waves.

Little Vladimir pulled off his cap again and stood in an indescribable ecstasy motionless, staring, unconsciously drawing the fresh air of the Volga into his lungs. And then, from behind a jutting rock which caught the whirling current, a big raft came into sight. Its crew strained on their long, iron-shod poles as they propelled forward the hundreds of big trunks of fir and ash, bound together with withes. In the middle of the raft was a shelter made of bark and green branches, in front of which a fire

burned on a flat stone. A fat, bearded merchant, seated by the fire, was drinking tea, which he poured from the cup into the saucer. Now and then he shouted encouragingly to his men: "Hi, there! Put your backs into it! Sing a song, boys! Make it go with a swing!" The men, bent over their punt-poles, began gloomily to sing:

"Oh, here is our club, let us strike!  
Oh, our green club that strikes by itself!  
Oh, let us strike, let us strike!"

The sulky voices became more lively. They gathered a bolder tone and a better rhythm. The young steersman, leaning on his long sweep, suddenly began in a melodious tenor the highwayman's song:

"From behind an island, upon the current,  
Upon the back of the river's tide,  
There come in a thousand colours  
The boats of Styenka Razin."

The choir of straining figures, stamping with their bare feet the grinding, wet timbers, carried on the swelling refrain:

"There come in a thousand colours  
The boats of Styenka Razin."

The high slopes echoed and threw back the words of the song. They rolled over the river and died away across the endless plain of green fields. Suddenly the raft struck upon a submerged rock. The current slewed it off into a whirlpool, and as it swirled around, the song broke off, a confused shouting arose, and the stamping rhythm became a panic. The butts of the long poles pressed heavily against the tired shoulders of the rivermen. The water rose against the sides, the withes strained apart, the steering-sweep creaked aloud. As the last echo of the song still hung upon the air the merchant jumped from his seat by the shelter and ran across to the steersman. Raising his arm, he struck the young fellow on the face as he wrestled with the current, shouting at the same time in a frenzy of rage. Vladimir heard, as clearly as he had heard the measure of the song, the hysterical curses of the merchant. "You son of a

b——! You spawn of a devil! All of you! Misers! Lousy beggars! Swabs! May cholera take you! May . . . !”

He was running about, swearing at his men, striking them, threatening, blaspheming, mouthing the most abominable filth. The high bank re-echoed everything and tossed his words back and forth like tennis-balls, where the great song of Razin the Robber, defender of the oppressed, had just died away.

In an instant the river grew colourless, grey and wrinkled, like the face of an old man. The coloured draperies of angels and archangels dissolved in a faded heaven in the boy's mind. Vladimir slouched his cap over his eyes, and with his hands in his pockets went home thoughtful and melancholy. The joy of holiday died in his heart. Nowhere could he see full pleasure now; it eluded him, leaving no trace or echo behind. The lad could only whisper to himself: “Mamma and the Catechism teacher say that God is merciful and eternal. Then why do men die—and birds—and dogs? Why is nothing peaceful? Why does the river-song break off? Why does the fat old merchant strike the poor steersman and shout things like that, at the top of his lungs? I don't believe the Lord is merciful, or He would have given eternity to good things. Perhaps He is not eternal Himself. Perhaps He lived once and was merciful. Now He is dead and there is no charity on earth. There is no God. . . .”

He remembered the words of his brother, Alexander: “It's better not to think of it,” he whispered. A grimace of pain distorted his chubby face and lingered in his eyes.

Days full of unforgettable impressions succeeded each other in the country-side. With the village boys Vladimir wandered at will through the forests, among the fields and along the Volga bank, where they bathed or sat patiently fishing. In the forest he became a real hunter, bringing down birds with a bow of his own making. He did this unknown to his mother, for she would have scolded him. “Mind, my darling,” she said once, looking at him gravely. “Life is the greatest treasure given to men. With good Lord bestowed it on them. Nobody can kill made—or even the tiniest insect, without offending God.”

"Even a gnat which stings you?" asked the lad.

"Well, the gnat is a harmful insect," his mother replied in confusion.

"And a wolf, a bear?" he insisted.

"They are ferocious animals," she explained in an uncertain voice.

"But aren't some men ferocious too?" he went on. "I heard Father Makary say that revolutionaries are harmful. And Mr. Bogatov said that gipsies were beasts of prey. What did they mean, Mamma?"

Maria Alexandrovna looked thoughtfully into the searching eyes of her son. Her instinct was to give him an answer, but after a long silence she whispered: "You would not understand it now, dear. You are still a small boy. In time you will know everything."

Vladimir asked no more questions, but resorted to secretiveness. He continued to shoot at the birds. He also learned how to play with dice, although he knew that his parents would object to this and scold him. Still, gambling took on an irresistible fascination for him. He had his own dice and played with the other boys, winning from them live squirrels and young rabbits taken from their burrows, blackbirds and goldfinches, and knobkerries which they fashioned in the woods.

Vladimir never lost—and finally his playmates caught him out. He had loaded his dice with lead. They gave him a thrashing on the spot, but no one of them was inclined to despise him for his trick. The ingenuity of it aroused their admiration; Vladimir himself merely shrugged his shoulders and said coolly, "What have you hit me for? I only wanted to win, so I made sure of winning."

Fifteen-year-old Serge Khalturin, covered with warts and agile as a cat, nodded at the boy.

"You're a sport, anyhow," he said. "You don't like to lose, do you?"

"I only play to win," replied Vladimir with a sulky lowering of his eyes.

He expected them to charge him with dishonesty. It was a word he often heard at school; the slightest breach in the rules of a game would raise shouts of indignation

and accusations of dishonesty. So Vladimir seldom played during the breaks. He used to go to the art-classroom and look at the casts, at the busts of Venus, the big statue of Hercules leaning on a club; or he turned over the albums of pictures from the Hermitage, the Strogonov Gallery, or the Louvre.

Curious comparisons passed through his mind. At school the boys used to copy from one another, or prompt one another loudly during the deaf priest's lesson. But they did not call that cheating, as they were quick to do when it was a matter of a game. Unable to explain the difference for himself, Vladimir smiled scornfully. But he understood the country boys well enough when they thrashed him for using loaded dice. They were angered by his practising a deception on them. Still, they called him a sport. They even approved of him. Clicking their tongues, they admired the simplicity of the trick and its inventor.

This often made Vladimir thoughtful when he was fishing with his friends over the quiet water where the river-bank curved into a deep bay. The lads would sit in a row, a few paces apart, and cast their flies into the deep, black water. For a time they would be silent, watching for a movement in the floats. From time to time one would slap his forehead or his neck to get rid of a too-persistent mosquito. Then, bored by the silence, they would begin to talk.

Vladimir always listened to his friends with attention, losing not a word. Particularly he liked the stories told by the red-haired Serge, from whom he heard the legends about Razin, the famous robber of old, whose territory lay along the Volga. Before that he had only known that Razin was a powerful chieftain who kidnapped rich travelling merchants, or Persians voyaging down to the Caspian Sea with their goods. Here, on the banks of the river which had seen the robber's gaily-coloured boats, he learned that Razin used to distribute his booty among poor peasants, or ransom them from slavery; and when the workers rose desperately against the oppression of the Czar's boyars, Razin would come to their aid.

The red-haired youth had other stories to tell of Pugatchov and his fellow-rebels who carried the case of



the downtrodden peasants to the ears of the Empress Catherine herself.

"Oh," said Serge, drawing himself up fiercely, "if only some Razin or Pugatchov would come now to lead us! We'd make a mess of the State officials and the police. They're squatting on our necks—here!"

Serge struck the back of his neck with his fist, for he was repeating what he had heard from his father and his brother, a discontented factory-hand.

From his friends Vladimir heard of the miserable conditions of peasant life, but many of their phrases he did not yet understand. "Ivan sleeps with Mary one night, and with Barbara the next." That passed over his head. And so did "Dunya got a miscarriage after she went to Annie, the old witch who lives beyond the village and deals with devils," or "He treated his wife's tantrums with a lash," or "He was pushed into the gutter because he didn't pay taxes," or phrases like "a Red Cock," by which one Ivan Gryaznov avenged an injury done him by his lord. These were all incomprehensible, and rather terrifying. When he asked his friends for an explanation he sometimes blushed at their plain, unvarnished answers. Many of his doubts and illusions remained. He decided to verify everything for himself, to investigate with his own eyes and hands the terrible wounds which his childish imagination sensed. He remembered also the despairing accusations of Nekrasov in his poems and of Turgenev in his *Sportsman's Sketches*.

His thoughts became less conjectural. He began to paint for himself a picture of country life very different from life in the towns, full of shadow and gloom. He felt now that if he got to the centre of existence he could see it all at one glance. This idea came to him as he changed the bait on his hook, and he realised that the most interesting things of life had escaped him so far. He resolved to see everything, to know everything. At the same time he had a foreboding that there were in store for him new experiences even more impressive than the excursions by night into the dark forest, where bonfires were lit in lonely clearings, and blood-curdling stories were told of wer-wolves and bear-men, devils and vampires.

Only once did he come across a wolf; and that one fled from him like a beaten cur, so wolves could no longer frighten him. In search of witches and ghosts he would go by himself into the forest at night or steal away to the old cemetery, a part of which had slipped down into the river. On one occasion he had a really good fright when something cried out suddenly above his head and he saw in front of him a strange light between the trees. But when he investigated the apparition he found it to be a screech-owl. From that moment he lost belief in devils or witches, and he listened impatiently to the stories of the boys about them.

Vladimir's thoughts were interrupted by what seemed to be a series of groans, at first far off, but coming nearer :

" Oo—oo—oo—ay ! Oo—oo—oo—ay ! "

Then there came in sight along the narrow strip of sand a long line of boatmen, bent under the rope of a loaded barge. The boy knew them for homeless vagabonds who would hire themselves out for a farthing, loading the barges and towing them from Astrakhan to Nizhni-Novgorod. Dressed in rags, bare-footed, dirty and unshaved, the burlaks tramped wearily along under the rope. A fat and prosperous merchant, the owner, stood by the rudder of the barge which glided smoothly along behind them. Their black feet, covered with wounds and calluses, sank into the wet sand. Their sweating shoulders bent lower and lower, as if their faces feared the sun. And all the time their straining, tortured lungs gasped their interminable chorus :

" Oo—oo—oo—ay ! Oo—oo—oo—ay ! "

This was the song of the boatman, the song of slavery and of despair. And as the boys jumped up and stood aside for them to pass, one of them shouted in compassion, " God be with you, burlaks ! "

It was their leader, a tall hairy fellow with red sores all over his powerful chest, who gave their answer.

" Go to the devil, puppy," he snarled. " The devil is our God ! "

The team passed on, unnoticed, and at last, around the river's bend, their moaning died away:

"Oo—oo—oo—ay! Oo—oo—oo—ay!"

Vladimir's heart stood still. He had not found the devil real, yet here were the boatmen acknowledging him as their lord. Where was the devil's kingdom? Vladimir wanted to meet him, to have it out with him once and for all, even if he had to suffer for the rest of his life, like the burlaks.

That evening the boy met Serge at one of their rendezvous and asked his red-haired friend to teach him how to be a worthy follower of Pugatchov and Razin. Serge only laughed at his young friend.

"You townfolk," he said, "don't know a thing about the villages, or the way we live. For you everything is different."

At that very moment a peasant, dressed in white trousers and a blouse of rough linen, plodded past the boys. He was muttering to himself, and thumping his heavy black stick angrily upon the ground.

"Khalin's coming from the manor house," whispered Serge, as they watched him pass, defiantly shaking his mop of thick, matted hair. "He's mighty angry, and I bet he has failed again."

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Vladimir.

"He has called over there every day for two months. What's bothering him is that the Squire's younger son came across the old man's daughter, Nastya, in the forest. After a bit of persuasion, and a few little presents, she gave in."

"Gave in?" asked Vladimir. "What do you mean—gave in?"

"You are a fool," shouted Serge; and with a few picturesque details he explained the whole matter to his friend. "She is in the family way and Khalin wants to get fifty roubles reward for it. If he doesn't, he says he'll kill the harlot."

"And what does the Squire say—Mr. Milutin?" asked Vladimir excitedly.

"He says he won't give a farthing. He says she used to come to his son of her own will; so she was not taken

by force. And he says that if Khalin kills the girl he'll go to the quarries. But that doesn't stop Khalin from haggling. What's more, he counts on the money because he wants to buy another cow."

"What on earth will happen now?" asked the younger boy in some trepidation.

"What will happen? He will thrash his wife first and then Nastya. He will get drunk. Also, he will snore in his sleep. To-morrow morning he will go to Milutin again, bowing and scraping."

"If he is going to thrash them now, I'd like to have a look," whispered Vladimir.

"A good idea," said Serge nonchalantly, sucking a sweet which Vladimir had given him. "We can hide behind his garden fence and see everything."

The two boys made a detour to the village and found a vantage-point near Khalin's cottage. They could already hear the angry voice of the old peasant raised in a drunken argument.

"He won't listen!—the old hangman! The blood-sucker! He says the bitch went after the pup until she got him."

"Oh, no! In Our Lady's name, no!" wailed Nastya. "I was in love with him and he promised to marry me! I didn't . . ."

A heavy blow fell upon her breast. She groaned.

"You bitch! You slut! You whore!" the peasant repeated, as he rained blows at random on her, kicking her with his heavy boots at the same time.

"What are you doing, you beast?" his wife cried, furiously attacking him. "You'll kill the girl!"

The peasant caught his wife by the hair, dragged her from the cottage, and snatching up a piece of wood, started belabouring her head and body.

"Good people, help! Murder! Murder! . . ."

Women ran out of the neighbouring cottages in answer to her cries. After them came their men-folk, who soon formed a speculating and indifferent group around the pair. Vladimir could see neither emotion

nor sympathy on the sunburnt faces of the peasants. He overhastily had an expression of furtive satisfaction, the

"Go ahead and, in affected terror, covered their eyes is our God!

with their hands. Serge, by his side, was laughing softly.

"You should love your wife as the apple of your eye," he murmured, quoting an old saying, "and shake her like the pear tree in your garden. He shakes her well, anyhow."

One of the women called upon the men to save her, for Paul Khalin was beating her to death. But the headman intervened with authority.

"This isn't our business," he said. "With us a wife is a treasure only twice; when she comes home after the wedding and when she leaves home for the funeral. This is nothing. Paul is teaching her a lesson, and that is the end of the matter."

But the peasant had now lost all self-restraint. With a curse he threw away the stick and reached out for a heavy iron-shod pole. At this the headman thought it best to intervene.

"That will do, neighbour," he said. "You've done all you ought. Look, Paul Ivanovitch, your wife is covered with blood. She can't even stand up. Enough, man!"

Khalin, raising his bloodshot eyes to the headman's face, became suddenly calm again, and started lamenting tearfully.

"She didn't keep her eye on the girl," he whimpered. "The slut! What am I supposed to do now? Support her bastard? And that thief, Milutin, refuses to pay fifty roubles! All right then! In the autumn, when his barns are full of rye, I'll let loose a red cock in his den. I'll light up a red flame for his lordship! He won't forget Khalin, so help me God!"

"You're in the wrong now, neighbour," said one of the peasants reprovingly. "God forbid that your words come to the ears of the police. You'll rot in gaol for them, and no mistake."

But Khalin continued his threats, and his wife, profiting by the diversion, got up in obvious agony and crept into the cottage. The neighbours discussed for a while the injuries of the more unfortunate Nastya. Then they took themselves off with Khalin, whose lamentations died away along the road.

Serge had neglected to water the cattle, so <sup>the</sup> ~~one~~ used ~~not~~ taken

made quickly for home. Vladimir did not move from the spot. He was engrossed by what was going on inside the cottage. The two women cried and lamented together for a time, then they fell silent, and soon again their excited whispers were heard, as though they were concocting a plot. The voices ceased, and Nastya came into the garden, under her arm a bundle of linen bound with a gaudy printed handkerchief.

The boy was ravenously hungry by this time, but he did not move. He saw Paul Khalin stagger home, talkative with drink, and waving his arms in the air. He even attempted to sing and to dance; but he nearly fell down with the effort, and at last he lurched through the door of the cottage, where his unfortunate wife pulled off his boots and laid him on the bed. Soon Vladimir knew that he was asleep; but between his snores he still shouted drunken curses.

Then the woman came to the door. She looked impatiently up and down the road, until at last she heard footsteps approaching through the orchard. Nastya had returned, Nastya dishevelled and fearful, a shapeless woman walking heavily. The other was a wizened, bent old woman, a true witch, with wrinkled yellow face and bird-like little eyes.

"Auntie, will you help this poor girl?" whispered the mother. "After the harvest I will bring you a silver rouble. I swear I will!"

"Good, then! make haste! Make haste!" muttered the old wise woman, rolling back her sleeves.

Far away there was a sound of music, of laughter, and of young men singing in the night:

"Hamlets two, and villages three,  
Eight young girls, and one for me!  
Hu—ha!"

### CHAPTER III

THE whole village gathered at Khalin's cottage. A white coffin of rough planks, hastily nailed together, was placed on two stools in one corner of the room. Above it a single candle burned before the black and sooty ikons on the shelf.

A young priest, short and thin, clad in a frayed cassock and an old cope of black velvet, was saying the prayers for the dead. He intoned them in a strained voice as though he were burning with indignation which he was making a great effort to control. Time and again his blue eyes filled with tears; with his pale, veined hand he gripped his cross; and as he chanted the uncompromising prayers, his glance, avoiding the crowd of peasants in the room, rested upon the face of Nastya.

He saw her nose, sharpened by death, the lines of pain etched about her mouth, her bruised eye half-open upon a clouded pupil. He stopped singing, drew a whistling breath, and then went on.

At last the ceremony came to an end, and as the final invocation died away, "Give her peace, O Lord, in the home of Thy Saints," the peasants carried Nastya to the cemetery. There, where the stray cattle grazed and dogs ran among the tall weeds and bushes, a small hill of yellow clay rose quickly over the girl's tomb. Above it was placed a cross of wood, without inscription to commemorate her name.

Ulyanov asked the priest to take tea at his home, saying, "You have come a long way, Father. You are tired. Let us look after you."

As for Khalin, he was pleased to be rid of the obligation. This priest from another parish, a stranger and a learned man, might spoil the funeral meal. He would certainly embarrass Khalin's friends.

Maria Alexandrovna seconded her husband's invitation.

The young priest smiled diffidently as he nodded his head in acceptance. After taking off his cope he wrapped up the cross, the hyssop and a small bottle of holy water in a red handkerchief; and as he shook the charcoal out of the censer he had his eyes on the unconscious peasants. They were already eating wheat porridge with their fingers from small bowls and waiting impatiently for Nastya's parents, who were smoothing over with spades their daughter's grave.

At the tea-table Ulyanov asked the young priest in a fatherly manner about his rectory, his family, and the affairs of the parish. The priest, as diffident as before, made evasive replies.

"What seminary are you from, Father?" asked Madame Ulyanova.

"I graduated from the seminary of Kiev and then from the Theological Academy at St. Petersburg," he answered haltingly. "My name—Chernyavin—Vissarion Chernyavin."

"The Theological Academy!" ejaculated Ulyanov. "That's the highest school of all! How on earth did it happen, Father Vissarion, that you have buried yourself in an obscure parish?"

The priest raised his timid eyes and whispered:

"I wonder if I may speak openly? . . . I am afraid that somebody might overhear us."

"It's quite safe here. You may say what you like," said Maria Alexandrovna.

"Yes, I'm quite sure of that," murmured the priest. "You see, I've met your son, Alexander Ilyitch."

"Have you really?" asked Madame Ulyanova. "Where did you meet him, Father?"

"In Khazan. We have friends in common." He was evasive again.

"Then tell us, Father, how it happened that an accomplished priest like you was sent down to such an obscure village."

Father Vissarion looked round suspiciously, and whispered furtively across the table: "I have been victimised by the bishop and the Holy Synod."

"In what way?"

"I opposed the ecclesiastical policy. I had no wish to



be simply a Church official. My vocation is—the priesthood. My work is to confirm the faithful in the true religion of Christ.” Warming with enthusiasm, the priest continued more boldly: “To this day Russia is a savage, almost a heathen, country! Our priests must be missionaries—the ignorant peasant has absorbed nothing from Christianity—nothing at all. Of old he used to prostrate himself and strike his forehead upon the pedestal of the wooden idol Perun. Now, after a thousand years, he prostrates himself before wooden ikons. He is quite ignorant. For him God is but an ikon; and the Holy Ghost he knows not at all. Why, there is nothing that he knows and nothing that he understands. His life holds no love, no light, no hope, no faith. What is even more terrible, he rejects prayer, the little symbol of faith, and thereby falls into blasphemy.”

Father Vissarion was silent, sunk in thought.

“No, indeed,” he continued after a moment. “Our peasant does pray for a good harvest, for more land, for the dispossession of landlords. That is what occupies his mind. With the lure of land you may lead him to heaven or to hell. Alexander II freed the peasants: he bound them to their small plots of land, which at the very best provide only a miserable existence and a constant threat of starvation. . . . They call him the Liberator. Some statesman must have advised him to make that hunger for land the passion of their lives—to fetter their powerful limbs with illusory promises. A diabolical scheme! And the Emperor perished for it at the hands of revolutionaries.”

No one spoke. Vladimir gazed at the pale, drawn face of Father Vissarion.

“How can I draw the peasants to the teachings of Christ if I am ordered to deceive them, to make them humiliate themselves: . . . all for the glory of the Czar and loyalty to corrupt authorities? I can’t do it!” He sighed and added softly, “That was the subject of my dissertation. Now I am persecuted—spied upon by the police—deported to a small village. And I a priest! What a tremendous word! What a terrible responsibility! . . . The funeral of that girl to-day—you were

there. Don't I know too well what is going on over the countryside? I know because of the appalling things I hear in the confessional. Not crimes exactly, for the attack of a wolf on a lamb is not a crime. But we live in a land of impenetrable darkness where husbands flog their wives to death when they feel an attraction for another woman; where wives drop poison into their husband's vodka when they wish to be rid of him; where girls lead lives of sin and go to an old hag when they want to be rid of the consequences. Everywhere there is drunkenness and savagery and a contempt for the value of human life. Do you know what our peasant has it in his heart to do? He can kill. He can kill a man with a subtlety that is exquisite, ingenious, quite Asiatic—kill so that his victim really learns what death is. And what will be the end of it all? Nobody knows. Nobody can guess!

"A revolution?" whispered Ulyanov. "A rebellion?"

"No!" shouted the young priest. "Like a wild beast of prey the peasant will break out of his cage, to cover the land with blood and flame. The time is coming! It is now at hand!"

He raised his fist and shook it above his head, like some prophet. Then he sighed heavily and relaxed.

"It is terrible!" said Madame Ulyanova.

"Perhaps our schools will save us from such a disaster," observed her husband. "Do you think so?"

"Not for a long time," the priest answered. "And, considering the ideas our peasants have, the method is dangerous. A book won't feed the hungry. Learning only comes easily to full bellies and peaceful minds. We cannot afford to live on illusions while there is hunger and hatred all around us."

With these words Father Vissarion rose from the table, crossed himself three times, and whispered deprecatingly:

"Don't repeat this conversation to anybody, dear people. I'm not afraid, but I would like to stay where I am for a certain time."

They went to the yard where his carriage stood, but the driver was absent. Just as Ulyanov was ordering Vladimir to look for him at Khalin's cottage, where the mourners were being entertained to the funeral meal, the

door of the cottage opened and the guests trooped out. The peasants, men and women, lurched down the steps, making their ritual sign of the cross. Once on the road they struck up a popular jig-tune in a discordant chorus. Father Vissarion's driver was amongst them, as drunk as the rest, but he remembered his duty and staggered towards the carriage.

"A fine and honest funeral they've given their daughter," he mumbled, climbing up to his seat. "Ah, may the Lord illumine the soul of His handmaid Nastasia!"

In a cloud of dust the carriage rolled away down the street, with the drunken peasant lashing his horse and shouting at the top of his voice. Vladimir, watching it lurch and rattle on its iron-rimmed wheels around a bend in the road, carried in his mind a vision of the pale and fanatical little priest with his menacing hand raised above his head. He contrasted the picture with that of Father Makary, a fat man fingering his soft beard and his silver cross with the jewelled and golden figure of Christ crucified. Two men of God, thought the boy, and yet how different they were! Which of them was the better, which was in the right? Or—which was worse? There was no answer to his questions. He stood seeking his way at a cross-road, lost in a mist of ideas.

Vladimir narrowed his black eyes and compressed his lips. He remembered that he wanted to see a wandering beggar who was being sheltered for the night by the headman, so he shook off the doubts that weighed upon him and ran to the headman's cottage. There he found the tramp surrounded by women and children who attended to his needs and asked him what news he had from his travels.

This old character, who went by the name of "Xenophon in irons," was lean and swarthy, with the distant eyes of a fanatic. Both summer and winter he walked barefoot in his eternal overcoat, ragged and shiny. As a mortification he wore on his worn-out body a hair-shirt and a heavy chain, while on his chest there hung a picture of Christ crowned with thorns. He talked incessantly. There poured from his lips a medley of prayers, legends, gossip, and news collected in his aimless wanderings all

over the face of Russia. He spoke of monasteries, of the relics of holy martyrs, and of their lives, of the prisons where thousands of peasants dragged out their miserable days; of rebellion; of some eagerly expected "White Letter" which was to give land to the peasants, and liberty, and happiness; of cholera, "a plague spread through the villages by doctors and teachers." He showed them, also, talismans against every form of disease and misfortune: a pinch of sacred soil from the Holy Land, a fragment of one of St. Anne's bones, a phial of water from the miraculous well of St. Nicholas. Laughing, singing and clanking his chains, he prophesied that soon Antichrist, the enemy of God and of the people, would appear; and he predicted that only those who were overwhelmed by wrong and misery—he meant the peasants—would survive the 666 days of his reign; the peasants would then earn the right to judge their oppressors, and when Christ came again to rule over simple ploughmen they would enjoy all earthly pleasures for a thousand years.

Little Vladimir watched and pondered as the old mendicant, as black as the soil he sprang from, capered about the room with his vacant laugh and hysterical chatter. Suddenly there was the sound of jangling sleigh-bells outside the door. A carriage, followed by two mounted policemen, had driven up to the headman's cottage. An official entered the room and greeted the headman haughtily.

"Is there a woman living in your village called Darya Ugarova, the widow of a soldier killed in the Turkish War?"

"There is," the frightened peasant replied, as he fastened on his coat with trembling fingers his official badge of brass. "Ugarova's cottage is near the gully."

"Lead me to it," the officer ordered, and they left the room.

The crowd of women quickly followed them, accompanied by the children, full of curiosity, and by Xenophon, chanting as he went. The motley crowd proceeded to a small tumble-down cottage on the outskirts of the village, with a broken thatch of black and rotten straw, and gaping windows stuffed with filthy rags. Outside a

middle-aged peasant woman was milking a cow. Her two little girls were turning out the dung of the cow-house with wooden pitchforks.

"In the name of the law," said the official sternly, "I confiscate the house and land of Darya Ugarova for non-payment of taxes since her husband's death. Men, do your duty."

He nodded to the policemen. They took the cow away and began to put seals upon the cottage and the cow-house.

"Neighbours! My generous friends!" wailed the woman, raising her hands. "Come to my help! Make a collection among you! Pay my debt! You know my misery! My man was taken from me by the war! What could I do, a poor woman, unprotected, without a proper plough, without a helper? I went out to the fields myself, with only a wooden plough drawn by the cow you see and my two children. The cow is my breadwinner. It has saved us from starvation. Help me! Oh, my neighbours, pay my debt!"

The villagers hung their heads and looked gloomily at the ground. Not one of them moved. Not one uttered a word.

"Enough of that!" said the official. "You must leave your farm to-day. The headman will see to it that you do not break the seals until the affair is settled."

He nodded and climbed into the carriage. The policemen followed him, leading the cow on a rope. But the crowd did not disperse. They stood silently listening to the lamentations and prayers of Darya, who ripped open her linen belted blouse, tore her hair, and cried out piercingly like a wounded bird. Suddenly Xenophon pushed his way through the crowd and went up to her. His chains clinked as he knelt down before the despairing woman; then, making the sign of the cross, he whispered a prayer, holding her with his fanatical eyes. Finally, he touched the ground with his forehead and said impressively:

"Darya, handmaid of the Lord, have you nobody to protect you or these children whom Christ loves? Have you nobody to watch over you?"

"Nobody! Nobody at all!" replied Darya, sobbing afresh. "They are lonely orphans, miserable orphans!"

Half swooning, broken by despair, she leaned helplessly against the wall of the cottage.

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen!" cried the mendicant. "Then I, Christ's unworthy servant, will be your protector! We will go wandering and begging food in heat and in frost, in rain and wind and blizzard from village to village, from town to town, from monastery to monastery, over the whole immeasurable face of Holy Russia! We will be like the birds, that sow not neither do they reap: yet the Lord sends them a harvest which ripens in the hearts of good men. Do not despair! Dry your tears! Christ the crucified and His chaste Mother will send you help from heaven! Make ready for a road that will be hard and long, until the day comes when there will be justice and a reward for the oppressed, for the tearful, for them that labour and are heavily laden! Come, let us go!"

He took the children by the hands and started on. They did not resist, but went obediently, still softly crying. Darya looked after them in hesitation. Her desperate eyes lingered a while over the poor cottage, the ramshackle cow-byre, the scattered palings of the fence, the abandoned pail with some milk still left in it. She shrieked again and ran forward, overtaking Xenophon, who trudged along with his stick, preceded by the two tow-headed children, dishevelled and miserable.

Various women, leaving the crowd, went back to their cottages, and soon they surrounded the little group of exiles, pressing upon them bread, eggs, meat and coppers.

"In the name of God," they whispered, as they gave their alms to Xenophon and Darya.

"May Christ reward you," the mendicant replied, putting the gifts into his sack.

The whole village went as far as the cross-roads with these old-time neighbours who were leaving their ancestral home. From that point the travellers went on to beg their way alone. Only Vladimir, concealing himself among the wayside shrubs, followed them further.

Xenophon whispered his prayers as he walked. Darya cried fitfully. The children, reassured, and satisfied already with the change in their life, ran here and there to pluck flowers. Peasants in the fields were following their crude ploughs, with one blade roughly hammered out by the village smith, or even with a sharp root in place of a blade, drawn by small and scraggy horses. The lowered heads of the half-starved animals, the straining shoulders of the ploughmen, were eloquent of labour. The horses breathed heavily, the peasants encouraged them in panting chorus: "O—o—o—ay! O—o—o—ay!" To Vladimir there came once more the picture of the river-men, driven to the last despair, living under the rope that drew a heavy barge along the Volga.

Suddenly the little girls walking at the side of the highway stopped dead and looked down into the ditch. At the same time two youths bolted out of the ditch, shouting curses and obscene jests. After them crawled a girl, dishevelled and barefooted. She walked on mechanically, gathering about her a dirty pinned-up skirt, attempting to cover her naked shoulders and full breasts with a muddy linen blouse, torn down the back. Young Ulyanov knew her as the dumb cow-girl of the village. She stopped and ruminated like an animal, her dull and indifferent eyes fixed upon the plodding beggars. The youths having reached their plough, bent over it and went on, turning over the shallow mould and urging their horse with the old cry, mischievously: "O—o—o—ay! O—o—o—ay!"

Vladimir went no further. He sat behind the bushes at the wayside and wept bitterly. There was no good thing on earth. The blue, deep sky, the golden dust hazy along the road, the flowers in the fields, the green meadows, the hot and brilliant sun—the whole scene was grey and miserable for him. Even in the song of the birds he heard but one tune, the tune of moaning lamentation. His crying ceased and a great hatred took possession of him instead. A hundred images pressed upon him in the grey dusk—God, his father with a decoration upon his chest, the headman, the tall police official Bogatov, the red-haired Serge, Doctor

Titov, the wrinkled old witch, the pale priest oppressed by the well-fed Father Makary, the naked breast of the dumb girl. . . .

And from the fields he still heard the deep low lament of the ploughmen : " O—o—o—ay ! O—o—o—ay ! "



## CHAPTER IV

VLADIMIR ULYANOV was never distinguished for frankness or cheerfulness, but after he came home from the country even his schoolfellows noticed a change in his expression, his voice and his bearing. He seemed to shun them and to avoid conversation with them. But in fact he was watching his friends very carefully. He was scrutinising them, as though on a first meeting.

In this way he passed in review the whole host of his companions and asked them offhand a few searching questions. He knew their types now.

There was the Colonel's son who could talk only of the importance of his father, or his career and decorations, of the severity with which he would punish refractory soldiers by handing them over to a court-martial for a certain death-sentence.

Another, the son of a tradesman, boasted about his parents' wealth. He described at length the clever bargaining of the firm at the yearly fair at Nizhni-Novgorod and the method of bribery by which they supplied a consignment of mouldy cloth for army great-coats.

Another, whose father was the Governor of a gaol, discussed with brutal cynicism the minutest details of the torture meted out to convicts. He spoke of the garlic and herrings given them for food, of their water-supply being withheld, of a system by which they were constantly awakened during the night, of sharp inquisitions upon prisoners worn out by suffering; he described also certain executions over which he had gloated from the window of his own room.

The young and simple-minded Rozanov gloried in the fact that his father, a District Governor, received handsome gifts from various sources, and that he himself was wearing a suit of real English corduroy, which was given

to him as a birthday present by a merchant who was negotiating with his father.

Nick Shulov, a fat and expressionless creature, derided his father, who was a Canon of the Cathedral and Procurator of the Consistorial Court. He had at his fingertips the exact sums paid to the Canon by rich men who wanted to be divorced; and he told many an anecdote about this respected prelate closeted in his office with his clients, while they concocted evidence of unfaithfulness or adultery. This boy, already a cynic, made no bones about the dishonesty of his father.

The unhappy Vladimir took their measure well. Then he began to describe what he knew of the peasants' miserable and hopeless lives. One after another, he recounted the experiences of his holidays: the tragedy of Darya Ugarova, the young priest's ominous prophecy, the death of Nastya, Xenophon the beggar, the miserable and ridiculous peasant plough in which a curved oak-root took the place of an iron blade. He described the anarchy widespread over the country-side, the secret practices of the wise woman, the illiteracy of the peasants and their vague expectations of a new order.

"It's a terrible life," he declared earnestly. "If Pugatchov or Razin comes again there will be a rebellion, sure as fate."

"Go on with you!" said the Colonel's son scornfully. "*That* devil is not as black as you paint him. My father pushes in with his soldiers, they fire a volley—c-r-r-r-ack—and the business is over! The beasts don't deserve more."

The others laughed in support of this view. From that day Vladimir talked no more with the boys of his class. He was absorbed in his lessons from morning to night. One of his chief interests was to copy out passages which struck him in his reading and to add his own comments. On one occasion his brother Alexander chanced to go through this collection, and after that, although he said nothing, he was careful to put books in Vladimir's way. The boy particularly applied himself to the Latin classics, where he advanced so well that by the time he reached the Fourth Class he hardly ever needed a dictionary.

He disliked his teachers intensely, and with good cause. The fat and stammering priest always reeled off his lessons straight out of the text-book, without even taking his eyes from the page. He required his pupils to know everything by heart, word for word, just as it was written; because the author of the text-book was His Grace Professor Sokolov, D.D., and it was approved and recommended by the Holy Synod. To all the questions of the boys (and some of them were nicely casuistical) he used to reply in stereotyped phrases: "I have told you all you should know about that. The answer is on page 76 of His Grace the Doctor's excellent book."

Vladimir, from the time when his brother declared that God did not exist, was afraid of entering into a discussion with him on religious problems, but he had many doubts. At first he wanted to consult the priest. He was referred to page 101 of Dr. Sokolov's text-book. After that Vladimir gave up the struggle and applied to him no more. If called upon in class he recited by heart the exact words of the learned Doctor of Divinity, received full marks, and sat down in black despair.

The teacher of Mathematics, Ugraf Ornamentov, a gigantic and untidy fellow, a chronic drunkard, who wore black disguising spectacles on a large red nose, would every now and then pour out a stream of foul language when he forgot where he was. He was always in a temper because, although every year he had the same questions to answer, his pupils never learnt how to do their sums. He would curse them explosively for standing in a dumb row before the blackboard, "like statues of the King of Heaven." Young Ulyanov was his only mainstay. When the Education Authorities came to inspect the place, the embarrassed Ornamentov could rely only on him to solve at the blackboard the complex problems set by the representatives of the Ministry.

Latin and Greek had been taught now for two years by an imposing man whose name was Arseny Kirilovitch Ilyin. He had a bass voice which turned easily into a sonorous tenor, a long black beard, a pale handsome face and blue eyes, gleaming ironically behind his gold-rimmed spectacles. Rumour had it among the boys of the upper

classes that the impressive Ilyin was a Don Juan always engaged upon an intrigue, for which reason he had been transferred from Moscow to a provincial town. This proved to be true. Even Vladimir heard it spoken of at home, when his father joked about Ilyin's romance with the wife of a School Inspector to Maria Alexandrovna. It appeared that the poor School Inspector, sickened and exhausted by an ill-spent life, married a young sempstress who started to betray him on the day after the wedding. She even lavished her attentions on the bigger boys of the school before the handsome Arseny Kirilovitch appeared on the scene.

The Classics Master was well aware that his young wolves, as he called them, were fully primed with stories of his romantic escapades. Accordingly, when he entered the class-room he would assume a mysterious and slightly ironical air, while his blue eyes were saying without words, "If you know anything about me—keep it to yourselves."

Ilyin became at once the idol of Vladimir's existence. The teacher knew from end to end the classics of Greece and Rome. He was an enthusiast for Ancient History. He remembered a thousand details of the ancient world. More, he could recite beautifully from the *Iliad*: the metres of Homer flowed from his lips like incomparable music. An unspoken friendship was established between teacher and pupil.

On one occasion Ilyin met Vladimir in the street and stopped to talk.

"Well, young wolf," he said with bantering friendliness, "you seem pretty fond of the classics. Do you intend to devote yourself to Philology?"

"I don't know, Professor. I haven't made up my mind as yet," replied Ulyanov.

"It's about time you did," remarked the teacher. "You've come to the point where you must define your interests and choose the course of your life."

"Yes, so I think. But . . . but . . ."

The boy stopped suddenly.

"But what?" demanded Ilyin.

"It always seems to me," said Vladimir slowly, "that life to-day is unreal, artificial. It looks as though some-

thing were going to happen—as though everything were going to be cut off short.”

The teacher grunted to himself and looked admiringly into the boy's serious face.

“H'm. You've got that idea in your head, have you?”

“Yes, I have.”

“Well, then, you have no choice at all. Stick your head into Philology and keep it there. Why, thoughts of that kind have been going through my mind for about thirty years. I keep on asking myself, 'Why on earth, Arseny Kirilovitch, do you remain in the company of these swine, rogues and dishonest fools, when you could enjoy the company of great men for many hours every day—of Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Xenophon, Demosthenes, Cicero and Plato?'”

Unfortunately, when Vladimir was just passing to the Sixth Class, Ilyin was transferred to Moscow, taking with him the Inspector's wife. . . . Vladimir could not understand that at all. Here was a beautiful world of old, a world of statues carved in marble, of mighty shrines hewn out of granite; and suddenly the whole universe of wonders, of geniuses, of great leaders was brought to nothing by a strumpet, an Inspector's wife, and an unintelligent sempstress into the bargain. He shrugged his shoulders and sloughed off any pity for the teacher. He found inconsistency and duplicity in his life, falsehood in his advice.

Ilyin's successor was quite without inspiration, an ignorant pedant. Vladimir could not be bothered with him. The teacher of Russian literature, Blahovidov, the product of a seminary, drove Vladimir into despair. The boy had decided opinions about Russian literature, which he had read very thoroughly. He knew the classics, but he disliked them because they were written chiefly about the nobility, the Czars, and the generals. He liked Tchernyshevsky, Nekrasov, Tolstoy, and Koltsov, for they wrote about peasants. He laughed at Aksakov, who stood for the union of Russia with the Western Slavs; in Khazan Vladimir had met deported Poles, so he understood the gulf between Poles and Russians. The teacher Blahovidov was in many ways not unlike the deaf priest. He would not let the boys go

beyond the pages of an uninteresting and tendentious text-book, nor would he add any comments of his own. However, he did possess some ideas. He arranged Sunday lectures on literature, which were mainly in praise of those authors whose writings increased devotion for the reigning dynasty. All other authors he called rebels and traitors. The man was so perverse, his desire to be decorated and advanced for his loyalty was so obvious, that Vladimir, who dearly wanted to argue with him, soon gave up in disgust. He dubbed him the Decorated Pig, a sobriquet which stuck to the ex-seminarist for the remainder of his career.

When Vladimir was in the Seventh Class, events occurred which were to decide the course of his future life. He passed the holidays with his brother Alexander, who was then a graduate studying Mathematics and Natural Science. On their walks together, Alexander found himself talking seriously with Vladimir, wondering at his knowledge, the depths of his thought and the convincing logic of his opinions. Then he told his younger brother about the revolutionary party called "The People's Will," of which he confessed to being a member.

"What we want," he said, "is for the whole nation, most of all the peasants, who are the largest class in the nation, to have their say in the governing of Russia. We must compel the dynasty to call a constitutional assembly which will decide upon an established form of government. Only then will the illiteracy and the misery of the peasants be relieved."

Vladimir listened attentively. Then he asked, "How are you going to force the Czar? Our nation is being ruled at present as though it were an unintelligent herd of sheep. Nor will the nation act for itself, because it is riddled with suspicion and has no idea of solidarity. I have seen that everywhere among the peasants."

"The Party looks for sympathisers among the liberal country gentry," replied Alexander. "It has influence enough; it can reach the ear of the Czar himself."

"I wonder! If the peasants are to rule Russia it will not be in the interests of the country gentry. They won't help you."

"Then we'll use terrorism," shouted Alexander.

"Terrorism? What good did the bombs of Zhelyabov and Perovskaya do you? They gave you Czar Alexander III and the old military rule of Czar Nicholas over again."

Vladimir did not conceal his contempt.

"Where did you learn all this?" asked his brother.

"From our teacher of history," answered Vladimir.

"I mean Simon Alexander Ostapov, who was sent to our school in the middle of the year. But I am going to ask you one more question. Tell me, do you want to help all Russia, or only the peasantry?"

"That's a strange kind of question," said Alexander in surprise. "Of course we stand for the whole country from one end of Russia to the other."

Vladimir smiled dryly. "If so," he observed offhand, "you are enjoying a pleasant dream."

"Why?"

"Because everybody will be disappointed in one way or another, and a constant internal struggle will go on. Suppose for a moment that the peasants have a majority in the Government. They have only one ambition, and that is to get as much land as possible. Ostapov declares that this is the only reason why the Czarist regime, pitiful though it is, has dragged on for so long. Acquisitiveness has become its ideal, and this responds to the dreams and appetites of the whole peasant class. But let's drop the subject. I am interested in quite another affair. All I can say is that when the peasants gain an influence over the Government they will be faithful to their old land-hunger and become at once the new landed proprietors. The dispossessed landowners and the proletarian villagers will smoulder in fury against them. And when that is multiplied all over Russia, what will be the good?"

The brothers thrashed out this argument time after time. Alexander had to admit that Vladimir made him doubt seriously whether the programme of "The People's Will" promised salvation after all.

One day Vladimir said to his brother, "I wouldn't mind throwing a bomb at the Czar and his friends, but I shall never join your Party."

"Why not?"

"Because it is a collection of religious fanatics. Is there any reason why you should take peasants as your guides in thought and in action? Of course, peasants can shout enough, when the time comes, to drown the noise of bombs. After that they will do such deeds of terrorism as to make Zhelyabov himself blush like a school-boy."

"Did Ostapov tell you that as well?"

"No. That's my own idea. I know your plan is useless, for the peasant is a bloodthirsty savage. He never makes any real complaint. He is attached neither to the past nor to the future. He has no principles and he is controlled only by brute force."

After that they never touched on the subject of "The People's Will." Alexander soon afterwards suggested that they should read together the works of Karl Marx. The book enthralled Vladimir at once. For its sake he gave up his favourite Latin classics and the use of Lübker's *Dictionary of Classical Antiquities*, which had been his recreations. Now he hurried through his daily home-work and turned to Marx, writing down page after page of quotation and personal comments. When his brother expressed astonishment, Vladimir exclaimed with enthusiasm:

"Here is all you need—tactics, strategy and a certain victory!"

"It's all very well for an industrialised State," was his brother's objection, "but not for our 'Holy Russia' with her wooden ploughs and smoky cottages and miracle-men."

"It is good for one class fighting against the whole of society," replied Vladimir.

At school everything went on as before. Vladimir remained at the head of his class, which would have been easy for him even with less effort, for most of his school-fellows would always be hopeless philistines. Though they were youths of only sixteen or seventeen, they enjoyed drinking and gambling. They led loose lives, making raids by night upon the suburbs and expeditions to the dark streets where the red lights of brothels burned defiantly. They made love as a matter of course with



chambermaids, sempstresses and peasant girls who came to town for work. None of them read anything. They had no interests or ambitions except to finish with school and possibly with a university by hook or by crook; after which they would become Civil servants without any more troubles in lives brightened every now and then by a fat bribe, a promotion, a decoration or a high appointment.

Those were days of decadence, of baseness and servility over-shadowed by the heavy hand of Alexander III. In Russia both the Church and the World yielded to the power of the dynasty. But it was a calm before a hurricane—an oppressive fear brooded over the people, so that some sank into stagnation and some debased themselves abjectly before the throne of the Anointed.

When Vladimir understood this he excused the Party of "The People's Will" for its poor and hopeless dreams. He felt that at least it was a spontaneous protest, though neither Russia nor the peasants really mattered to it. There was nothing to do but to shake the whole country, to rouse it from its lethargy . . . even with bombs.

The bonds of friendship and spiritual accord between Vladimir and Alexander were gradually broken without any obvious cause. For Alexander the young schoolboy was too serious, too austere, too boldly seeking the truth. Moreover, Vladimir openly declared that he did not consider his brother a born revolutionary. For instance, while Alexander was preparing a scientific paper he spent days on end bent over a microscope, studying some insects. A true revolutionary would not waste so much time on insects, thought Vladimir indignantly. With rape and debauchery and hypocrisy on every side of him, Alexander could devote himself to—bugs! Who needed to know whether or not the creatures possessed a heart and brains? It was enough to think of 1200 millions of men, without bothering about worms! Vladimir felt very lonely, and there was nobody with whom to share the thoughts surging up in him; nobody except Karl Marx, the bold dispassionate thinker who revealed to the lad a new and absorbing truth.

One Sunday Vladimir received a welcome invitation to visit Ostapov, whom he greatly admired. The young

teacher, whose pale, almost translucent face accentuated the depths of his big brown eyes, greeted his visitor heartily.

"I've been wanting to see you here for a long time," he said, wringing Vladimir by the hand. "I want to apologise for the rubbish to which I usually treat the class. It is easily digested food, you see, but I am ashamed to give it to you. You are not just widely read. You are a man capable of understanding the nature of the present Golden Age."

The embarrassed Vladimir made some deprecating answer.

"No, don't deny it," interrupted the teacher. "I can see it, and I know what I'm talking about. Yet, what more can I do? 'The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.' I'm not a hero. I fear my own shadow, not to mention the Curator of the district and the Governor of the school. I am a weak sort of character, that's all."

He ushered his pupil into a room where there were already a few guests, obviously new arrivals, because Vladimir had never met them in the town. One of them, dressed in a student's uniform, was speaking of life in the capitals. The picture he sketched with fluency and a gift for ironic narration confirmed Vladimir's opinion that a party even of dreamers, like "The People's Will," was a necessity.

"Yes, gentlemen," the student concluded, "I was deported to Siberia, as you know, and I tell you it is much better than St. Petersburg under the protecting wing of His Majesty Alexander Alexandrovitch, Emperor of all the Russias. There people are full of hatred. They look forward to some new thing inevitably coming. In the capital there is nothing but an Egyptian darkness and chaos; and in the minds of the people nothing but the seven lean cows of Pharaoh's dream."

"A hopeless situation," muttered one of the guests.

"Yes and no," said the student, eagerly taking him up. "Though everybody tries not to think about the situation, they do feel that it can't last. Something must happen."

"But what?" asked Ostapov.

"I don't know! Only one thing's certain: that more

and more people pass through a well-established university, the prison system. They graduate ready for anything!" He laughed.

"Those fellows won't be our present type of home-made Jacobins whose souls are loyal despite the theatrical bombs they carry beneath their coats!"

"Aha!" said Vladimir to himself, moving in his chair. The student looked at him suspiciously.

"Lord!" he groaned. "Our host has invited a fledgeling."

"The brother of Alexander Ulyanov," whispered Ostapov, adding aloud, "Vladimir Ilyitch is a sound man in spite of his years."

"Good enough," said the student. "Let me continue. I may tell you, gentlemen, that I have talked with Mihalovsky, Lepeshinsky and many others who have tasted prison bars and drunk the fresh air of Siberia. They have a different tale, though they are not quite so drastic as the people who are full of Karl Marx."

"Which way do they tend?"

"Oh, their direction is plain enough! They are not out for discussion. They want an all-Russian Revolution against the all-Russian Czar."

The student shouted this boldly, eyeing his audience in triumph. He repeated it slowly and with emphasis.

"An all-Russian Revolution . . . against the all-Russian Czar."

A long silence followed. Nobody knew quite how to deal with such a serious statement. Suddenly the schoolboy spoke. His face was pale but his set eyes were full of fire. His voice betrayed no emotion, unless it were a hint of cold mockery.

"These fellows full of fresh Siberian air have learned nothing at all. Or else they have not understood Marx. As for the direction they take—their rudder will turn out to be the very loyalty for which 'The People's Will' has already been blamed. That is true, I admit. 'The People's Will' is loyal to the bottom of its soul. The all-Russian Revolution cannot succeed. It is a ridiculous scheme. At the present moment the peasants will not rebel against the Church. Against the police and the doctors, yes. But when they have cut the

throats of their immediate enemies they will crawl to the steps of the throne, bringing to the Czar, as bribes, the heads of policemen. The Revolution must not be directed against the Czar. It must be directed against everything, so that stone will not remain upon stone, nor grass grow on the battle-field. That is not a Revolution for stupid and illiterate peasants, but for one well-organized Party, inspired by one slogan."

The visitors listened in astonishment to this youth, typically Mongolian with his high cheek-bones and narrow eyes. After a long silence the student clapped his hands and shouted, "I declare now that the whole world will know this youngster! Write down what I say! He has a great mind, I swear he has!"

From that moment there was a closer understanding between Ostapov and his pupil. The teacher addressed his history lessons to the ears of Vladimir alone, showing a particular enthusiasm for the Decembrists, whom he greatly admired. Ryleyev, Pestel, Volkonski stirred his soul. He noticed, however, that Ulyanov listened with cold indifference, and Ostapov's enthusiasm was damped.

"What do you think of the Decembrists?" he asked one day. "What do you think of the Decembrists?"

"I call them Romantics. A Revolution started by the weakest and most despised class is only an adventure, a slight and unimportant episode."

Ostapov was soon compelled to change the spirit of the lessons. Young Rozanov reported them to his father, who denounced the disloyal teacher to the Curator. Consequently Ostapov was severely lectured by the Headmaster of the school, a man who was a Councillor of State and a Knight of several Orders.

A period of official lessons then set in, based upon the notoriously stupid text-book of Ilovaysky. Ostapov lectured monotonously, without taking his eyes from the book. He felt thoroughly ashamed of himself, and Vladimir listened to him with contempt. One night Ostapov's servant-girl came to Vladimir and asked him to call on the teacher about some urgent matter. Reluctantly he put on his overcoat and went. Ostapov was sitting in his unbuttoned dressing-gown with the

neck of his shirt open. His unbrushed hair fell over his forehead, which was bathed in perspiration. His eyes were fixed and staring. Lost in thought, he did not even notice Vladimir's arrival. The room was in disorder. On the table before which Ostapov sat were a large brandy bottle and a glass half-filled. There was also a mirror, into which the drunken man would stare from time to time.

"Come again, have you?" he muttered to his own image with an air of mystery. "What's the news now, eh? You can't tell me anything fresh. No, nor anything worse. I've heard the lot. You gave me a devil's bargain and I signed it. D'ye hear? I signed it, and be damned to you!"

He bared his teeth and gave the mirror a terrible blow with his fist. It fell to the floor with a crash and was broken to pieces. After it went the bottle, the glass, and Ilovaysky's text-book. Sobered by his anger, Ostapov raised his eyes and noticed Ulyanov.

"Ah," he drawled. "You've come, though . . . I'll tell you about that later. Sit down. Have a drink. It's good stuff, strong stuff—aniseed brandy. Peter the Great, our Russian Antichrist, was fond of it. Yes, Peter the Great, the carpenter-Czar, the innovator, the conqueror of the decadent West. First he sucked it dry and then he conquered it. A clever brute, that Peter the Great. The Czar with a big stick. He had a smoky cottage and he broke a window out of it that looked all over Europe. Yes, he clipped the beards of our shaggy boyars—he wanted to make dandies out of them. A bit of a jester, too! Tortured his son in gaol because he loved the patriarchal spirit of Holy Russia, because he liked smoky cottages, old customs, and lousy beards!"

Vladimir sat motionless, wondering what was the matter with Ostapov now.

"Yes, I'm drunk!" the teacher laughed uproariously. "Drunk! A Russian is happier than any other man. He has a shield against pain, despair and remorse. When a Westerner is in trouble he shoots himself, goes into the river, or hangs by his braces. That's an end to him. As for us, we float into Nirvana, our Brandy Paradise! Ha! ha! ha! Yes, my boy, that's all you have to look

forward to yourself! You have too much brain, too big a heart. Avdotya, fetch some brandy and two glasses! Be quick about it!"

The frightened girl brought more brandy. Ostapov filled the glasses, and holding up his own proposed a toast in tumbled Latin:

*"In vino veritas. Ave, amice, morituri te salutant! Bibamus!"*

"I won't drink," said Vladimir in disgust.

"I'm not fit for such a noble companion," Ostapov began in mockery. Then suddenly he became quiet, his face blanched, and he began to tremble. "You see, do you?" he muttered. "Look! There! There again! Like sparks! They glitter! Go away! There they are! Coming now! To shame me! To curse me!"

Vladimir's eyes instinctively followed the direction of Ostapov's pointing hand. Dusk brooded in the corners of the room. Mounting the walls were the faint shadows of a flickering lamp and of the candles on the writing-table.

"There is nobody," he said quietly, watching the teacher.

"Nobody there? Not now! But they will come," whispered Ostapov. "They will not pardon me! They will come again!" He went on in reverie:

"Judas betrayed Christ. He loved Him, though, even after he lost faith in the Messiah. He got thirty pieces of silver for Christ's head; to show the whole world He was worth no more as a human being. What is more, he gave back the silver to the Sanhedrin. But little malicious devils set upon Judas. They laughed at him. They pinched and teased him. He wanted to drive them away, and they whispered to him, 'Go up the hill there, where you see the dead tree over the precipice.' They kept repeating it, repeating it, the whole day, the whole night, and the next day again. Judas went and sat under the tree, looking at the brown plain and the dim length of the Jordan, far away. Then he saw before his eyes the whole face of Christ. Yes, he saw the bruised mouth which had tasted gall and vinegar. He saw it move, he heard it whisper, 'You traitor! You sold your Lord!' So Judas made a noose from the cord of

his belt. Judas swung out over the precipice, a victim of conscience . . . of conscience !”

Ostapov rubbed his eyes and drank another glass of brandy. His eye roamed over the dark corners of the room.

“ Here come the devils ! They come to me ! I see them in the light ! And dimly I can see five gallows . . . five bodies hanging . . . Pastel, Ryleev, Bestuzhev, Katchovsky, Muravyev. They wanted to change the anti-Christian madness of Peter the Great. They wanted to save Russia, to enlighten her, to uplift her. They gaze at me with terrible eyes full of hatred, they shout with swollen lips, ‘ Traitor, traitor. ’ For I was afraid of the Curator. In humiliation I accepted reproof. I took pieces of silver to keep silence about the Holy Martyrs. I am silent like a traitor, like a coward ! Oh, God ! They are coming ! Do you see them ? ”

Vladimir calmed him with difficulty, helped him to dress, and took him from the room. They walked about the streets in silence for some time, and when Ostapov became sobered, Vladimir took him to his own home. There the lad gave Maria Alexandrovna an account of the evening and left Ostapov in her charge. He spent some days with them before he was taken away by his father, an old military doctor, to recover his health and sanity.

But Ostapov was never restored to his former even temper. After that night he led an uneventful life as a teacher from day to day, from promotion to promotion, from decoration to decoration. He became dull and apathetic, like so many of the subjects of Alexander III, a Czar who loved peace : the peace of the dead. —

## CHAPTER V

BEFORE Christmas Mr. Ulyanov received a new appointment as Director of all the elementary schools in the district. He at once set out on a tour of inspection, accompanied by Vladimir, who was at that time on holiday. They travelled on mail-sledges, often penetrating into places untouched by the outside world, into settlements lying at the heart of mighty forests, where there were no churches, schools, doctors, or even local officials.

Vladimir remembered from his history lessons that the whole district of Khazan used to form a powerful and highly-civilised Bulgarian state, of which no trace now remained except the name of the River Volga. The Tartars of the thirteenth century, driving before them innumerable tribes, poured westward out of Asia in a Mongol swarm. Everywhere Vladimir came in contact with tribal remnants, Votyak, Meshcheryak, Tcheremi, Tchuvash and Mordvin, living side by side with the Tartar and Russian peasants. They were a horde without history, preserving among themselves differences of clothing, religion, speech and custom, which were always primitive, sometimes savage and cruel.

A ruthless enmity prevailed between settlements inhabited by distinct tribes. The Russians despised their old invaders, calling them "Tatarva" or "white-eyed Tchuds," and their contempt was returned with interest. No Russian peasant would dare to approach a Tchuvash or Tcheremi village unaccompanied; a lonely Votyak or Tartar took his life in his hands when he went among Russians. It was even a common thing for an argument to arise, and for a scuffle to follow it, in front of the local church on a Sunday morning. And



the children at school behaved no differently from their parents at church.

Vladimir once witnessed an instructive scene of this sort himself. During a halt at a small village for food and fresh horses the lad went down to the ice-bound river, where he noticed that a large crowd was gathering, receiving reinforcements rapidly as small groups came out from either bank. First he encountered a party of women and children, from whom he learnt that there was an old feud between two riverside villages over the possession of an island which lay between them; and that now they were determined to settle the matter once and for all in a set battle. First of all the two armies hurled insults at one another. Then the small boys began to skirmish, and all the youths were soon engaged. But it was not long before their ineffectual battle was overwhelmed by the *mêlée* of men, who held heavy stones in their hands and had their fists bound with leather thongs, like the ancient gladiators. The strongest of the men, upon whom victory depended, laid about them with long staves. The struggle did not last long, for the Votyaks soon gave way before the bold attack of the Tartars from the opposite bank. A few, killed or wounded, lay where they had fallen on the snow. Blood shone upon the surface of the ice like scarlet poppies.

Young Ulyanov wondered how all the aborigines of Finn and Mongol stock, hating each other, could be welded into unity for any common end. He was sure, at least, that the Party of "The People's Will" was deceiving itself. He thought ironically that they could not unite the peasants when every village had its own battle-cry.

In larger villages the new schools were visited one by one. Vladimir took note of the teachers, both men and women, some of whom welcomed the new Director openly, having nothing to conceal. They used the same old text-books, recommended by the Church and the Ministry, and they conscientiously followed the same stultifying and deceptive programme. The majority of the teachers, however, as the observant youth noticed

at once, had no real loyalty to express. In their conversations with the Director they were diffident and chose their words carefully. It was easy to see in their whole bearing a feeling of unfriendliness for the representative of the Government. But Mr. Ulyanov did not notice it. He saw nothing wrong in the system, and he listened indifferently to complaints about salaries, about poor living conditions, or about the distrust of the schools shown by the people, which amounted to enmity against all schools and all teachers. He considered such questions to be the responsibility of the central authorities, not his own. His task was to see that the system was working. So he departed, pleased and undisturbed, without a suspicion that the teachers were secreting pamphlets sent out by "The People's Will" wherein the authors dealt more freely than did official and highly-paid scholars with the history of Russia.

Vladimir came home depressed. He knew that the peasants, divided into hostile tribes, had no solidarity, that they could not be brought together by principles. He saw an unfathomable gulf between village and town, between the peasantry and the intelligentsia, whom the peasants profoundly distrusted for their knowledge and customs, seeing in them a personification of the Government or else simply the work of the devil.

Only a Genghiz Khan or some other <sup>man</sup> <sup>into</sup> <sup>paper</sup> <sup>propagander,</sup> thought Vladimir, could manage ~~themselves~~ <sup>themselves</sup> in olden times his mighty hand <sup>and</sup> guided them to the conquest of the world, <sup>and</sup> which was his goal. They had not changed; ~~to-day~~ <sup>to-day</sup> a Khan was needed still, or some brutal Antichrist of Russia, a Peter the Great, a reformer and a dreamer who could wield power without mercy.

The lad described his impressions freely in the family circle of Ostapov, where he was very popular and called by his pet name "Vola" (and when he first heard it from the lips of their golden-haired daughter, Helen, he blushed to the tips of his ears). Old Doctor Ostapov listened in astonishment to the stories of this serious boy who spoke with all the settled conviction of an

adult. His logic, his thought, free from exaggeration or enthusiasm, his plain and forcible dialectic, all made a strong impression on the old physician. They had long talks together, which the lad much preferred to hearing the disillusioned teacher's opinions.

On one occasion, when Vladimir said with deep conviction that men could change their attitude towards law and morality, the younger Ostapov interrupted bitterly, "Nothing of the sort will happen. Russia is doomed to perish!"

Everybody present felt repulsion for one who could so give way to despair. Only Ulyanov looked at the speaker attentively and replied:

"Russia holds 130 or 150 millions of people. The whole earth contains a population of two milliards, who feel and suffer the same things. Let Russia perish, that the all-human truth may prevail!"

"No," said the old Doctor emphatically. "That's going too far."

"Well, we can't set up a purely Russian truth," retorted Vladimir. "It does not exist by itself at all."

"Then what about the all-human truth?"

"That will be worked out by the whole world: the English, the Hindus and the black races together. With co-operation all will be well."

"What sort of truth do you mean?" asked the teacher.

"I don't know yet, but I feel it here, and here." As he said this, Vladimir touched his forehead with his finger.

In the corner Helen was sitting, bent over her needlework. At Vladimir's last words she raised her eyes to his; when he pointed to his forehead she looked down at her work again and sighed softly. A little later, when she found herself alone with him, she asked quietly: "Are you sure that the truth resides in the brain?"

"Yes," he answered. "And only in the brain."

"I don't think so," she said, shaking her fair head. "Great ideas can rule mankind only when they are

changed into feelings. What I mean is that, with regard to the creation, confirmation and acceptance of truth, the heart should have its say."

"No!" he replied brusquely. "For when the heart directs, compromise follows. I can't stand compromise! I don't recognise it!"

"Will you never follow the voice of your heart?"

"Never! The heart is the enemy of reason."

She sighed and said no more, but bent lower over her embroidery.

"Why do you sigh, Lena?" asked Vladimir.

For a long time she did not reply. He waited patiently, watching the lamplight lingering on her smoothly combed hair and caressing her long, thick plaits.

"Because I feel sad," she answered at last, and sighed again.

"I feel sad," she repeated, and suddenly looked at him with her large blue eyes full of warmth. "You're a bad boy, Vola," she said.

Vladimir was silent.

"You love nothing in life, Vola, do you?"

"I want happiness and truth for everybody in the whole world," he said thoughtfully.

"That means you do love something?"

"Not at all. Reason is enough for what I want."

"And don't you love somebody?" Helen whispered after a while, with her soft eyes full upon him.

He wanted to reply. But suddenly he felt embarrassed, and with a deep blush on his cheeks he began to turn over the pages of an illustrated edition of Pushkin which lay upon the table.

"For example, Vola," her low voice went on, "do you love me?" He started violently and his face became set. "Vola, I love you as I do my father, as I used to love my mother. No, I love you as I love God."

Then he spoke, bitterly. "Your comparison is not very convincing, Lena. God is an old-fashioned idea which we have not yet outgrown."

He did not look into her face, however. He feared her eyes, filled with the warmth of real feeling.

"For me God *does* exist," she whispered. "I love Him. Next to God I love you."

"Lena!" he exclaimed. His voice had almost a note of supplication in it. He did not so much see as feel that she reached out to him her soft and dimpled hand. He caught her to him, almost brutally, until he felt her throbbing heart against his breast. He held her close to him, ardently kissing her cold and shivering lips.

"I am yours for the whole of my life, until my last breath," she murmured in ecstasy.

"For the whole of my life," he repeated, and suddenly a chill crept over him. He did not know if he felt that her passionate words were actually insincere, or if a sense of foreboding had overwhelmed him. Helen, in her woman's way, was planning out her whole life. . . . "Vola will graduate from the University and become a lawyer. He will defend only the unhappy and the oppressed, like Darya who went begging. I shall study medicine so that I may heal the poor and the abandoned. . . ."

Their conversation was cut short by the entrance of the teacher to call them both to supper; but after this Vladimir did his best to pass all his spare time with the Ostapovs. He even gave up Karl Marx, whose spirit seemed too cold and ruthless for a youth immersed in his first love-affair.

When Maria Alexandrovna sensed the turn of events she was delighted. "Lena is a very fine girl," she confided to her husband. "She is dependable and she comes from a good family. I hope I shall be spared to see them make a successful match."

"You are right, my dear," agreed Ulyanov. "Her father is a General and the best doctor in the town as well. It is a splendid alliance."

"It is far more important that she should be a good-hearted girl," said Maria Alexandrovna reprovingly.

Nobody knew that all the time Vladimir was passing through agonies of doubt. He felt that he was betraying something much more important than his own personal ambitions. He recalled the drunken Ostapov and

his talk of Judas, and his remorse of conscience. Now at last he understood Judas because he felt that some intangible treason was bound up with his love for Lena. He asked himself why he did not abandon her, as he had abandoned his skates and his Latin authors, so that he might be free for his real work—for Marx, for his private notes, for his books.

But he was unable to conquer himself. As often as he could he visited the Ostapov family, to feast his eyes upon Lena's blue eyes and golden hair. A shiver of excitement passed over him when he saw her knitting her brows to catch the full meaning of all he had to say. Vladimir was too young to know that he did not really love this girl when he could place her among the distractions which kept him from his real work.

He continued to struggle against the absorption of first love. He struggled . . . and he yielded. He shook off its spell and again accepted it in moments of weakness. He was like some saint of old putting away all the pleasures of the world and retiring into the desert only to find the hallucinations and visions of the desert as tempting as the world he had left. In the same spirit Vladimir scorned himself and loathed the weakness of his spirit. He mortified himself as though he were a Christian ascetic whose Lord wore a crown of thorns. But Vladimir could call upon no God. There was no Saviour to demand his sacrifices: there was only an insistent temptation to surrender all his strength of intellect and power of will for the beauty of Lena's eyes.

After Alexander Ulyanov had finished his day's work over his insects and his microscope, he was accustomed to entertain a group of his friends. In the evenings his room at home was clouded with tobacco smoke and echoed with the debates of young students. If by any chance the father of the house appeared, immediately the conversation switched over to the commonplace topics of the day, because it was known that Mr. Ulyanov was proud of his Cross of St. Vladimir, which conferred upon him hereditary rights of nobility. Nevertheless,

disturbing fragments of conversation reached his ears in the room of his elder son. He knew that they were talking of revolution, of "The People's Will," of Zhelyabov. He rebuked his son bitterly, telling him that his disreputable acquaintances would lead the whole family to destruction; and in fact it was not long before rumours of the meetings reached the ears of the Police Inspector, who called Mr. Ulyanov to his office. It was a sad moment for the Knight of St. Vladimir when he was warned in a friendly way to keep an eye on his household, and particularly on Alexander Ilyitch, a youth, as the Police Inspector said, of uncommon attainments who was unfortunately affected by the criminal ideas of the Masons and revolutionaries who had killed the holy Czar, Alexander the Liberator.

That evening there was a terrible scene between father and son, in which the father became so excited that he had a mild stroke. For two weeks he was ill in bed, and Doctor Ostapov was called in to treat him. But Alexander transferred his meetings elsewhere, and from that time peace and accord were re-established in the family. Alexander pleased his father by proposing to play his favourite game of chess with him, and the old man never alluded to the student's behaviour, which was so unbecoming in the son of a knight.

Vladimir's suspicions of Alexander's activities were also lulled until on one evening he chanced to pick up the book which he saw tucked away under his brother's pillow. He was astonished to feel its weight in his hand, and when he examined it he found that it was a cleverly constructed fake, made of iron, and hollow. A terrible realisation flashed across his mind. He understood everything now, but when his brother returned that evening he did no more than rebuke him for his careless choice of hiding-places.

The discovery upset Vladimir in quite a personal way. He reflected that insects did not prevent Alexander from becoming a revolutionary; while, as for himself, Lena was making him lose sight of the revolution. He felt that he must part with her, and yet he could not. The discovery made in his brother's room tormented

him, but he could find no solution for his problem. He became pale and thin, and his mouth set in hard lines. He felt like a soldier called upon for the first time to carry out a sentence of death.

The intensity of his struggle was redoubled when his father suddenly died in the autumn of 1886, for then Lena alone knew how to console his distracted mother, how to soothe her pain and loneliness. Maria Alexandrovna had never respected her husband, but she needed his companionship after all the years in which they had shared fortunes and misfortunes. She had loved him more as a mother would, in the knowledge that this man, whose blood was half that of a Kalmuk from Astrakhan, had only made his career by her efforts and encouragement. Her daughters, who were clever and intelligent women, were now more than ever enthusiastic about Lena, whom they treated entirely as a sister-in-law. Only Vladimir saw no future, not even the future of his ambitious dreams. From one day to another he waited for the next blow that would fall upon his family, to change and to destroy it all. He saw it coming more clearly than his brother could ever do. Vladimir had no illusions and no hopes.

In March of the next year, when Vladimir was in the Seventh Class, a rumour suddenly went round that on the anniversary of the death of Alexander II a plot against the reigning Czar had been discovered in St. Petersburg. It was true. And not only was Alexander Ilyitch among the conspirators arrested, but his sister Anna was also thrown into prison as a suspect. The widowed Maria Alexandrovna, overwhelmed by this latest disaster, resolved to set out for St. Petersburg. Her children did not want her to go by herself, but when they applied for assistance to old and tried friends they found that not one of them wanted to incur the anger of the authorities or to show friendship for a family whose criminal son had raised his hand against the Czar. At some houses the young Ulyanovs were even refused admittance.

In the end it was Lena Ostapov who set out with



Maria Alexandrovna under the pretence of making arrangements about her medical course. But the visit was of no avail. The poor mother could not help her son. The Czar Alexander, "the friend of peace," knew well how to take revenge upon the enemies of his anointed rule. The mother's request that the sentence of death might be commuted to perpetual imprisonment was rejected, and in the dark inner yard of the fortress of Schluesselburg, which had witnessed since the days of Peter the Great an unceasing round of cruelties practised upon the enemies of despotism, Alexander Ulyanov was hanged.

So Maria Alexandrovna came back to her home. She was outwardly calm, but her hair had turned grey, her eyes had lost their life, and her whole body shook with an unceasing palsy. On the day after their return Lena asked Vladimir to visit her, and he saw then how great was the change that had come over his sweetheart also. A shadow hung over her bright and pleasant disposition. Her blue eyes now held a cold and steady purpose and her fresh red lips were marked with a new self-control. Even her pretty, childish blush was a thing of the past; and her voice had taken on a note of metallic hardness.

She greeted him without her old smiling enthusiasm. For some time she was silent, searching Vladimir's hard and serious face.

"It is well," she said finally.

He looked at her in astonishment.

"Vladimir, you have suffered, and you have found an outlet for sorrow and for anger." He was silent and she went on: "I know that this is no time for you to think of yourself, of me, of love, or of a happy life. No, this is a time to plan revenge for the death of Alexander."

She had divined his thoughts.

"Yes, now is the time!" said Vladimir firmly.

"I was given accounts of the conspirators' trial, Vola. There was a small group of them. The ring-leaders threw all the responsibility upon Alexander and his closest friends. The Party fell into a panic,

and separated, and hid itself. The cowards! The beasts!"

Vladimir frowned and was silent.

"Vola, you must show the Government that the struggle is not at an end. The bomb that was not thrown must be thrown by another hand! The anger of the people must have voice! I know that you have thought out the whole position. You have decided to take up the work of your murdered brother. Is it not so, Vola? Tell me! Speak!"

He hung his head in silence.

"Speak, Vola!" she whispered passionately. "Your sisters have sworn to take vengeance on the Romanovs, but you are silent. Are you afraid?"

He raised his eyes. His face was steady and determined.

"I am not afraid," he answered hoarsely.

"Then what have you decided?"

He spoke now as though in self-confession, without looking at Lena at all.

"I knew long ago that my brother intended to make an attempt on the Czar. I found that he was preparing a bomb in his study. The discovery astounded me. I did not doubt for a moment that the attempt would lead to his death. If he failed he would be hanged by Alexander III. If he succeeded he would be hanged by Alexander's successor. There was no other issue, there could not be. I had the opportunity to save his life then—either by persuading him to give up the attempt or by telling my mother everything I knew. I said nothing. Nobody knows what tortures I went through. But I allowed Alexander to leave here with his bombs . . . to go to his death. What else could I do? A man ought to live for an idea and an object, forgetting himself. Who can interfere?"

He stopped, and his haggard eyes stared vacantly before him.

"And now what are you going to do? Suffer in silence?"

Vladimir looked into her face with a deep intensity and said, with an emphasis upon every word, "The next

bomb will not be thrown by me. That is mock-heroism, a foolish and miserable melodrama, an aimless spilling of blood. I swear revenge upon the Romanovs, but my time has not yet come. And when my time does come, blood will flow . . . a sea of blood!"

"What if your time never comes?"

"It will! I shall hasten it!" he replied, crashing his clenched fist down upon the table.

Lena was startled by his vehemence. She thought at first that he was only a boy after all, making empty boasts to deceive her as well as himself, in justification of his cowardice and inertia.

Then she looked into his piercing eyes, fixed upon her face. They held her like the eyes of a bird of prey. They burned and scarred the very marrow of her being. She felt that he saw everything that she was, and every thought in her mind.

"I am not afraid of anything on earth," he said. "I don't want to deceive anybody. My heart tells me to plan the assassination of the Czar at once. But my reason tells me that the time for revenge will come only when the accounts of the past have been drawn up for settlement and when the scheme of the future has been decided upon. Lena, I am the man who will do both these things."

A mighty power and a living enthusiasm vibrated in his muffled voice. For a moment, but only for a moment, the revelation frightened her and she surrendered to it. Then a terrible suspicion of his sincerity swept over her. She felt that he wanted to turn her mind away from the necessities of the moment, and she looked at him with silent reproach. Vladimir's eyes were like a hawk's again, and a smile passed over his pale face. He rose to his feet, hesitated visibly for a moment, and said in abrupt tones:

"Lena, I may go now without more explanations. I know that you are thinking of me. I shall not explain. I am following my own plan. But I tell you that you are the only creature I have ever loved. I shall come back to you when all that I have spoken of is fulfilled."

"Vola," she whispered, "you will be in my mind for ever."

She expected that he would take her in his arms as he had always done, and press her to his heart. But he looked down at her with his old enigmatic and inscrutable expression, saying to himself with scorn and hostility, "She has not believed. She thinks that I am a coward!"

At once she became a stranger to him, unnecessary to his life. If he stayed for another moment, if she said another word, she might become even an enemy to be hated. So he left her without a backward glance.

Vladimir soon found that he did not suffer for the loss of Lena, nor did he long to be with her again. As soon as school was over he went home to be with his mother. He studied and read feverishly, becoming, as time went on, more silent and concentrated. When Marie Alexandrovna asked him why he no longer visited the Ostapovs, he gave her to understand that they were afraid of any connection with the family of a criminal. "Let the little teacher get his precious decoration if he wants it so badly," was his laughing conclusion.

In his own room, however, he reflected that it was a low trick to misrepresent his old sweetheart, Lena, and the poor broken-down teacher, in the eyes of his mother. "Oh, well"—he made a scornful gesture to dismiss the whole affair—"nothing is wrong that leads you most quickly and most surely to your goal. I shall have no more trouble now, at any rate." And in fact he soon forgot all about it.

In preparation for his final examination he worked like a madman, and as a result he passed with the highest honours. He was awarded a gold medal by his school and entered the University of Khazan as a student of Law. He spent his first holidays with his mother and sisters at the home of an aunt, where the first news he heard was that Doctor Ostapov and Lena had left for St. Petersburg. Lena's brother, the teacher, had gained his promotion and was now a School Inspector at Ufa.

Vladimir sighed when he heard about Lena. But,

introspective as ever, he realised that he sighed from relief rather than sorrow. He knew now that he was unfettered. "I have lost what was dear to me," he reflected. "I have won the most valuable thing of all—my own freedom."

The young student realised his power.

## CHAPTER VI

LIFE in the University of Khazan was fuller than life in the capitals, though conducted under the unceasing vigilance of political police, to which some of the professors and students were attached. The majority at Khazan were frankly careerists, but there existed as well many groups of students who dreamed of a new order in Russia. All of them, however, gave allegiance to "The People's Will" or to the Social Revolutionaries.

Vladimir Ulyanov was at once drawn into these circles and frequented their secret meetings. Moreover, he volunteered to write some pamphlets and leaflets in support of the peasant policies. But his compositions were always rejected indignantly, for they far from corresponded with the ideas of the leading men, and innumerable heresies were detected in them; more than one of his statements were considered rank treason against the ideals of the Party. Ulyanov soon ceased to associate with his revolutionary friends and awaited an opportunity for attack upon "The People's Will" as a whole, which he had now thoroughly examined.

He did not have long to wait. In protest against the brutality of the police, the students of Moscow and St. Petersburg proclaimed a strike and refused to frequent their universities. The students of Khazan followed their example. At a meeting held in the College Hall a leader of the Social Revolutionaries spoke at length, advocating a sharp protest against the ruling system and demanding that the Constitutional Assembly should be summoned.

The very next speaker was a short, thick-set student of definitely Mongolian type. As soon as he appeared on the platform a whisper ran through the hall: "That's the brother of Ulyanov who was hanged." Vladimir

heard it. He looked evil and truculent as his eyes swept over the crowd before him.

"Friends!" he began, "my speech will not be a long one. I want only to call you a flock of sheep. Yes, and led by a goat at that!"

A groan of anger and surprise went up from the meeting. "Throw him out!" a few voices cried; and from other parts of the hall there were shouts of approval.

"Your leaders are dreaming," he went on, "when they think that the Czar and his Ministers will give in to their foolish demand for the Constitutional Assembly. They think they can force the Government by petitions and isolated acts of terrorism. Friends, that is a fool's policy."

"Throw him out! Shut his mouth!" The meeting was against him.

"Yes, a fool's policy! Remember that! The Czar is an anointed ruler and he knows it!"

"Bravo, Ulyanov!" shouted a group of loyal students.

"Don't mention names! There are spies amongst us!" shouted others.

When the disturbance subsided, Vladimir's voice was heard once more.

"The Czar, the anointed ruler, maintains that his power comes from God and not from this world. He was brought up to think so. His whole mind is different from ours. He does not know bourgeois morality. He is no bourgeois coward. Yes! The Czars are courageous men! It is nothing to them to cut short the lives of their subjects. They are equally willing to sacrifice their own lives. Do you think they can afford to ignore the weak protests of students and the silly formulas of 'The People's Will' about the Constitutional Assembly? So why don't the Social Revolutionaries demand the distribution of land in the moon?"

"Bravo!" interrupted someone cheerfully. "That's one for the Jacobins."

By this time the more ardent democrats were on their feet and shaking their fists at Vladimir. They were howling with rage. "Chuck him out! He is an *agent*

*provocateur!* He is a spy! He is trying to break the proletarian strike!"

"Will you let me finish or will you not?" asked Ulyanov hoarsely. "Are you afraid of the truth?"

His supporters cried out that he should be heard, and at last comparative silence obtained. Vladimir took up his argument again.

"The calling of the Constitutional Assembly means that the flunkeys of the Czar would lose their power at Court. There they are paid and fed liberally. They doze all day in their cosy corners. Do you think they are so stupid as to help you? But who else is there to obey the unsupported demands of our Jacobins, who wear official caps and have the souls of flunkeys themselves? They seem to be in rebellion at the moment, but all they dream of in the end is a comfortable seat at the Czar's dinner-table. Who else is there to back you up? Is there anybody?"

The revolutionaries broke out again in fury and the loyalists joined the few impartial spirits in delight over the scene. A variety of shouts and slogans came from all parts of the hall: "Traitor! Blackmailer! He's a detective! Long live 'The People's Will'! He's a sport! That's pricked the bubble!"

But they settled down to listen again when the bold speaker lifted his hand and tamed them with his eyes.

"You have chosen the wrong method, comrades! You want to protest, do you? Very well, I'll go all the way with you. But the place to go to is the barracks, to the soldiers, to the peasants' sons. Let us get arms and gather forces. Let us prove that we know how to back our demands, and to give our lives for what we want! Let us go!—but at once, without delay, for in an hour's time we shall be trapped by spies, aided by loyalist cowards. But 'The People's Will' revolutionaries will go into hiding, leaving behind somebody as a victim, because the leaders must be preserved to write pamphlets full of nonsense and pretty fairy tales!"

Pandemonium broke loose. It was by this time impossible to proceed with the meeting, for shouts were giving place to blows and a scuffle began at the foot of the platform. Ulyanov stood motionless, judging the



unworthy scene. During a lull he said ironically, and his voice was heard, "Gentlemen, this is exactly what a meeting of the Russian Constitutional Assembly would be like. But I shall scatter it all to the four winds."

He left the dais quietly, holding with his eyes the students, who gave way before him, though they cursed him as he passed, and left the hall. In the corridor he found two of his friends awaiting him.

"Now, let's make a bolt for it," he said. "They'll be after me in a moment."

They ran away as fast as they could go. He was right in his forecast, for soon the student was in crowds from the hall and pursued the same time the police and the University appeared on the scene. Caught by Vladimir Ulyanov was arrested. The discussed with the administrative prisoner should be brought before in some other way, and it was finally should be expelled from the University of Khazan and deported to Kokushkino under police supervision. All the authorities agreed that he had very effectively riddled the Party of "The People's Will" and paralysed their attempt to provoke trouble among the students.

"I wouldn't mind taking that young fellow into the secret police," observed the Colonel of gendarmes.

"He wouldn't take on the work," said the University Inspector dubiously.

"No, I suppose not. What's more, I wouldn't be certain of him as an agent. He might play a double game—there have been such cases before now."

On the same day Vladimir, escorted by a bewhiskered sergeant of gendarmes, departed from the town. It occurred to him on his way that if Lena Ostapov had lived in Khazan and heard his speech she would have put him down for a spy and traitor. The idea made him smile, and he remarked to his escort, "Life is a funny story, isn't it, sergeant?"

"Well," he replied gruffly, "I see little fun in it, for one. A small salary and a lot of work."

"Careful, sergeant," said Vladimir, in high good-humour. "I fear you'll join 'The People's Will,' for

they defend the oppressed and they may offer you more pay."

"You're joking, sir, and I don't feel in a laughing mood at the moment. My wife is going to have a child in a month and there is no chance of supplementing my pay."

The sergeant continued to groan over his misfortunes, that the flunkey felt no less cheerful. The farther he went Court. Thern the more his joy increased. Although the doze all day covered with snow and the frost increased are so stupid to hour, he had an illusion that spring he obey the unsung unleashing all the abundant energy of wear official ca

selves? They sepleately free now. He had broken with but all they dreambound him to the regular monotonous at the Czar's dinner-ois. He could start to advance on you up? Is there any ~~for~~ <sup>to carry into</sup> his mind that he was destined for years had hardened in his brain. Now he would set himself to learn everything; nothing should come between him and knowledge. He knew that there would be no immediate political complications in his new life, for he had finally broken with "The People's Will," and certainly no member of the organisation would come near him. On the other hand, he would be under the constant surveillance of police spies, so that every step he took and every word he uttered would be known to the authorities. Vladimir smiled at these reflections as though they brought him the greatest happiness.

In his lodgings at Kokushkino he devoted himself day after day to the most intense study. Within two years he mastered the whole course set by the Faculty of Law and made application to sit for the examinations at Khazan or at St. Petersburg, but he was peremptorily refused. Next, he asked for a permit to live abroad, which the authorities also refused to grant him; but he learned at least that his expulsion from Khazan was reduced to three years, and within a few months after he was allowed to return. He soon found, however, that the University from which he had once been expelled

now held no attraction for him, so he moved on to Samara.

During this period Vladimir achieved an enormous amount of work. In particular, he mastered the whole subject of sociology and he studied Karl Marx very carefully from many angles, so that his stay in Samara made him a convinced Marxian theorist.

And yet he had no use for theories as such. He scorned them, just as he despised people who held rigidly to any formal doctrine, and he solved this apparent contradiction by a practical example. "Every physician," he used to say, "must start by being a theorist. It is only when he has conducted, more or less successfully, a few confinements, or when he has killed off some unfortunate patient, that he becomes a man of practice and a help to mankind in its war against suffering. Without doubt that is the case with me as well. In order to become a specialist I would not shirk a thousand vivisections."

Sometimes he felt an almost irresistible desire to address the whole people, but where were the people who would hear him? The provincial intelligentsia, a drunken crew, indifferent to all appeals? Or the formula-mongers of "The People's Will"? Or the peasants as a whole? "No," he decided. "They are not of the material that can be re-fashioned by means of the written word. With them you want a hard fist, a bludgeon, or even some more drastic form of violence."

But quite accidentally Vladimir discovered a more pliant class among the people. In the house where he lodged there was a concierge whose frequent drunken bouts brought him home in a fury to beat his wife and children, or even to attack the dogs in the yard with his broom and to threaten passers-by.

"What's the matter with you, Gregory?" Ulyanov once asked him.

"To hell with it all!" the man roared angrily. "There is not enough land left for us, and even what we have brings nothing in! There is no work to be had in town during the winter! My unemployed brother sits on my neck and I have to feed him! Where do you think I'm expected to get the money?"

That very night Vladimir wrote two pamphlets and made five copies of each. One of them dealt with the growth of the proletarian class and the other with unemployment. He concealed them until he met Gregory again. After he had listened to another tale of woe, and shown a sympathetic interest in the man's life, he went on to suggest new ideas of his own for which he had prepared the ground. The result was immediate: the two brothers became his accomplices in the work of secretly spreading his leaflets among the surrounding villages and in the factories of the district.

At that time also Vladimir met a girl who lived in the same house, an attractive woman, small, swarthy, broad-hipped, with dancing black eyes. She smiled at him shamelessly and encouragingly when they passed each other; and Gregory told him that she lived by dressmaking, although she did not scorn another and easier occupation.

"Your name is Grusha, isn't it?" he asked at one encounter.

"How did you know?" she countered with a provocative laugh.

"The Governor told me."

"No, you don't! The Governor never comes here. My visitors aren't fine gentlemen at all, but you can call on me if you want to."

"I'd like to," he agreed.

"When?"

"I'll come to-night."

Her room was the ordinary lodging of a poor prostitute, with a wide bed, a table, two chairs and a washstand. Pinned on the walls were a couple of cheap prints of naked women and a few pornographic photographs. It was more surprising to see a sewing-machine in one corner and an ikon with a lamp burning before it.

"What on earth is Christ here for?" asked Ulyanov, with a laugh. "He must have seen some funny happenings in this room."

The girl, who was just unbuttoning her blouse, suddenly became grave and sullen.

"Let Him look," she hissed. "He ought to know about it. He wanted to save the world, but He saved

nobody from misery. The poor must still help themselves as best they can. Let Him look!"

Ulyanov was thoughtful. He imagined what would happen if this prostitute, full of hatred and conscious of her misery, were given the means to revenge herself with impunity. She would enjoy herself. But her outbursts aroused his sympathy, so that he had to smile unconsciously. At the same time she had taught him a vital principle of his life: to make use of the power of hatred.

"What are you smiling about?" she asked.

Not to betray his thoughts he replied: "You have a lamp burning in front of the ikon and yet you say that Christ could not help you. That's why I smiled."

"I want Him to know that I also have goodness in my heart." She looked again at her visitor and said with curiosity, "Well, shall I undress? Or do you want a talk? You're a rum customer altogether."

"Don't be afraid. I'll pay all right."

"You're a fool," she retorted. "I only take money for a job of work. I'm not a beggar standing at the church door for alms."

Ulyanov soon made friends with Grusha, and supported her regularly. As his mistress she addressed him with the familiar "thou" and threw modesty to the winds. But when he called on her as a friend and neighbour she prepared a meal for him and gravely discussed the topics that interested him. Then she addressed him courteously as Vladimir Ilyitch, nor did she allow him any familiarities.

When a strike was declared at the Zlokarshev factory, Ulyanov wrote a leaflet on workers' tactics and sabotage which Grusha distributed among the operatives. She was arrested, however, and an attempt was made by the police to force a confession from her about the organisation to which she belonged. They were unsuccessful. Although she was starved and beaten she did not betray Vladimir by a word, with the result that she was sentenced to imprisonment for two years.

Ulyanov soon forgot her. After all, she was nothing to him but an insignificant episode in a career that went straight to a distant goal. Only once did he hear of

her, when the concierge's brother brought back a message from her prison where he had been visiting a friend.

"Grusha sends her greetings. She does not mind rotting in prison any more than rotting in hospital."

Ulyanov shrugged his shoulders at the message. He had no time to busy himself with odd fragments of existence. He was now surrounded with dictionaries and "self-help" booklets, studying foreign languages. He had more in his mind than to think of the ridiculous prostitute who used to burn a votive lamp before an ikon in the very room where she sold her body.

Vladimir Ulyanov had not a vestige of sentiment about him. He could not see a comparison between that poor woman and the votive lamp itself. For him she was like a chip of wood split off from a tree when a forest was being felled. Could he pause over the fortunes of a splinter when the whole forest was at stake?

## CHAPTER VII

THE feeling of happiness and of freedom did not forsake Vladimir in the years after his expulsion from Khazan. Nothing could subdue it or cloud his spirit. Even the news that his sister Olga had died and that Maria Alexandrovna was prostrate and ill meant little to him. He looked upon himself now as the leader of an army in the field of battle. His work was to plan out the direction of the struggle, to examine every aspect of his forces, to prepare carefully against every surprise. The enemy, surrounded on every side, would succumb in turn to his final assault.

He looked forward impatiently to his departure from Samara, and as soon as it was possible for him to leave the town he moved on to St. Petersburg. As he had already received permission to take his final examinations at the University, it was not long before he was through with them and admitted to the Bar, although he had no influential connection to help him on.

Vladimir smiled to himself when he read his diploma as a barrister, remembering Lena's golden head bent over the table in the lamplight, and her ambitions for his future. The thought crossed his mind that she also was in St. Petersburg. Should he go to her and say that he had surmounted the first obstacles in his path, that he would soon surmount them all? But he put the notion aside.

Instead of lingering in St. Petersburg he went back to Samara, where his mother now lived with him, and began to practise as an advocate.

The first brief entrusted to him was in defence of a workman charged with theft. Ulyanov went to see his client in prison—a squat rascal with evil and shifty eyes, who began at once to swear by all the Saints that

the charge was a trumped-up case against a poor workman by an employer who bore him a grudge.

"One day at a meeting I said he was a murderer sucking our blood. Now he has taken his revenge."

This was enough for the young lawyer, who appeared next day in court and began by putting up the defence that theft under certain circumstances is not punishable. "The workman before you," he went on, "would have transgressed the provisions of the Criminal Code if he had purloined some valuable portion of the machinery and sold it secretly. There is no proof that he did any such thing. He obeyed the accepted canons of morality. The fact is that he has been saddled with this accusation by an employer who is his private enemy."

The Public Prosecutor, a benevolent old man, smiled paternally at the arguments of the young barrister and brought forward two quite convincing pieces of evidence that went against the defendant. Ulyanov tore them to pieces. The Public Prosecutor returned to the attack and argued the points at issue. So, between one and the other, a case trifling in itself dragged on till late afternoon, by which time the two lawyers were exhausted and the Chief Magistrate was in a state of high indignation. He turned to the workman. "Well, my man," he said severely, "you shall have the last word. What have you to say in your own defence?" But the accused was as tired and as hungry as the rest of the court. He answered listlessly, with a yawn, "I'm sure I don't know what all this fuss is about. I stole it right enough, but there's nothing uncommon about that. I'm not the first, or the last, to steal something!"

Ulyanov had lost the case, but he was the first to laugh at the course it had taken; and, in fact, the unexpected admission of his client decided the young advocate's career. After unsuccessfully contesting a few more actions Vladimir frequented the courts no more. He realised that it was not possible for him to exercise his abilities within the narrow scope of the Penal Code. His talent did not lie in the manipulation of a few dry facts within a well-defined area. He had



proved at least that Justice applies variously to different classes in society. A principle good enough for a corrupt Civil servant educated at a University was not to be applied to an illiterate peasant or to a starving workman. Sometimes he found himself in open court acting at once as prosecutor, defender and judge with a personal logic that drew down upon him the scorn of the professional judges. During one case the prosecuting attorney remarked scathingly that Ulyanov clearly wanted to act as a legislator and to introduce new paragraphs into the Code. "That's just what I do want," retorted Ulyanov, so calmly that nobody could tell whether this unsuccessful lawyer was serious or flippant.

After throwing up the law as a career, Vladimir began to study the new factory legislation so as to keep his knowledge up to date. He busied himself also with a pamphlet on markets, and on the economic fallacies of the People's Party, and he began a long treatise called "Friends of the Peasants." In this he described clearly the strategy and the tactics of the campaign that must be carried out by the Social Democracy, which was only then being organised in Russia under the influence of Marx and of Engels.

Before this was completed, however, he moved to St. Petersburg in a vain search for sympathisers with his ideals. Marxism was then the monopoly of the Liberal intelligentsia, who regarded Socialism theoretically as an historical phase of economic development in which the great masses of the people played only a passive rôle. The proletariat had no place in the accepted ideology. The intelligentsia looked forward only to evolutionary changes in the existing order of law and government. In the sphere of practical policies they vacillated hopelessly from one side to the other and they contented themselves for the most part with spreading pamphlets of Liberal tendencies amongst the working classes, though even such an innocent occupation as that took on the features of a conspiracy under the inquisitorial rule of the Czars.

More than once Ulyanov met the leading lights of the propaganda section and of the groups which worked

among the peasants. These meetings ended in an open breach; for his scorn of the Marxists in St. Petersburg was so ill-concealed that those who were not infuriated by this fire-eating comrade from the Volga district went away dispirited from his presence, asking themselves what kind of revolutionaries they were after all.

"Is your group out for a war of revolution to socialise the whole Russian structure?" Ulyanov asked harshly.

"Of course we are. A class-war is bound to break out."

"Meanwhile you are busy distributing the soothing leaflets of a miserable committee which is the quint-essence of the Liberal intelligentsia—slack, cowardly, soaked through and through with bourgeois ideas. Well, go your own way to your own destruction! We don't mind!"

Such an attack infuriated all of them.

"In whose name does Comrade Ulyanov speak?" somebody called out. "Who does he mean by 'we'?"

"I speak in the name of all those who have cut themselves away from so-called Society and who are joining up with the natural enemies of the bourgeoisie."

"Who are they?"

"You will know before long," replied Ulyanov, and from that time he was never seen again at the meetings of the Social Democrats in St. Petersburg.

They were wrung by the scorn and contempt which he continued to express for them, but they would have forgotten the bold Marxist but for a series of writings which came from his pen. These were the "Yellow Booklets," printed on a duplicator, which soon obtained an enormous circulation. They were written in a simple, rather vulgar style of great virility, which well emphasised the leading ideas they contained, and they certainly could not be taken for literary or scientific productions. In their burning anger they were like the writing of the Early Fathers; they read almost like Papal Bulls, expressing a consciousness of infallibility, and they attracted wide attention by their drastic pronouncements. Impartially the author of the Yellow Booklets ridiculed the Liberals and the Socialists, proud of their privileges as officials, threw suspicion upon their

activities, and robbed them of their prestige in the eyes of the workers, who were not in a position to assess their true worth. The Social Democrats, like the members of "The People's Will" formerly, had to recognise in Ulyanov an unscrupulous and dangerous enemy.

Despite these activities he was able to travel all over Russia, from one industrial town to another. He got to know very many of the workers, more for the purpose of listening to them attentively than of making speeches to them. But when he left them the men were repeating the formula, "We do not recognise Society, Law, Morality, the Church, or the State. We want no help from others. We represent Power. By the shedding of blood and by our own solidarity we will gain Liberty and Justice."

At this period Ulyanov met two working-men of high intelligence, Babushkin and Shaldunov. With their help he formed groups of other workers, produced leaflets and pamphlets, and distributed them among the proletariat, thus sowing the seeds of ruthless warfare against all society. In St. Petersburg he lectured to workers' groups on sociological subjects, with comments on Marx and on the famous Communist Manifesto. Moreover, he plumbed the feelings of the destitute classes who lived from day to day, defended by none and exploited shamelessly.

In one of the circles which he organised in the factory district of St. Petersburg, at Okhta, he met a girl who worked at the Tornton factory. Nastya was her name: a pretty, well-built girl with auburn hair and fine eyes. When he shook her tiny hand, coarsened by labour, Vladimir remembered that other Nastya from Kokushkino, who was in turn the victim of a young landlord, a drunken father and an old woman.

"This girl is not likely to get into trouble," he thought to himself with a smile. "She is an able and resolute woman, well able to keep anybody from blowing into her porridge."

That evening he spoke on the Erfurt programme. The audience listened attentively while he emphasised and repeated the points of his lecture, as was his habit.

to arouse in them the will and purpose that they lacked. But he was not at ease. The presence of the pretty Nastya, alive with youth, with elemental power and with warm blood, was teasing his mind. Even against his will his eyes came back to hers more and more often, seeking in them an answer to his silent question; until he saw her question and her answer there. Nastya's splendid bosom moved and her graceful body was alive with desire. The glances which Ulyanov threw at the girl were intercepted by Babushkin. During the interval, when tea was brought round, he came to Vladimir and whispered to him.

"Nastya Kozyreva is an educated girl and a member of the Party. But I warn you against her. She is not too certain a proposition——"

"What are your suspicions?"

"None at all. I don't want to say anything against her. All I know is that she is out for a good time. She already has a young engineer at the factory in her power. He's mad about her. She yields to him for a month and then refuses to see him at all."

"Haven't you told her it does no good to have dealings with bourgeois people?"

"That would do no good. Through her we learn what the factory managers intend to do next against the workers."

"Aha!" drawled Ulyanov. "Then you must not stop her making love."

But he said it with hidden anger. He knew that he was jealous of Nastya.

"I'll see you home, comrade," he whispered, approaching her.

She eyed him narrowly and then thanked him with a wink.

They walked on through the dark streets of the suburbs until just before dawn they reached the woods at Polustrov and stopped before the door of a small wooden cottage.

"I live here," she said, stretching herself lazily. "It's Sunday to-morrow. You can sleep as long as you like . . ."

"Hurrah for Sunday!" he laughed.

Nastya did not answer but tapped at the window. An untidy woman, only half-awake, with a baby in her arms, slightly opened the door.

"Damn you!" she said angrily. "You gave me a fright. I thought it was the police again."

The girl went in and beckoned to Ulyanov from the shadows of the hall. He entered. He heard the key grate in the lock behind him, and as the darkness fell upon him he felt a warm arm around his waist and Nastya's full body against his own. He turned quickly and kissed her mouth, her cheek, her neck and soft hair, murmuring the endearments that rose to his lips. Then they went into her room in silence.

It was early in the next afternoon that Vladimir departed from the cottage. He was tired, disgusted and angry with himself. As his habit was, he began to analyse his feelings. "Hell!" he muttered to himself. "A fine woman without a doubt. She is generous, giving everything and asking nothing. Not many of her sort exist. But what have I got into this mess for? Now I shan't be able to keep my authority in her presence. She will imagine that there is no difference between me and her engineer." He remembered one of her offhand remarks: "I want to make sure that these Socialists are capable of doing things. If not, it's no use for me to take risks with them. I could do myself more good in other ways." But before he could ask her what she meant she had thrown her arms about him and pressed herself against him like a big cat. For the next two days he did not see Nastya, and then, after a meeting, he went home with her once more.

After a few days Babushkin came to him and said that Nastya had caused a scene in the Tornton factory: she had struck her engineer when he was making love to her and had then complained to the management.

"Why did she do that?" asked Ulyanov.

"I don't know. She's a foolish sort of girl. The whole district knows her. Something must have come over her. But who can understand a woman anyhow?"

Babushkin went on with a laugh to discuss a newly-acquired duplicator for printing illegal leaflets. That

night Nastya was at the meeting of the circle, and after it was over Vladimir left the premises with her.

"I've given my little engineer the sack," she said with a laugh. "I have you now. I don't want anybody else. Let's go to a restaurant where there are lights and music. We want to enjoy ourselves."

Vladimir looked at her with surprise and suspicion.

"Is that where you go with the engineer?"

"Of course it is! I'm not a beast, to spend all my life in a dark stable without a moment's pleasure. I want to live!"

"I haven't got time for that, my dear," he exclaimed, drawing back. "Pleasures of that sort don't amuse me. They aren't in my line."

"Then what is in your line?" she asked quizzically.

"A fight," he wanted to say, but he restrained himself, for he remembered that he had not fought to win this girl; and he knew that the same thought would occur to her as well.

"Tell me," she insisted.

"Oh, I have no time for music and for restaurant life," he groaned. "I don't want it."

"But I do!"

"Well, then, help yourself to it," he replied brutally.

She took him up without any trace of anger. "I will," she murmured and came close to him, looking into his face with half-closed languorous eyes. He was at a loss and kept silence. "Come to me!" she whispered, pressing herself against him. He took the easiest way out of the unpleasant situation.

On their way to their home he bought a few oranges and a box of chocolates at a kiosk. In the morning they went out together, Vladimir to the secret flat of the conspirators on the Vassilyev Ostrov, Nastya to the Tornton factory, where he took leave of her.

Nastya turned back at the gate and said to him, "I shall be proud all my life of such a lover as you, Vladimir Ilyitch. It is no small thing."

"It is no great honour," he laughed.

"Don't say what you don't mean. I know that all Russia will soon hear of you."

"A prophecy?" he queried mockingly.

"Perhaps," she replied, and went into the factory as the hooter blared.

After that Ulyanov avoided meeting the girl. He was busy now in the workers' circles of the Putilov factories and in establishing connections with the Navy Yard at Kronstadt. This was an extremely dangerous enterprise, for the authorities maintained a strict discipline among the sailors and workmen.

One day he had just returned from Kronstadt when Babushkin dashed in.

"Bad news, Ilyitch," he exclaimed as soon as he entered the room. "Nastya Kozyreva has found a lover!"

"Not the first, I should imagine," said Vladimir indifferently.

"This is no laughing matter, comrade," retorted the worker angrily. "Our whole organisation may be undermined. The strumpet has gone off with a gendarme sergeant-major. Do you hear that?"

"Well, what harm?" Vladimir shrugged his shoulders. "There is no danger. But in case of emergency, transfer the duplicators to another place. I know! Take them over to the dining-hall of the Institute of Technology and give them to my friend Herman Krassin. Though I have not the least fear . . ."

"The gendarme will get all her secrets from her. That's why he came to her."

"Nonsense! Our secrets are not her only bait to catch gendarmes with. Cheer up, comrade!"

As it proved, although Nastya was seen to pass her evenings in restaurants with the imposing gendarme officer, the organisation was not disturbed for a long period. Once Babushkin met the girl in the street. When he made to pass her without a word she stopped him.

"Will you tell Vladimir Ilyitch that he needn't worry about his affairs?" she said. "As for me, tell him I want to live. I wasn't born a bookworm or of nun. I have a lot of hatred inside me, but much have of joy. I want to live when my happiness is. I suggest what else is there after that? Only a run part? All of poison or the river. I want to om the Kaiser!"

laugh and be merry. Then we shall see. I may even come back to you and die on the barricades. Until then I want life. Tell him that—and good-bye!”

Babushkin reported this conversation to Vladimir.

“You see, comrade,” said Ulyanov, “there is no danger coming from her.”

Nothing more was said about her until one day Vladimir received a letter which was delivered by an unknown worker. It was from Nastya, a warning that the Intelligence Service was watching him, as well as Babushkin, Shapovalov, Kartarmskaya and Knipovitch. They had discovered that the booklets, “Who Lives on What?” and “King Hunger,” secretly published by the revolutionary printing press, and signed Tulin, were written by Ulyanov.

Vladimir did not interrupt his work, but he concealed himself so skilfully that no police agent could trace him. Several times he was nearly arrested in the street, but this courageous man knew every inch of the network of streets and alleys, as well as a number of secret hiding-places in cellars and in barns beyond the suburbs of St. Petersburg. So he escaped from the spies and put into circulation a number of even more provocative publications which troubled the Government and excited the workers.

Of the whole group only Knipovitch, a teacher, was arrested, and she was betrayed by a secret agent, a compositor who worked at the revolutionary press. A few of her friends were also apprehended, because they were in possession of illegal pamphlets, although they did not belong to the Party.

Ulyanov often hid in the Kalemaykov book-shop in the city, where the authorities would not think of looking for him. He continued to extend his network of personal connections, which were well concealed; he even had a friend, Morsin, who was a fireman in the Anitchkov Palace, and at one time when he was being hotly pursued he spent two grimy days as a stoker at the furnaces below the Palace. It occurred to him that

“It is now easily made an attempt upon the Czar,  
“Don't still see no advantage to be gained from  
Russia will soon venture.

“A prophecy?”



However, St. Petersburg was soon made so hot for him that his only course of action was to go abroad. This he was asked to do by the Association of Fighters for the Liberty of the Working Classes, which was one of Ulyanov's most successful foundations. His friends also insisted upon it, for they saw a great leader in the young revolutionary. They managed to get a passport for him, and Ulyanov mysteriously disappeared from the ken of the police.

In Berlin he stayed at a small hotel near Moabit and attended the meetings of the German Socialists. Here he met many famous leaders of the Party, but he failed to discover any links with them. Their minds worked only within the limits of a Parliamentary system. Their only object at the elections was to gain the greatest possible number of seats in the Reichstag. Even the greatest of them, Karl Liebknecht, was affected by this bourgeois ideology, as Vladimir soon discovered during a conversation between them at Charlottenburg.

"I've heard of you before, comrade," said Liebknecht, when he was told the name of the Russian. "It was common talk how you made life miserable for Struve and Potresov."

"All in the day's work," replied Ulyanov with a smile. "But what I want to ask you, comrade, is how long the Social Democrats of Germany will go on tub-thumping in their present fashion? They aren't getting anywhere. They remind me of the way you can make a hen stop by drawing a chalk line just in front of her beak."

"And what's the line in our case?"

"The Parliamentary system: a bourgeois trap for the credulous."

The German shrugged his shoulders.

"What else do you propose?" he asked. "We have no other method for achieving our end."

"Do you really mean that in industrialised Germany, with an entire army of workers, of unemployed, and of dispossessed peasants—do you really mean that you have no other method? You are afraid that what I suggest would be a complete capitulation on your part? All right, then, go on drawing your salary from the Kaiser!"

Liebknrecht followed attentively.

"But our Party," he objected, "is not strong enough for revolutionary tactics. It must grapple first with practical economic problems."

"Practical economic problems," answered Ulyanov, "are exactly what I'm talking about. That's why I think it better to take over the whole house now than to wait ten years for the landlord to let you a basement room at a high rent."

"How do you propose to take over the house now? Or is this just another Utopia?"

"How to do it is for you to decide. I can only tell you how it will be done in Russia, a country without great industrial centres, a country where the whole working-class population does not exceed the figure of any one centre of industry in Germany. I ask you a question. Don't you think that a well-organised, disciplined and determined group, unrestrained by the slogans with which it attracts the working classes, would have the power to carry out the revolution? Don't you think that after a resolute campaign of terrorism it might destroy the existing order and take power over the heads of the wavering classes?"

"I think you are right," admitted Liebknrecht reluctantly.

"And that is what will happen in Russia!" exclaimed Ulyanov. "In that way, and in that way alone, is success possible—the concerted action of a sworn band of ideologists. Sooner or later, comrade, believe me, Germany will choose the same method, for none other is possible."

"But where is the group of ideologists to be found?" asked the German, measuring with his eyes the thick-set figure and inscrutable face of the man who stood before him.

"*Est modus in rebus*," replied Ulyanov, and went on to inquire whether he could raise from the German Socialists a subsidy for the propagation of Marxism in Russia, to reinforce the international front of fighters for the working class.

After a stay of three weeks in Berlin he went on to Paris, where he at once put himself in touch with some

of the Russian students. He found a welcome, for his reputation had preceded him. His chief interests were in the Musée des Arts et des Métiers, out of which his friends had to drag him by force.

"Oh!" he used to sigh, "if I could only transport all these to Russia!"

One day a young student, Arinkin, burst into his room in a great state of excitement.

"Paul Lafargue, the leader of the French Socialists," he said, "has agreed to see you, comrade, for a short talk. Let's hurry along at once."

Ulyanov laughed. "'See me,' 'a short talk'—what bourgeois expressions those are! Lafargue will speak to me for as long as I want him to."

Lafargue adopted a faint air of mockery when his sharp eyes had taken in the figure and the Mongol face of his visitor.

"Is the comrade Russian?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Ulyanov, grinning. "The Master must have noticed my Mongolian face."

"Yes, I admit that."

"There are few purely Russian types," Vladimir went on. "Remember, for three hundred years we were under Tartar domination. They left us unpleasant faces but some valuable traits of character. We are capable, for instance, of deliberate cruelty and of fanaticism."

Lafargue lowered his eyes, smiled politely, and changed the subject.

"I was wondering," he began, "what is the average intellectual level among Russian Socialists?"

"The best intellects among them are studying and commenting upon Karl Marx," the visitor replied calmly.

"Studying Karl Marx! But do they understand him?"

"They do."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Lafargue. "They don't! Why, even in France nobody can understand him. Yet our Party has existed for twenty-five years and developed year by year."

"That is because you and a few other of its leaders

do understand Karl Marx. No more is necessary. The masses only want to be firmly controlled by a group of strong minds."

Lafargue showed a growing interest as he listened to the Russian's remarks, despite a grating accent that sounded unpleasant in Parisian ears.

"So that is your principle, is it?" he remarked. "It comes strangely from the lips of a Socialist who should believe in liberty and have regard for the community."

Ulyanov replied quietly and with conviction: "Liberty is a bourgeois prejudice. The community profits by the brains of outstanding leaders, and that is sufficient for it. It is for the good of the community to be ruled by a strong hand."

"So the Czar is an ideal type of ruler for you, comrade?"

"For me, no. For the class from which the Czar sprang, yes. The Czar is not thinking about the all-Russian community but about the nobility and the bourgeois class."

When Ulyanov left Lafargue after a long conversation the Frenchman remarked, "I'd like to see the day when you start to put your ideas into practice."

"The day is coming soon," replied the Russian.

Less than a week later he sat in a small café in Geneva looking out upon the turquoise-blue waters of Lake Leman. At the same table were the veterans of the Russian revolutionary movement who had been long in exile: Plekhanov, the father of Russian Socialism; Axelrod, its early organiser, and Vera Zasulich, a devoted propagandist. Ulyanov looked with reverence upon the severe face of Plekhanov, with its direct eyes and heavy brows, the face of his teacher, for Plekhanov's books and his articles in proscribed periodicals issued abroad inspired Vladimir as a revolutionary. He noted especially the obstinate, compressed mouth which had spoken the burning words, "The good of the revolution is the highest law. Tyrannicide is not murder." To Vladimir those were the inspired teachings of a great leader, and maxims that were often upon his own lips.

With an equal admiration he turned to Axelrod, a

human machine, writing from morning to night, visiting town after town, controlling, advising, keeping in motion the whole mechanism of the Party, forgetful of himself in his fiery enthusiasm.

Vladimir, in his turn, made a strong impression upon the older men. They saw that he had not only an inexhaustible vitality and a driving will, but also the cunning of a born revolutionary, based upon a wide knowledge of the psychology of the various social classes, and of the conditions in which they lived. Ulyanov spoke little of Party affairs, if only because he felt some coldness in Plekhanov's manner: the old lion was angry with this stripling who dared to criticise the well-established programme of the Social Democrats.

Instead, Vladimir described his impressions of Europe. He could not conceal his admiration for the life of the West.

"What couldn't we do if we had such material as they have, and such technical advantages?" he said. "But in Russia, to put it very bluntly, there is no one worth robbing except the Czar. Our nation is a procession of beggars. But Europe is in a fine state altogether—so fine that I would raise my hand against it only with a painful effort."

"Wouldn't you have the same pity for anything in Russia, comrade?" asked Axelrod.

"For anything in Russia? No!" he replied without hesitation. "What is there to pity? In Russia it is easy to strike and to destroy. For a thousand years we have been set upon from all sides by anybody who had a mind for it—from the Vikings, the Tartars, the Poles, and the Swedes, down to the Czars and the police. Our villages have been burned down by the thousands every year as though they were cartloads of straw. Our people die in myriads from disease and starvation. What is there to pity throughout the endless plain that is called Russia, a land of forests and marshes? Our smoke-filled cottages roofed with stinking and mouldy thatch—foetid lairs where people drag out their lives with the cattle and the swine, growing, giving birth and dying in the same squalor? Or must we pity our narrow

minds, bound by superstition, which begins when we put milk out for the brownies and ends in an enthusiasm for the Parliamentary system? Russia is a vast desert owned only by the peasant, primitive and illiterate, a slave of God, a slave of the Czar and a slave of the devil."

"But our towns, our arts, our literature . . ." protested Zaslitch.

"The towns?" Ulyanov repeated. "Yes, they may have a feature, but so far they are only big villages. Sometimes they show splendour at their centres—with misery all around it. Art, literature, they are fine enough; but Pushkin was a half-breed and a sycophant, Shchedrin was a Governor, Tolstoy a Count, while Nekrasov, Turgeniev, Djerzhavin and Zhukowsky were of the gentry and bourgeois. All our art has come from manor houses and palaces. Its inspiration has come from the enemies of the working class."

"And what about the West, the corrupt West, comrade?" asked Plekhanov with a severe glint in his eyes.

"Is there any comparison?" exclaimed Ulyanov. "Here at every step you come across the products of an organised human will embodied in concrete forms. Here men can boast that they have been able to direct the primitive forces of Nature to the service of reasonable human needs. They are the rulers of the earth!"

"What enthusiasm!" laughed Zaslitch. "You certainly don't know much about this paradise of yours."

"I am admiring what has already been achieved. But I can see all the faults. The Western man believes too deeply in the value of human beings. He thinks too much of his own work and has too much confidence in his personal dignity. In a word, he is an individualist, and so he has a boundless egoism. I am sure that the greatest achievements will come from the masses when they are mechanised, and controlled by a ruthless intellect which comprehends the destiny of humanity."

"You see very distant horizons," remarked Plekhanov.

"I see them clearly, so they are near," retorted

Ulyanov. "The West will be consumed by the Parliamentary system as by a leprosy. Our task is to safeguard Russia from this incurable disease."

"A bold conception," muttered Axelrod.

"But a healthy one," added the younger man as he took leave of his new friends.

## CHAPTER VIII

ULYANOV returned to St. Petersburg in the autumn, but it was a long time before he could order all his new impressions. He was forced to admit that the West had laid its spell upon him; only there could he understand the words of Maxim Gorki, put into the mouths of one of his characters: "Man! That is a proudly sounding name!" For Europe showed all the evidences of hard work, of deep thought, of brilliant conceptions. There, thought Vladimir, are nations which are producing supermen.

But the very word superman made him pause. What were they, after all? An architect turning into reality some dream-building out of the *Arabian Nights*. A sculptor carving marble into flowing lines and graceful images. A painter setting down on canvas a unique conception of form and colour. An author expressing in one epic the content of human thought. Those were supermen—or were they only forgers deceiving mankind? For what true man could create undisturbed when misery and oppression reigned around him? What true man could exhaust his genius to delight a few thousand people when millions of his wretched fellow-creatures were too weak even to crawl up to his masterpieces and to raise their eyes to look upon them? How could a fine poem or a noble piece of music silence the groans and the curses of slaves? And yet who could honestly say that the whole framework of society should be torn down just because great museums and art galleries stood side by side with prisons full of people who had broken away from artificial standards? The fact was, he reflected, that both the oppressors and the oppressed deceived themselves. They tried to come to an understanding in Parliaments guarded by police and



troops. That was no solution. Nor could the greatest genius do away with all those evils by himself. What was necessary was a ruthless collective will, the anger of a prosecutor and the power of a judge summed up in one man who would stop short of nothing less than a complete victory.

So Ulyanov was led step by step to decisive conclusions. He was convinced that he could not count upon the assistance of the comrades outside Russia. Indeed, he expected opposition from them, or treachery at some critical moment. Having made up his mind on that score, he smiled happily to himself.

At that moment one of his friends entered the room.

"Welcome, comrade," said Ulyanov, shaking him warmly by the hand. "Peter the Great cut a window in the wall of the West and let into Russia a breath of fresh air. Now we shall open a window in the eastern wall of Europe and a hurricane will pass through it."

The visitor looked at him in astonishment. Ulyanov slapped him on the shoulder and laughed.

"It doesn't matter," he said. "I was only thinking aloud."

They sat down and began to discuss the printing of new pamphlets which were to be distributed in certain factories where a strike was in prospect. Once more Ulyanov had taken up his secret activities in St. Petersburg.

The police were soon aware of the return of the dangerous revolutionary who was so skilful in escaping from the hands of their agents. Ulyanov was as unruffled as ever and continued his work with pedantic exactitude. His articles were always ready for the press at the appointed time. He appeared at meetings with unvarying punctuality as though nothing could disturb his routine. At the same time he was printing pamphlets on a duplicator and distributing them to colporteurs who came to collect them at a settled rendezvous. He worked with the cold efficiency of a machine, eating when he could snatch a moment, sleep-

ing only a few hours a night, and changing his hiding-place whenever it became necessary.

One night, while he was walking across the Vassiliev Ostrov, he noticed the shadowy figure of a man who followed him from street to street. He stopped, pretending to read a Government placard to recruits, and waited events. The man overtook him and whispered as he passed, "Comrade, save yourself. The police have a cordon round the district."

Vladimir watched his unknown friend very carefully, in two minds whether or not he was himself a spy for the police. Then he walked on, alert, noting a place of concealment in the inner courtyard of a near-by house which faced the crossing of three streets. Then he noticed signs of police activity, for on each corner there was a lounging group of policemen and detectives, waiting for nightfall to begin their activities. He looked at his watch. It was nearly seven.

He entered the courtyard and took up his position at the foot of a staircase, ostensibly reading an ultra-conservative newspaper, the *Citizen*. He stayed there until nine o'clock. Then, as nothing had occurred, he crept out to the front gate again, only to find that the police had not moved from their posts. He crossed the street and slipped through the dark entrance of a narrow lane where there was an old house faced with dirty brown plaster. Above the door shone a lamp which bore the scratched and half-erased inscription, "Night shelter." Ulyanov quickly made up his mind. He entered the building, put down his five kopeks, and asked for a bed for the night.

The one-eyed porter at the desk looked him up and down with obvious suspicion, but he could find nothing about this new arrival that was out of the ordinary. To all appearances Vladimir was a working man dressed in a worn-out overcoat, dilapidated high boots and a greasy cap.

"Unemployed?" he asked.

Vladimir nodded his head.

"Where are your papers?"

These were quite in order. They were made out for

Basil Ostapenko, a peasant from the province of Khar-kov, by trade a compositor. The porter entered the particulars in his register, threw the coins into a box, and passed over to Ulyanov a numbered brass ticket.

"Second floor, Room 3," he growled, taking a teapot and a dirty glass from under the counter. The figure of the unemployed compositor held no further interest for him.

Ulyanov found his bunk in a half-lit, dirty room, clouded with tobacco smoke and impregnated with the body odours of thirty men. They stank of sweat and brandy and old clothes. They lay in their berths around the walls in the abandoned attitudes of complete fatigue, many of them completely naked, with boils and sores upon their bodies and bleeding wounds upon their worn-out feet. Most of them were not yet asleep. They busied themselves with catching lice and with cursing their companions. A murmur of voices sounded from the other rooms along the corridor, where the same scenes were being enacted.

The entrance of Ulyanov was loudly greeted by a bearded and half-naked giant who lay full-length on one of the bunks.

"A Count has condescended to visit us. Silence, you louts! Keep your mouths shut in the presence of the gentleman. Welcome, Count."

"Good-evening, General," replied Ulyanov with a laugh.

"And what makes you think I'm a General?"

"All Generals will be where you are before long," Vladimir explained. "I was thinking that you were starting a fashion."

He began to take off his overcoat. The men in the room laughed at his retort and then went on with the argument he had started.

"Do you really think that will happen?" asked an old beggar.

"What else can happen?" replied Ulyanov. "Do you think our patience will last for ever? Are we going to spend the rest of our lives in doss-houses with no food in our bellies? Don't you believe it. The time is

near when we shall drive Generals, Counts, and the whole gang of them into dens like this. As for us, we'll live on the fat of the land in their palaces."

He immediately won the admiration of his room-mates. "He knows what he's talking about," they agreed. "It's about time to start to work and get rid of the curs. They've sucked our blood long enough."

"Nay, rather, we should endure in silence," came a soft voice from a dark corner of the room. "We must be worthy followers of Christ, our Saviour."

Nobody answered. The speaker, a solemn old fellow, grunted loudly and scratched his chest. He sat up and began to search for bugs, which he crushed with his huge thumb-nail.

"A louse?" asked Ulyanov mockingly.

"Yes: the fifth. The place is infested with them."

"You should endure them in silence," said Ulyanov. "You can't stand lice, but you preach endurance to us. Who are you trying to deceive, Christian? Yourself or us?"

The room roared its approval, and the Christian had no more to say.

Then the "General" joined in again.

"If I were a judge I wouldn't make long speeches. I'd cut their throats and into the ditch with them. I'm infested with hatred just as this bunk is infested with lice."

"Don't you worry, comrade," said Ulyanov encouragingly. "You'll live to see the day."

"Well, one day would be enough. I could die happy after that."

"The day will come."

Ulyanov said no more. He lay down on his bunk, covering himself with his overcoat, and waited. His companions went on talking in low voices about their sufferings, their misery and their failures. One by one they became silent and went to sleep. But Ulyanov could not afford to sleep. He was waiting for a police inspection, and his every sense was alert. Near by a clock struck midnight. There was no sound but heavy

breathing from the broken men who had crawled into the dirty room from all parts of Russia.

Suddenly Ulyanov heard a rustle of clothing and a soft whisper.

"Come on, Ivan. All clear."

By the light of the sooty oil-lamp he saw two figures creep out of the room. They disappeared in the darkness of the corridor. After a time he heard cautious footsteps returning. Two men and two women crept back into the room. In a moment they were hidden in their berths; Vladimir heard their low voices and the sound of kisses.

Suddenly the whole room was awakened by the loud tramping of feet. The door was flung open, and a stentorian voice gave an order.

"Inspect every room. Get on with it!"

Broad-shouldered policemen poured into the room accompanied by porters carrying flash-lamps. They shook the exhausted men, snatched away their ragged coverings, searched their clothes and inspected their papers.

A light flashed into Ulyanov's eyes. He lay back, groaning, pretending to be half-asleep, and gave up his passport. The policeman inspected it, entered the name on his list, and passed on to the next man. So the inspection continued with a chorus of yawns and threats and frightened protests from suspicious characters who were put to a more searching examination. Suddenly a porter gave a startled exclamation.

"Oho, you strumpet! What are you doing here? You devil! What do you care about the good name of the shelter?"

Ulyanov cautiously raised his head. He saw, in the light of a lamp, the face of a worn and drunken woman. Her uncombed hair fell upon her thin uncovered shoulders and over her flat breasts. A grin of sheepish defiance only served to accentuate her shapeless mouth and broken teeth.

"Away with you to the women's room," the porter roared. "A diseased sheep like you infects the whole flock."

The woman laughed.

"I'm not the only one in this flock," she said.

At the same time a policeman dragged out of the next bed a girl of about fifteen years of age. Her naked, lean and supple body wriggled like an eel in the grip of his huge hands.

Ulyanov watched the incident with curiosity. The porter struck at the vagrant with whom the girl was found, and shouted, "Get out of here and take your rags along with you, or you'll be thrown downstairs on your head."

"What's the matter?" asked the man, addressing the whole room, in pretended astonishment. "If a few kopeks fell out of my pocket the porter wouldn't raise such a row. But just because a girl fell out of my bed he starts abusing me. A curious character, that porter."

Meanwhile the girl, with a running fire of obscenities, was searching for her clothes among the disordered rags on the bed. She dressed herself at last and stood before them all defiantly, her hands on her hips. Although she was still young and immature her eyes were frightening with their snake-like venom and terrible hardness.

"You swine!" she screamed. "You hangmen! You drove me into this filthy hole! And now you don't allow me to defend myself against starvation. I hope you get the pox and rot with it. But the time will come when you'll have to answer for this, and then I'll tell your judges everything. I know who you are, you tykes."

She spat at the policemen and attendants. Her ravings became more and more abominable as they pushed her from the room.

Apart from this the inspection proceeded smoothly. All the men had their identity papers in order; except the Christian, who roused suspicions by some irregularity in his passport. He was taken away to the police station, and Vladimir smiled mischievously to himself. "Now let him suffer in silence," he thought. "The damned prophet! All he has is the soul of a slave."

The rest of the night passed without any disturbance. At dawn the attendants brought in a big teapot with cups of coarse china and some bread. Immediately afterwards the homeless men were driven from the shelter. Ulyanov went out unobtrusively in the motley crowd, hoping to catch sight again of the young girl. She would be just the right type for spreading his leaflets, for she was full of hatred and she had nothing to lose. But there was no sign of her.

He made his way through side streets to the Neva toll-gates, where he had friends, but they advised him not to stay because the place was under surveillance. They passed him on to a school where he would be given work as a painter to escape detection. The school-teacher, Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya, was an old friend of his. She was a Social Democrat with a wide influence because of her bold and active mind, although personally she was of a shy and silent disposition. She was not pretty—indeed, she might be described as plain—but she always made a sympathetic impression on Ulyanov; her mind was balanced, her character was equable, she was always cheerful, and she had a profound belief in the ideas which she professed. The quiet teacher knew how to listen and to appreciate every shade of thought in the people who spoke around her. Ulyanov knew that she was to be numbered among his few real friends in the revolutionary intelligentsia. He even heard, by chance, that she once defended him hotly against Struve and other Socialists in St. Petersburg.

During the few days he passed at the school they had many conversations together. Vladimir, who always kept a check upon himself in argument so as not to be caught up by enthusiasms or mere words, forgot his strong discipline in the company of Nadezhda Konstantinovna. He confessed to her even his inmost thoughts; and when he saw in her eyes a profound sympathy and a silent admiration he became stirred with a new idea. It occurred to him that she was born to become his wife. She was like him in not demanding anything for herself; at any moment she would sacrifice

all she had for the cause. She was well-read, she had a gift for criticism, she knew foreign languages, and she feared nothing on earth. She could be his best assistant as well as an almost ideal and entirely intimate friend.

He looked at her attentively and asked with half-closed eyes:

"What would you say, comrade, if you knew that I had committed an act which 'society' described as base or criminal?"

She fixed her calm eyes on him and replied at once without any affectation: "I would not doubt that you did it for some good reason."

He chuckled softly, rubbing his hands.

"And if I said to you suddenly, 'Nadezhda Konstantinovna, I am going to be the dictator of all Russia'?"

"I would believe it without a doubt."

"Well, then," he went on quietly, "if that is so, I think we might do well to live our lives together . . . to go through with it to the end, either to the gallows or to the dictatorship . . . Nadezhda Konstantinovna."

She looked down for a moment. Then, without emotion, she replied: "I agree to whatever you ask."

They spoke of that no more. Indeed they could not, for soon after a man sent by Babushkin dashed in to give warning that police agents were surrounding the house from all sides. Ulyanov fled at once in the direction of the Imperial china factory. A few days later he crept back into the city, where he always felt safest at times of increased persecution. But soon the police were hot on his trail. In December they ransacked the whole town for him. They searched the flats of all suspected persons, even the Liberals. Ulyanov could not evade them.

He was arrested and put in prison, where Krupskaya supplied him with books. She also sent word to Maria Alexandrovna that her son had been captured by the police. The old lady came to St. Petersburg to visit Vladimir, who reassured her that nothing seriously threatened him. He was sure that the police had no incriminating evidence, but only suspicions. His opinion



was soon proved right, for he was not brought to trial at all. Instead, by order of the police authorities, he was sent to Siberia for three years.

"I am going for a holiday and for a hunting trip," he wrote jokingly to Nadezhda Konstantinovna, in milk, between the lines of a book she had lent him.

## CHAPTER IX

THE third year of his exile was coming to an end, another year of almost unbroken peace. The authorities in Siberia were now much more liberal, making no efforts to interfere with the political exiles. Vladimir Ulyanov lived in the village of Shushenskoe, near Minusinsk, a town on the banks of the picturesque River Yenissai.

Soon after his release from imprisonment, Nadezhda Konstantinovna came out to join him with his mother, and a few weeks later they were married.

For neither of them was the occasion one of great excitement or of the great happiness which changes the whole world into a paradise and the breath of a wind into divine music. They did not even think of their marriage as a romance. They were bound to each other by a tie stronger than love or mutual surrender, for they were united by their faithfulness to an idea which they valued more than life itself. Their only possibility of failure was in the failure of the idea.

Ulyanov had complete confidence in his wife. She believed absolutely in his power to achieve his ends. So their period of exile in the beautiful district of Minusinsk was both pleasant and fruitful for them. Here Vladimir's thoughts finally crystallised and his permanent plans for the future were made. He read eagerly an immense number of books which were sent to him from St. Petersburg by their friends, or which he borrowed from Eugene Rozycki, a Polish engineer who was sympathetic towards the exiles although he held an official post in the district.

During the same period Vladimir completed his book on the development of Capitalism, which he had begun to write in prison. A manuscript of such a nature

would most certainly have been confiscated by the prison authorities, and so he wrote in milk on the back of pages covered with innocent quotations from Russian and foreign authors. He kept the milk in small phials made of bread which he moulded into shape with his fingers; and when the warders visited his cell, as they did six times in a day on one occasion, Vladimir swallowed his "ink-bottles." But he enjoyed the difficulties of the work and he expressed a whimsical regret when he was released from prison. In Siberia he warmed the pages over a paraffin lamp so as to bring out the invisible writing.

But this was not the whole of his work in exile. With the help of his wife he made translations from Webb and Engels which were ordered and paid for by Struve—a welcome addition to his income, for the authorities allowed him only eight roubles a month, and his family could supplement it with very little more.

His only pastimes were walking and hunting. He shot hares and woodcocks with great enthusiasm, but his very impetuosity prevented him from making a large bag. He had a passionate devotion for the sport, however, and never lost an opportunity of spending a day in the country with his gun. During these excursions he also became better acquainted with the Siberian peasant, an independent type on the verge of revolt against the agents of the central Government. Vladimir, who knew the mentality of the Volga peasantry, observed both differences and resemblances between the two peoples.

The differences between them depended on the fact that the Siberian peasants did not suffer from land-hunger. They had land enough for their needs. There were no large estates in the possession of country gentry or granted by imperial decree to officers and bureaucrats as a reward for faithful service. The purely Russian peasant could never forget that under the Mongol Khans and the early Russian Czars the land was the property of the ruler, but it was cultivated by the men of the soil. Only in the days of Peter the Great, or of Catherine II and Elizabeth, who used to give estates to their lovers, was the land taken away from the peasants.

The peasants never acknowledged these usurpations. They awaited a mysterious "White Letter," a mystical Decree which would restore their land, and the certainty of its coming was a conviction at the heart of their minds. There were many occasions in the history of Russia when the peasants tried to recover their lands by force. From the days of the Empress Catherine until 1861, when Alexander II published his decree of Liberation, peasant revolts shook Russia from end to end; and even after that time, when the country was covered by a network of military posts, local risings troubled the authorities.

The Siberian peasants dreamt of separation from Russia, for they were of a different race. Their forbears were exiles and criminals deported from the Asiatic provinces, or Mongols of many tribes. So they had a traditional hatred and fear of Russia which were now increased when they felt the intolerable burden and expense of the Imperial system.

But the resemblances between the two types were no less striking. Both were ultimately anarchic and yet of passive character. Both were accustomed throughout history to a large measure of self-government within the peasant communes, and the central authorities were compelled to tolerate this system because it was impossible to exercise very close control over such wide areas. Their passivity was due to their complete lack of education, with the result that progress meant nothing to them, and if any pressure forced them to change of life or of economic conditions it had to come from the State.

Ulyanov understood and noted all these facts. He was convinced that the peasantry yielded to the power of the State only because they would acknowledge the rule of any body of resolute men who could enforce their will with heavy penalties.

When that idea came to him he smiled and rubbed his hands. "Ah, Karl Marx," he reflected, "you had a knowledge of the human animal! You knew best of all that it likes to be one of a herd. And the herd likes to have a shepherd, a shepherd with a whip and a sharp-toothed dog."

Vladimir used to return from his hunting expeditions in a great state of excitement and exhilaration. "My dear," he would say to his wife, "I knew the Russian villages only in the Volga district, but here I am a student at a regular University." He would describe to her all his observations and impressions. "Who do you think will ever lead the peasants? How can he do it? Nobody can lead them in a normal fashion. The Russian peasantry can be driven forward by the club of a Peter the Great, or by the machine guns and bayonets of a modern Governor. But how can we manage them? We must have some more effective whip, which must be fashioned. It must be such a whip that a flick of it will move both heaven and earth. We must think it over."

Ulyanov meditated on the subject as he walked about the steppes. Then he poured out his ideas again to his wife. When speaking to her his eyes narrowed, he ground his teeth together, and his whole face was contorted as though with the hate of battle. His aspect and his words terrified Nadezhda Konstantinovna, who grew pale and pressed her hands to her bosom. But she did not oppose him, for she was full of faith in this direct and ruthless man.

They called occasionally upon the other exiles scattered about the neighbourhood, but Vladimir never disclosed his brooding thoughts to them. He knew that what he had decided upon would not meet with any sympathy amongst them, for they did not pass far beyond the loyal Socialism of their German comrades. None of them equalled Plekhanov in boldness of mind, though even for Plekhanov he felt a diminished respect after making his acquaintance.

Vladimir did not encourage his fellow-exiles to call too often at his house, because such visits increased the vigilance of the secret police. When the police began to spy upon him, to search his rooms or to put him through cross-examinations, he found that he could not concentrate upon his work. Besides that, constant social intercourse led to arguments and misunderstandings, to gossip and backbiting. Even challenges to duels were quite common among people nervously

exhausted by long exile. For his nearly ascetic contemplation Ulyanov required peace and solitude.

Meanwhile, with gun on shoulder, he penetrated into the steppes. He liked to sit in the shadow of a birch tree enjoying the vista of vast fields and luxuriant meadows covered with wild flowers of bewildering colour and intoxicating scent: violets, and lilies of many colours, and wild roses. Cattle and sheep and horses grazed over the grasslands unattended. To the south, far away, loomed the dark blue chain of the Sayans. Large and rich villages were scattered at great distances among the wheat-fields and birch groves. Swift brooks and rivers tumbled their way through deep ravines down to the Yenissai. Grouse, quail and bustards moved in the high grass, and high overhead, like a black speck on the blue tent of the sky, a great vulture hovered. It was seeking its prey, crying out for destruction, as though in anger that it could not kill and tear in pieces every living thing. Here and there, in the grass and undergrowth, stood rough pillars of red sandstone. They were dolmens, the old burial-places of the innumerable tribes which for centuries had wandered across the fertile plains of Siberia.

Ulyanov knew that the great Mongol chieftains had passed over this ground on their way to the west, leaving behind them the bodies of many warriors to sleep for ever under the red monoliths. The sons of Genghiz Khan, thought Vladimir, had far to go and they had no clear goal in sight. Yet they reached the plains of Poland and of Hungary. They saw Silesia, and Budapest, and Vienna. But for quarrels amongst them they might have swept around the walls of Rome and Paris; and now, centuries after, the thoughts of a Mongol followed the Mongol hordes in their irresistible advance. . . .

On the right bank of the Yenissai the rich Cossacks lived in their hamlets where they had been settled long ago by the Czars to defend the southern frontier of Siberia. They remained, although an enemy no longer existed to invade the powerful Empire which spread like the net of a spider over nearly one-fifth of the globe. In the less fertile parts of the same district the

authorities also settled liberated peasants, homeless men who had been deprived of their property in Russia. Here, in a rich country-side, they lived their useless lives, illiterate, lazy, and perpetually at feud with one another. They stole horses and cattle from the Cossacks, stole their crops, felled their trees, emptied their nets, set their houses on fire, and murdered their rich neighbours in constant ambushes.

Across the river were the Tartars, tending droves of horses and flocks of sheep, ever on guard against wolves and robbers, and strict followers of the prophet of Mecca. An unceasing hostility reigned between the two banks of the Yenissai where the powerful river, narrowing between the red gorges of Kizyl Kaya, roared and foamed in a mist of spray on its journey to the great white northern sea. When Ulyanov looked down upon the whirling torrent he saw himself apart from the tumult and hysteria of the world. He, a persecuted exile, was laying large plans and concentrating upon his purpose without emotion or frenzy. As he listened to the waters and felt the vibration of the enormous power pent up by primitive nature, he understood that in the army of the oppressed there was no man but himself who could be its leader. He would build up the new life of the world. He alone had the power and the will and the experience for this great work. Was it possible that he could perish in prison or on the gallows? Could he be shot down or die in exile? That would be an aimless waste of the forces necessary for accomplishing the great design.

He came to the conclusion then that he could not remain in Russia, the slavish and illiterate Russia of the Czars. It was a country like a brackish pool overgrown with every kind of weed. He wanted freedom, fresh air, liberty to use his strength unhampered. He knew very well that, after he was sent to Siberia and his confederates were arrested, his Party had quickly broken to pieces. It was doing nothing at all. Only with great difficulty was any communication preserved between the few members who were left. It was clear to him that the arduous work of spreading the ideas of the Party was producing meagre results. Yet he knew

that he was called for a great task. "I am crushing great rocks with a small hammer," he thought bitterly. "What I want is a great machine, something heavy and strong. This machine I can have by founding a Russian newspaper to be published abroad and spread throughout Russia by a secret organisation. That will be a hammer to destroy and a tool to construct. And I am strong enough to control it."

From that moment the exile lost his peace of mind. He could neither eat nor sleep. He wandered about, silent and restless, devoured by a feverish longing for hard work and for an opportunity to carry out his schemes.

With this in his mind he returned to St. Petersburg when his exile was over, leaving his wife at Ufa. He went all over the capital, carefully investigating the state of the Party and the spirit that was being shown in revolutionary circles. He took counsel with the prominent men in the Socialist movement, and when a complete picture of the situation was formed in his mind he wrote a letter to his wife.

"All that I decided upon," he wrote, "when I looked across the steppes near Minusinsk and when I watched the rushing Yenissai, will soon become established facts. I am leaving for abroad. Wait until I send for you and then come at once."



## CHAPTER X

IN a small tavern which was like hundreds of others to be found in the suburbs of Munich, a modestly dressed woman with a serious and concentrated face was sitting at a table near the window. A glass of beer stood in front of her, but it was untouched. Every now and then she looked impatiently at her watch, and it was clear that she was expecting a visitor.

Just as the clock above the counter struck eleven, the door was pushed open and a short, stocky man, in a grey overcoat and a shabby soft hat, entered the dimly-lit room, which was empty save for the woman at the table. He regarded the rather dingy figure for a moment and then crossed over to her.

"Bakharyov?" he asked in a low voice. She nodded her head. The man took a seat, ordered a glass of coffee and waited inquiringly.

"Doctor Yordanov?" asked the woman, when the landlord had left to carry out the order.

"Yes. Yordanov."

"Are you the one who publishes *Sparks*, the newspaper which carried on the struggle for justice?"

For a moment he hesitated. Then he nodded slowly.

"And if I am the one—what of it?"

"I am here to give you a considerable sum of money for the paper. I know that the management has financial troubles—it is always the same with illegal papers published abroad. So . . ." She stopped while a waiter served the coffee.

"I must explain it all to you," she went on. "I am a sister of the Bakharyov who was hanged for organising an attempt against Nicholas II. I want revenge, but not on the Czar, because that would lead nowhere. If we got rid of him, another would be put in his place.

The evils we suffer don't depend on the Czar alone. The whole structure of society is responsible for them." The man smiled imperceptibly and there was a gleam of irony in his narrow eyes. "In *Sparks* you make war upon the Social Revolutionaries, calling them cowards, romantics and petty bourgeois. So they are. I know them well. *Sparks* also opposes the theories of the loyal Socialists who come to compromise inevitably and accept bourgeois ideals. And your paper proves that we must create without a moment's delay a real Socialist and revolutionary party which, even though the times are difficult for it, should start the struggle not only against Czarism and the bourgeoisie, but also against their helpers, the Social Revolutionaries, the Democrats and the Liberals."

"O Lord!" groaned Doctor Yordanov. "You certainly read *Sparks* carefully. But I don't see the connection between all this and avenging the death of Bakharyov."

"I want to crush the Social Revolutionaries," whispered the woman passionately. "I want to annihilate them! They send enthusiasts to their deaths while they hide themselves and continue to deceive the people."

"Indeed?" he drawled, watching the woman's face attentively. "Well, your proposal is worth discussing. We must talk it over amongst ourselves."

"Martov, Potresov and Zaslitch won't oppose it, will they?" she began.

"I see that you are well acquainted with the editorial board of *Sparks*," he observed ironically.

"Of course I am. I have been seeking an introduction to you for a long time. . . ."

He interrupted her sharply. "On what conditions?" he asked.

"At the present moment I have 3000 marks to do as I like with. My condition is that I must be taken on as a permanent contributor to the paper. I have a good style and I am well educated. I studied under Professor Lesgaft at St. Petersburg."

"And what is your name?" he asked quietly.

"Roshchina: Vera Ivanovna Roshchina. My husband is a veterinary in the Kuban district."

The man sat silent, lost in thought, his expression softened and kindly; but his half-closed eyes were examining the woman narrowly. The nervous movements of her fingers did not escape him. He saw a gleam of triumph in her pale eyes.

At last he looked up and said softly, "I must discuss this with my friends, Vera Ivanovna. We shall meet here to-morrow at the same hour, and then you will have our answer."

He called for the bill, said good-bye to the woman with a friendly smile, and left the room.

For some time he walked around the town. Then, satisfied that he was not being followed, he made his way to Schwabing and entered the courtyard of a tumble-down old house.

He went at once into the kitchen of a small flat in the building and addressed the woman who was there: "Drop your cooking at once, my dear. Go and find Parvus, Bobrov and Rosa Luxemburg for me. She should be with Parvus. Tell them to come here without delay. Then get hold of our compositor, Blumenfeld. And hurry up with it. Delays are dangerous."

He was in a gay mood. He walked about the little room, rubbing his hands and humming. An hour later he was still walking up and down, and he was still in a cheerful mood as he finished describing to his friends the encounter with the woman.

"They're cunning people, those gendarmes. Behold our revered friends Lopukhin, Semyakin, von Kotten, Kimovitch and Harting. But Vladimir Ulyanov has some brains in his head as well, even though he is only a Bulgarian, Doctor Yordanov. Ha! ha! They want to pay 3000 marks for the honour of belonging to our organisation. Excellent! I shall take the money and use it as a bellows on *Sparks*. The farthings collected from poor comrades in Russia don't supply fuel enough, but 3000 marks is a tremendous sum. Trust me, I'll lead the gendarmes astray!"

He laughed loudly and rubbed his hands. Nadezhda Konstantinovna sat silent, as always, her eyes fondly on her husband. But his friends opposite Ulyanov, and Parvus began the attack. Extremely they put them

firing with excitement like a heap of dry straw, he stamped his feet, waved his arms about, and seemed almost to be out of his mind.

"It's a crime," he raved, "to take money from the police. It is treason. It will never be forgiven by Plekhanov, by the 'Liberty for Labour' group, by our Party or by its sympathisers. First of all, we must remember . . ." He talked for an entire hour, and would have gone on longer had not Ulyanov sprung towards him, his eyes narrowed with a terrible anger.

"Enough!" he said sternly. "I'll take the money. I spit upon what idiots or 'sympathisers' may say. All that matters is our aim. How we achieve it is immaterial as far as I'm concerned."

Bobrov nervously made a gesture of dissent. Ulyanov, noticing it, looked at him inquisitively and repeated, "I'll take the money. Aren't you rather full of bourgeois notions about propriety? But why did you praise me when I organised a raid on the post office at Tula and gained a few thousand roubles? You knew as well as anybody that the money belonged not only to the bourgeois but also to poor peasants and destitute workers. And yet you shouted Bravo! Bravo! Get rid of your prejudices, comrades. Don't worry about rights and wrongs. I take all the responsibility upon my own shoulders. Yes, all of it."

The quarrel was over and Ulyanov smiled again. "Comrade Blumenfeld," he said, "you know all the Russians in Leipzig, Dresden and Munich . . ."

"And in Berlin," added the compositor proudly.

"And in Berlin," agreed Ulyanov with a laugh. "To-morrow evening, then, just before eleven o'clock, drop into that tavern and let me know the name of the woman who is being used by the police. She said that her name was Roshchina. I shall be waiting for you on the corner and then I'll go in for the money."

For a long time the comrades continued to discuss the

Pr. Vladimir Ulyanov soothed their revolutionary  
 "Annces with such a disarming simplicity and con-  
 "Ros"agic that they were soon in a good humour  
 band is a picturing to one another the surprised faces

of the Secret Service agents when they found themselves caught in such an easy trap.

When they had departed, Ulyanov dictated to his wife with a cunning smile a few letters to his nearest friends, in which he described the whole incident, his own proposals, and his decision not to apply to Martov, Axelrod or Potresov, who would hamper him with their bourgeois prejudices. Each letter he signed himself, and he added, in his own handwriting, below the signature, "It seems that I must either transform the minds of these people who call themselves Socialists, or else break with them. Neither morality nor a code of honour exists for us. Our work is to revolutionise human life and human ideas. Remember these words." That done, he walked about the room again, rubbing his hands and humming cheerfully to himself.

Next evening, as he loitered at the corner near the tavern, Blumenfeld approached him and whispered the results of his scrutiny.

"I know the old girl," he said. "She is Shumilova. She is a relative of the secret agent Zenaide Gerngross-Zhuchenko, who betrayed the terrorists, Bakharyov, Ivan Rasputin, Akimova and Savina. At the present moment she is hiding from the Social Revolutionaries of Leipzig and Heidelberg, who are on the look-out for her. She is one of the real spies, Vladimir Ilyitch, in the pay of that skunk Harting. I've heard that her official pseudonym is 'Mikheyev.'"

"Thanks, comrade," said Ulyanov, and went into the tavern. He sat down at the table where Shumilova was waiting and greeted her pleasantly.

"Our group considers," he began, "that your struggle against the bourgeois element in the Social Revolutionaries corresponds with its own ideas. So we accept your proposal."

"Very well," she replied with assumed calmness. "Here is the money, 3000 marks. And now, when can I come to the editorial offices to start my job? I have an article ready on the activities of our common enemies against *Sparks*."

"Hold on! Just a moment," muttered Ulyanov, carefully counting the banknotes. Then he put them

all into the pocket of his overcoat and looked at her with mockery in his eyes.

"Dear Madame Shumilova," he said softly, leaning towards her across the table and emphasising every word, "would you mind expressing our gratitude to the very dear Zenaide Teodorovna, to the revered Counsellor Harting, and to the other Intelligence people for this precious gift? Believe me, not a penny of it will be wasted. As for your collaboration, you may perhaps offer it to a few impetuous stalwarts of the Social Revolutionaries who are anxious to get in touch with Zenaide Teodorovna. And your money will be returned with interest—with interest, dear lady. Good-evening!"

"You monster!" she cried.

From that day *Sparks* flared up again. Its attacks upon the bourgeois Social Revolutionaries, upon the opportunism of the Social Democrats, upon Struve and Tugan-Baranovski with their "legalised Marxism," became more and more bitter. As a result, increasingly numerous groups of workers drifted away from the well-known parties, which was exactly what Ulyanov was aiming at. Where theoretical Socialism failed to hold them, his paper supplied them with a cut-and-dried programme, and with a definite outlet for their energy. It filled them with a revolutionary will to act. It led them beyond the pale of "society" and called upon them to reconstruct their lives according to the tenets of Socialism without calling upon the old Gods—the State, the Church, the family and the moral code of the bourgeoisie.

Ulyanov crystallised all this in his address to the workers who came to arrange the programme of the second congress of the Social Democrats. "All ideas, laws and sympathies are dead and done with except one: we must have a revolution which aims at creating, not a bourgeois republic, but a Workers' Commonwealth, upon the ruins of the old world. This is our one object, which we shall achieve without regard for anything or anybody that may stand in our way. We shall advance through crime and blood. Men and laws will go down before us. We must be ruthless in our victory when it comes, and ruthless in our actions now."

In those days the young Russian Socialist Party was united behind its traditional leaders, its "idols": Plekhanov, Deich, Axelrod, Martov, Zaslitch, Potresov. But these were taken aback by the bold articles which appeared in *Sparks*, and the first coolness, which was to turn later into open enmity, manifested itself.

External events, however, restored the old unity when it suddenly became clear that *Sparks* could no longer be produced in Germany. The printers, under pressure of the police, who were acting on the request of the Russian Intelligence Service, declined to bring out the paper. Plekhanov insisted that it should be transferred to Geneva because he wanted it to be under his personal control and influence, but Ulyanov resolved to migrate to London in order to be independent of his old teacher and his uncritical followers.

He passed entire days and nights in deep meditation. His resolution was clear, and his intention of fulfilling it, but he had no money at all. Considerable capital was necessary for the journey to England and for the publication of the journal in that country. Yet it was very seldom that money came from Russia, and then it was only in small sums, collected penny by penny from workers at their meetings. And more than once even those sums were intercepted by the police, who traced the collections and arrested the Socialist agents.

One day, desiring solitude for his reflections, Ulyanov left home and rode across the town on his bicycle. Late at night he returned and called upon a Latvian named Walcis. Many years before this man had been exiled to Siberia for the crime of coining, but he had escaped abroad and set up an engraving business. He sometimes visited Ulyanov, asking for work within the movement, but Vladimir gave him no decisive reply because Walcis was an illiterate fellow and there was no guarantee that his revolutionary sympathies went very deep.

Now Ulyanov was knocking at his door in a small and dirty hotel.

"I come to you, comrade, on very important business," he said. "Can I count on you to keep a secret?"

"Certainly you can." Walcis was delighted and flattered.

"Could you possibly make in your workshop a good impression of the Russian banknote and print off 200 copies of it at least? But, remember, secrecy is essential."

"I must think that over," replied the engraver.

A few days of troubled expectation went by. The restless Ulyanov found it impossible to stay at home. When his day's work was over he went out and wandered about the town. He was like a caged lion. The comrades in Russia were waiting for the new issues of *Sparks*, yet the paper could not come out and there was no money available for its publication in London. Rumours reached him that Plekhanov was secretly mocking at *Sparks*, smouldering to extinction.

At a moment when his restlessness had become unbearable, late at night, somebody knocked at the door of his flat in Schwabing. The visitor was using a pre-arranged signal. It was Walcis, who entered the flat with an air of deep mystery.

"Light the lamp," he whispered. Then he took from under his overcoat a bulky parcel tied with string.

"Money!" shouted Ulyanov when he caught sight of it. "*Sparks* will continue!"

"Five hundred banknotes of ten roubles each," boasted Walcis. "They are excellent imitations. Nobody will find anything the matter with them. I've tested them already by changing ten of them at a bank. I had no trouble at all."

Ulyanov wrung the engraver by the hands, laughing and rejoicing as he thanked him.

"Never shall I forget this service," he said. "Now, can you give me the die as well? It may come in useful."

"Alas," groaned Walcis, lowering his eyes, "the die broke as I was printing the five hundred and eleventh note."

Ulyanov looked at him sharply. Then he said evenly, "I hope you said 'Amen'? But never mind. I thank you, comrade, for what you have done."

When Walcis had gone, Krupskaya remarked that



the man would continue to print the forged banknotes for himself.

"No doubt he will," laughed Ulyanov, "but that's none of my business. He'll go on printing them as long as they let him. In the meantime, let's get down to work."

They divided the money into small parcels of 100 roubles each, and next day they gave them to the comrades to change into marks in various quarters of the town. At three in the afternoon Vladimir was buying English pounds and tickets for London, while Nadezhda Konstantinovna was packing their books and poor belongings in a small trunk.

A period of feverish activity began as soon as they reached London. There they were joined by a new colleague, a young Socialist named Leon Bronstein, who was known under the assumed name of Trotsky. Shortly before he had escaped from a Siberian prison and slipped across the frontier. He was a man well known in the student and worker groups, where he commented successfully upon Marxism, and now, feeling an irresistible attraction towards journalism, he began to write daily for *Sparks*.

Ulyanov watched him attentively. One day, when Trotsky had just left them, he said to Krupskaya, "That lad has first-rate abilities as an agitator. What is more, he has no scruples. He will go far, without doubt. He is impulsive and energetic, like many of his race, but he has no staying power. He wants a mentor like myself, someone who never takes fire. And I want his help, for at present no one else is capable of thinking things out or of acting according to my schemes."

Nadezhda Konstantinovna disagreed on the point. "He uses too much emphasis," she said. "His style is arrogant, shallow and unattractive. It doesn't convince. It has no depth and no simplicity."

"He's young yet," laughed Ulyanov. "He will soon pick up everything. I want to introduce him into our group with Plekhanov. He will be the seventh man, which is a good thing when a vote is taken, and a man on my side, which will help to carry my proposals."

Plekhanov, however, would have nothing to do with

Trotsky. He refused to admit him into the group and would not even allow him to be on the committee of *Dawn* and of *Sparks*. Trotsky was deeply offended and soon afterwards he left London for Paris.

The tendency of *Sparks* under Ulyanov's direction did not please Plekhanov at all. He even came over to London to remonstrate in person, but it was of no effect.

"I am a disciple of revolutionary and militant Marxism," repeated Ulyanov time after time. "I will not change even if I am expelled for it."

One day he invited Plekhanov for a walk and led him to Highgate Cemetery.

"Why on earth are you strolling around this rubbish heap?" asked Plekhanov.

"You won't call it that in a moment, George Valentinovitch."

After walking on for a few hundred yards they stopped before a small tombstone.

"Karl Marx," read Plekhanov aloud.

"Karl Marx," repeated Ulyanov. "Let us sit down here in silence and reflect. The place deserves it."

For a long time they sat without a word. Ulyanov, with bent head, watched the old revolutionary from the corners of his eyes. He felt a cold shiver down his back.

"Plekhanov is thinking about himself," he reflected. So he sat up and began to speak, holding with his eyes the pale eyes of Plekhanov.

"I can't make fine speeches. I can only tell you what I am thinking of at this moment, what has been forming in my mind ever since I first met you, George Valentinovitch. I have sifted everything to the bottom. I have said aloud before this what I am going to tell you now. I have said it on this spot, recalling to my mind the face of the greatest of the prophets, Karl Marx. He has heard my confession and confirmed me in my design.

"If the working class waits for recognition from the ruling bourgeois, all will be lost. Recognition will only be granted when our enemies have irresistible weapons at their disposal—their technicians and their scientists

will forge them. Before that happens we must crush the bourgeois class. We must keep the whole world in a state of perpetual revolution. We must scorn whatever the bourgeoisie give us as a sop. We must always have at hand our own weapon with which to stab suddenly at the right moment. And I am sure, George Valentynovitch, that there is no other way."

The old Socialist frowned and groaned involuntarily. "But in the meantime you are uttering counterfeit money. You are shaming the ideals of revolution and of Socialism."

Ulyanov ground his teeth together and his eyes narrowed. "I am using bad money, but it is good the moment that it is used for the revolution. Only conquered peoples feel shame. Conquerors have no such word."

"Still . . ." began Plekhanov.

"Not another word! What you say pains me. Yes, it hurts me. So I will finish what I have thought about many a time at the tomb of Marx. Remember, I will not hesitate a moment to split the Party, to break with you. I have no fear of the crushing accusation which I can hurl at you. Not a scruple will cross my mind about overthrowing you, or about branding your name for ever, although you are a man whom I revere with all my heart. I have nothing of my own except my idea, and that I will defend tooth and nail, with words and bayonets and gallows. Come with me all the way, and your name will shine like the sun. If you part company with me, woe upon you!"

"A threat?" asked Plekhanov.

"No!" said Ulyanov in a passionate whisper. "A warning and an entreaty!"

They said no more, but returned to London in a depressed silence. Soon afterwards Plekhanov departed; their frigid farewells embarrassed both of them. There was nothing that they could say to one another.

Shortly afterwards Ulyanov went for a month to Brittany, where his mother was staying. He left behind him a few articles for *Sparks* which were signed with a new pen-name, Lenin. He used the name for the first time quite subconsciously. The word crossed

his mind, he wrote it down, and then he looked at it in perplexity. "Lenin?" Suddenly he saw before his eyes the beloved and spiritualised face of Lena, with her golden hair and her compassionate eyes.

"Has she heard any news of me?" he thought with a sigh. "She may take me for a monster as this Shumilova did. But she must have forgotten me long ago."

His dreams were shattered by Nadezhda Konstantinovna asking him the address of some comrade in New York. He swept aside his romantic memories and turned to the business of the moment.

"Nonsense," he whispered to himself. "Lenin has as much or as little reason as my other pen-names—Ulin, Ilyin, Ivanov, Tulin. In the same way I was Dr. Yordanov in Germany, Modrachek in Prague, and here I am Richter. A name means nothing. It is a trifle compared with the aim of my life."

Then he laughed and set himself to finding the address of the comrade in New York who sent one hundred dollars to *Sparks* every six months.

## CHAPTER XI

ULYANOV raged up and down the room, talking to himself, although his wife Krupskaya sat at the table. He did not seem even to notice her presence.

"Good!" he shouted. "Splendid! The committee outvoted me, did it? We must transfer *Sparks* to Geneva, must we? That is the end. I know what will happen. There is no doubt about it. Plekhanov will rob us of our paper. It will be my duty to break with Plekhanov and his friends, to fight against them. It hurts me. It depresses me. . . ."

Suddenly he staggered and fell down senseless. Terrible convulsions shook his rigid body. He ground his teeth and moaned, muttering disconnected and meaningless sentences. Nadezhda Konstantinovna brought him round with difficulty, and when at last his eyes opened he clearly remembered at once all that had passed. He sat up, cursing, and sternly whispered to his wife: "Write!"

She sat at the table.

"Write to Trotsky that he must hasten at once to Geneva. His job is to widen the breach between us and the Plekhanov gang. I want to remain out of it for a time so that I can come in at a crisis. Then write to Zinoviev and Kamenev. They are hot-headed young students with brave hearts. Tell them to come to me. I must have some stout Russians with me. Still, it can't be helped. When you make war you must use what weapons you have. Get those letters ready at once."

Ulyanov arrived in Geneva completely broken down, ill and feverish. There he had long consultations with Trotsky and with Lunacharsky, whom he met for the first time. He was pleased to make the acquaintance of this brilliant orator, whose noble voice inspired the confidence of all who heard it. Lunacharsky was a true

Russian of wide culture and of varied abilities. But Ulyanov's first enthusiasm was damped when he had more time to study the man.

"Here is a Russian," he reflected. "But of what use is he? He suffers from the curse of his race. He goes to extremes in his mind, but his thoughts are not based on realities. He believes in our victory as though it were some supernatural miracle which will suddenly alter the whole trend of human nature. He is superstitious and a word-monger. Lunacharsky will follow me until he sees that we will obtain our rights with blood, that we will lead mankind to freedom by way of serfdom. Then he will beat his breast in slavish repentance."

It was not long before Trotsky opened the attack on Plekhanov. The whole editorial committee of *Sparks* were accustomed to gather at the Café Landolt, where they discussed the programme of the Third Congress of Russian Socialists. Plekhanov and Axelrod were at odds with the opinions expressed by the new members of the Party, but the students and workers who listened to their debates became enthusiastic supporters of "Lenin's" new programme. At last Trotsky turned to Plekhanov in direct opposition.

"You understand, comrade," he asked, "why you are no longer supported by members of the Party? Because you have lost touch with the working class. You have emigrated from Russia, and that has destroyed in you the sense of the Russian reality. Your words and your ideas are good enough for the loyal European Socialists, but not for us. You have become Museum exhibits."

From that day, not only on the committee of the Party but even in the editorial offices of *Sparks* itself, relations with the Plekhanov faction became so strained that Ulyanov, Martov and Potresov refused to collaborate any longer. Ulyanov, his wife and Martov were busy for whole days and nights sending out letters and circulars to explain the situation that had arisen in the Party and to get the money for a new paper.

A few weeks later they published a small paper which they called *Forward*. When the trial number was brought to them and Trotsky read out some of its

attacks on Plekhanov, which called the old leader a coward and demanded a new conference of the Party, Ulyanov suffered a mental agony. Still an invalid, he sat in a chair gazing up at the blue sky, his cold hands clenched and his lips moving silently. A mortal struggle was about to break out, and Ulyanov knew that leadership of the workers would fall on his shoulders. He had to take into his own hands the lives of millions of unhappy men. He would have to make brother fight against brother and friend against friend.

At that moment Ulyanov prayed silently that the burden might be taken from him, but his prayer was not answered. The battle was begun at once. Accusations, calumnies, invective, hatred filled the air. *Forward*, poor paper though it was, accomplished the work which it set out to do, and despite the intrigues and efforts of Plekhanov, the Third Congress of the Russian Socialist Party became the First Congress of the Bolsheviks and the nucleus of the Communist Party, to which more and more of the partisans rallied as they gave up their allegiance to the old Socialist leaders. It was useless interference when Bebel tried to persuade Lenin to effect a compromise with Plekhanov's Mensheviks, or to accept arbitration in the dispute. To the leader of the Bolsheviks the future was now clear. His teacher had diverged entirely from the way of revolutionary Marxism. In the eyes of Lenin he was now only an agent of the bourgeois class, an enemy who must be crushed in the end.

For the first time Lenin proclaimed openly and to the whole world the watchwords of Russian Communism, commanding the working class not to aim at the creation of a bourgeois republic in Russia and not to become ensnared by the rotting parliamentary system of the West.

"We are in the act of founding the first Socialist Republic in Russia," he used to declare to the comrades who called on him. "This is our ideal. I do not promise rashly that it will be achieved at once. In Russia and abroad we are fighting under the most unequal conditions. Yet I think that we can ourselves start a revolution which will show for ever the differences

between a bourgeois and a socialist *coup d'état*. Further steps will be easier after that. As the revolution spreads, our ideals will come nearer to realisation; and we must never draw back."

The name of Ulyanov-Lenin, as it became famous, attracted hosts of followers and faithful comrades as well as fierce and fanatical enemies. He had no fear of the enemies, and as for the followers, he only wanted to see them attached to the cause, not to himself. He used to quote the words of the poet: "Our recognition is not in the applause of the mob, but in the hatred and the curses of defeated foes."

When, after the unhappy war with Japan, a bourgeois revolution which broke out in Russia was carried on by the Socialists, Lenin crept back to St. Petersburg. The Mensheviks, directed from Geneva by Plekhanov, created a Council of Workers' Delegates. At once the Bolsheviks, including Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Badaiev, worked their way into it. They gave a truly revolutionary direction to this body: for the first time in the history of the human race the working class took power into its hands, made war against the bourgeoisie, and spread the idea of a Socialist Revolution.

Concealed, unknown to anybody, in the gallery of the room where the Council deliberated, Lenin overheard the speeches of the Mensheviks and the replies of his comrades who were his followers. He knew then that only oppression, violence and an unheard-of terrorism would ever bring them all together. As the Mensheviks discussed coming to an understanding with the Government, Lenin marked down man after man of them who would have to be put violently out of the way. And then, as he looked at his own followers, he had to ask himself the painful question whether they were brave and persevering enough to prevent the Councils, which were springing up everywhere, from being suppressed.

He went to Moscow, for he knew that a workers' rising would break out there first of all, and that the barricades would be raised in the streets. He formed Councils and gave his instructions to Chanzer-Murat, who was the leader of the projected rising.

Meanwhile the wave of revolution spread across



Russia, from the German frontier to Vladivostok. The authorities lost their heads and surrendered everywhere to the rebels without resistance. The army at the seat of war espoused the cause of the people.

Nobody knew that the insidious Witte was silently approving this outbreak among the people because it would force Nicholas II to sign the decree for the new Constitution, which provided for the summoning of the Duma. The favourite counsellor of Alexander III was well aware that the parliamentary system would blind and captivate all the disturbed social classes and pacify them for years to come.

But Lenin was aware of this as well. He feared that Witte might be able to turn the revolution into the quiet backwater of parliamentarianism. So, through his followers, he gave a stormy character to the Councils of Workers' Delegates and excited the people to an armed rising. At length it broke out in Moscow, but it was drowned in its own blood.

Immediately the opponents of Witte, to shame him in the eyes of the Emperor, put in motion the whole machinery of suppression. Punitive expeditions set out under the command of Rinn, of Count Meller and of Baron Rennenkampf. Gallows were set up all over the country-side. Hundreds of revolutionaries were sentenced to death and fell under a hail of bullets. The gaols were glutted with the political enemies of the Czar. Witte, for fear of his own future, broke up the Councils of Workers' Delegates and imprisoned all the revolutionaries upon whom he could lay his hands.

Lenin concealed himself in Finland, where he became to all appearances a German printer whose name was Ervin Weikov. He travelled constantly between Kuokkala, Perkarvi, Vyborg and Helsingfors, and everywhere he was in touch with people who came to him out of Russia.

One night somebody knocked three times on the door of his little cottage, which stood in a quiet yard surrounded by fir trees. After a short pause, two more knocks sounded. At this prearranged signal Lenin opened the door. On the threshold stood a young worker in a black overcoat with the collar turned up.

"Vladimir Ilyitch, it is I, Badaiev! I've brought you some guests," he said, holding out his hand.

"I'm very glad, comrade," Lenin replied. "Come in."

Three sailors and a young priest with wide and dreaming eyes entered the room. When they were all seated, Badaiev introduced his companions.

"Comrades Dybyenko, Zhelezniakov and Shustov were sailors on the cruiser *Potemkin*, which raised the revolutionary flag."

"Welcome, comrades," cried Lenin heartily. "The proletariat will never forget your deed, for it was the germ of revolution to spread all over the fleet. Tell me the whole story."

The sailors told a long story of their adventures until the point where they were disarmed in a Roumanian harbour. Then Dybyenko took up the tale.

"We escaped from Roumania," he concluded, "and hunted for you everywhere. You must tell us what we are to do now."

Lenin replied at once: "You will go abroad and from there direct the activities of the comrades still serving in the fleet."

"We know them all, in Sevastopol, Odessa and Kronstadt," interjected Shustov.

"That's just what I was hoping. We will spread our papers and pamphlets amongst them until they are ready to join our ranks."

"They will! Like one man!" exclaimed the sailors. "But first they will kill the officers who ill-treat them."

Lenin raised his head and looked searchingly at his visitors. He smiled in a kindly way as though he were dealing with children.

"The officers will appear before your court, comrades," he observed.

"We'll play with them in our own fashion," they muttered.

"You may. Your verdict will in no case be reversed."

The sailors took counsel among themselves in a whisper, and then, having obtained from Lenin a letter of instructions, they left the house.

Badaiev remained. He glanced towards the priest and

remarked, "Father Gapon. He led the workers to the Winter Palace when they demanded that the Czar should dismiss his corrupt Ministers and grant the Constitution."

Lenin did not reply. His set face and narrowed eyes betrayed his anger. For a time he was silent, examining the priest from head to foot.

"When I first heard of you, Father Gapon," he remarked at length, "I took you for a secret agent, a degraded provocateur, leading a mob of foolish workers up to the rifles of the Guards. . . ."

Gapon shuddered, and crossed his hands over his breast, looking as though hypnotised by the watchful eyes of Lenin.

". . . But now, when I see you, I have my doubts. You look like a man who did not know what he was doing. You pleaded with the Czar, you entreated the tyrant on your knees, and for what? You pleaded for what should be taken from him by force, for what should be cut out of his dead carcass like his heart and his eyes. Madman! Lunatic! Slave!"

So saying, Lenin began walking quickly about the room, cracking his fingers, in a state of furious excitement. After a time he halted before the terrified priest. Fixing him with his sharp eyes he rapped out:

"Well. Say something. I'm waiting."

"Only people who have not seen my work can accuse me of treason," quavered the priest. "And I? For five years I have been an awakening spirit among the workers. I have strengthened their belief that God's kingdom on earth is at hand." He drew breath sharply, and continued: "I had a prophetic vision. I heard a voice saying, 'Lo, the tyrant's heart has changed! Lead the people to him, that he may pour out his good-will upon them.'"

"And he poured out a stream of lead from his rifles," Lenin laughed boisterously. "Your God does not know the Czar very well. He suggested to you a vile and criminal action. What are you going to do now?"

"I don't know," Gapon whispered miserably. "My mind is torn in two."

"Then I'll tell you," said Lenin after a moment's

deliberation. "Go abroad, penetrate into the *émigré* families, into the homes of rich and poor alike, and tell people what the Czar did to the crowd which came to ask his favour, with crosses and ikons. Tell them again and again, as though you were an Old Testament prophet, that the Czar and his defenders must be trampled underfoot by the toiling masses. Do you understand?"

"I do," the priest answered softly.

"Then go. I must go with the comrade alone."

When Lenin had shown Gapon to the door, and when he had listened for the click of the outer gate, he turned to Badaïev inquiringly.

"An agent?"

"No," the other decided.

Lenin shrugged his shoulders. "It's your affair," he said. "What are you going to do with him?"

"He is ready to carry across the frontier anything we entrust him with—weapons, bombs, illegal documents. Nobody will pay any attention to a priest."

Lenin raised his hands in astonishment. "But who asked you to bring this man to me?"

"Don't worry about that," replied Badaïev. "A brave and reliable comrade—Malinovski."

"Malinovski? Malinovski? I remember. Trotsky told me about him. He is to go into the Duma, with you and other candidates from the Party."

"Vladimir Ilyitch!" Badaïev exclaimed. "Do not insist upon that! I cannot criticise the Budget or propose amendments to the bills. I am uneducated, and the parliamentary job is no joke."

Lenin roared with laughter. Then he patted the man encouragingly on the shoulder. "Why should you fool about with the Budget or with bills? All you have to do is to enter the tribune as often as possible and repeat that the working class does not want any truck with bourgeois tricks of that sort. Tell them that the workers will pull down all the rotten institutions of the State and blow the Czar, his Ministers and the bourgeoisie to pieces. Tell the Duma that if they offer resistance they will be hanged on lamp-posts. That's all you need know for the time being, my friend."

Badaïev looked at the speaker in astonishment.

"Is that all?" he asked doubtfully. "But the Duma will be full of Ministers, Generals and great landowners. Can we say that to them?"

"Don't you think a gibbet will be strong enough for a Minister or a rich man?"

"I suppose it will be. But will they even listen to such a speech?"

Lenin laughed again. "They certainly won't listen to a foolish speech from you about the Budget. But they'll cock their ears when you talk about a lamp-post and a piece of rope."

Suddenly he stopped laughing and assumed an air of furtive suspicion.

"Gapon is a traitor bought by the Government," he said.

"No," exclaimed Badaiev. "He has been known in workers' circles for a long time."

"Gapon is a hired traitor," repeated Lenin with conviction. "Tell Trotsky that. He should pass the word to the Menshevik and Social Revolutionary leaders. They'll square accounts with him. And to-day I must change my quarters. I'll let you know where I go to. Now leave me. I have a lot to do."

Immediately Lenin moved to another house and awaited events. For some days none of the comrades heard any news of him, but in the meantime an old woman selling candies, apples and sunflower seeds was seated in front of Lenin's former residence. She scrutinised carefully all the passers-by, and on the third day she noticed a young priest passing the house every now and then. He was clearly nervous, and he stopped occasionally to look into the yard through openings in the fence. When he moved on to the end of the street he stopped to talk with a smartly dressed man with a clean-shaven fleshy face and heavy sunken eyes.

The old woman took up her basket and trudged through the town crying her wares. She stopped at a small cottage, and after looking round, cautiously slipped into the doorway.

"Comrade Lenin," she whispered, "Father Gapon is wandering around your house, and with him is Ivan Manassevitch Mannilov, the secret agent of Witte."

"Good, Comrade Simon. Now find out where Gapon lives and inform Rutenberg."

With these words Lenin closed the door. A few weeks went by, during which Lenin concealed himself in Perkarvi, Usikirka and Helsingfors. Then he came back to Kuokkala and to his old house, where he found Comrade Simon.

"Well, how did it go?" he asked, shaking hands with the worker.

"Gapon lived in Teryoki. I traced him there and informed Engineer Rutenberg. They came to the priest with two other comrades and handed him the warrant and the verdict. Then they tied him up and hanged him. The police found Gapon after he had been hanging for two days. On his chest was pinned the death sentence of the Social Revolutionaries."

"The dog deserved a dog's death," grinned Lenin. "This Rutenberg is an excellent hangman as well as an engineer. He could be of use to us if he wants to join our Party."

"He won't," replied Simon. "He's a friend of Savinkov and a sworn Social Revolutionary."

"A pity!" Lenin sighed. "I'd send him to kill that revolutionary jackass."

"Which jackass?"

"Boris Savinkov!" Lenin chuckled to himself. Then he pointed to the ground. "Sooner or later I'll send him underground."

"Why?"

"I don't know why," barked Lenin, taking a book and sitting near the window.

After it had become apparent to everybody that the new Constitution was a betrayal, and that many alterations had already made it almost a dead letter, the Party began to demand that Lenin should go abroad. The political police were on his trail and were drawing in around the hated leader of the working classes.

His words to the comrades who came to see him off were: "You have come to the conclusion now that we have nothing in common with Czarism or with the bourgeois class and its rotten parliamentary system. Workers who lack either courage or independence, even

they must come to the same conclusion in the end. But we shall get control of this country without their aid. We shall establish our laws and mete out our own justice. Nor shall we forget the workers who follow false prophets and treacherous leaders, so that they are not with the proletariat in the moment of victory. Go on organising yourselves. Fill up your ranks and make preparations for the final battle!"

His words were so outspoken that his audience hardly took in their importance. At the time, reaction was the order of the day. Military courts were set up all over the land and the Nationalists openly demanded the abolition of the Duma. They advocated the most severe repressive measures for the revolutionaries in order that the new vision of an awakened Russia should be dissipated once and for all. At such an hour who could believe in the hopeful and courageous words of the departing leader? The comrades listened to him in doubtful mood. They hung their heads sadly.

"We shall all be dead before then," they replied.

## CHAPTER XII

LENIN became a different man when the train started on its journey and the comrades to whom he had spoken so encouragingly were left behind. He was filled with the bitterness of complete failure. His face was a tragic mask of hatred as he looked back upon his sterile labours in the last years. He hated Plekhanov, Struve, Bebel. He hated his earlier companions, Martov and Potresov. Above all he hated Trotsky.

"I know what will please them," he reflected bitterly. "The revolution has failed. The reactionaries are in power. They want me to shoot myself as the worst criminal of all, a traitor like Gapon, a monster sending others to certain death."

He laughed maliciously at the thought, for he realised that even in the most desperate crisis the idea of suicide would never tempt him, though others might wish him out of the way.

Lenin had no illusions about how matters stood. Russia lay inert and terrorised under the hard rule of the Prime Minister, Stolypin, and "Stolypin's neckties," as the gallows were now called, were strangling his victims from end to end of the country. In Kuokkala and Teryoki Lenin met hundreds of workers, peasants, soldiers and members of the revolutionary intelligentsia. He talked with them and plumbed their minds until he knew even their unspoken thoughts. They were quite without hope. They were convinced that there could be no prospect of revolution for years to come, that the workers' organisations were ruined, and that the Party should now revise its programme. They all agreed that now the most to be hoped for was to get the "loyal" Social Democratic faction acknowledged in the Duma.

Lenin boiled with anger and with hatred for his wretched partisans. They were not his friends. He had



no use for friendship. All he admitted was devotion for a common cause. He could unhesitatingly condemn and send to death even the most intimate of his companions who proved unnecessary or harmful to the movement. His companions felt this, and so they shunned any closer connection with their leader. He lived now only for his ideal, no longer a man but a machine working with cold exactness upon the most complicated impulses of the human mind.

Suddenly Lenin recalled an incident that had happened at Kuokkala, and once more anger surged up within him. For Khalainen, one of his most devoted disciples, had brought with him to Kuokkala some of the peasant deputies who represented Labour in the Duma. The visitors were ill at ease and even hostile in Lenin's presence. He welcomed them with a hope that they could all work together for one end, the complete alteration in the structure of Russia; but even as he spoke he knew the thoughts of the old peasant seated opposite to him.

"You don't deceive us so easily, my friend," the old man was saying to himself. "We've seen your type of rebel before, with a black coat and a stiff collar. You'll find that our ways are a bit different from yours."

Despite his own mounting hostility, Lenin embarked upon an explanation of the whole revolutionary design, which aimed at the destruction of the bourgeois class.

"The workers," he said, "will get into their own hands all the factories and banks. They will give you the land and the means of working it—ploughs, reapers and tractors."

The peasant interrupted him. "We can take the land for ourselves. There are millions of us. When we rise, who can stop us? The soldiers, our own sons? They won't shoot us down. But until we do rise, the land and the landlords can look after themselves."

"Very well!" exclaimed Lenin. "It will be the proletariat that will open up the new world for you by revolution, comrades."

The peasant looked meaningly at Lenin's clean collar and at his white hands, unused to manual labour.

"And the proletariat?" he asked. "Does that mean the working class?"

"What is your work, for instance?" the rugged old man went on. He stretched out a gnarled finger and touched Lenin's pale, soft hand.

It was an unexpected turn to the conversation. The prophet and leader of the workers narrowed his eyes in anger, but he did not lose control of himself.

"I work with my head," he answered mildly. "I am working for the happiness of Russia."

The peasant received this reply without enthusiasm. "That's what the Czar might say," he observed sarcastically. "And the policeman." He glanced triumphantly at his friends, who were smiling as they stroked their beards. Then, suddenly galvanised into an intense energy, he began to harangue the Bolshevik leader, with many gestures of his toil-worn hands.

"No, brother, we've heard all this before only too often. What you must do is to follow the plough yourself, barefooted, in the rough clothes of a peasant. You must learn what our work is in flood and in frost, our family troubles, our fear of a bad harvest, our sufferings in famine and disease!"

Lenin replied evasively, "But we are giving you a future better than that, comrades. We are at the head of your ranks, leading you on."

The peasants exchanged knowing glances, and the old man expressed their thoughts. "That's just it," he said. "You are leading us, but you have not asked us what we want to have."

"We know what you want. But go on, let us hear it from your own lips."

"What's the use of long speeches?" continued the peasant. "It comes to this. We don't want the Czar, because whenever he feels like a war he takes our people from the fields and loads us down with taxes. We don't want a monarchy at all, because while it exists people like you will be in rebellion and we shall never know what peace is. But we can put up with the landlords and the gentry so long as we have axes and

arson to use on them. Those are the facts. That is our policy."

Lenin's eyes lit up for a moment, but he checked himself and continued the argument with extreme good-nature.

"You have left out of account the bourgeois class, the capitalists who buy your bread cheap and then sell their factory goods to you at high prices. Are you satisfied with them, comrades? Are you satisfied with the educated swine, the lawyers and so on, who get you into the clutches of the bourgeois so that they can skin you?"

The peasants were silent for a moment, looking furtively at the revolutionary workers who agreed with Lenin. Then a peasant who had not spoken before, a tall and broad-shouldered fellow, took up the argument.

"We've heard all that before. It means nothing. It is like a cuckoo's song."

"A cuckoo's song?" exclaimed Khalainen with indignation.

"Yes, a cuckoo's song," the peasant laughed. "You have nothing yourselves, neither house nor land, so you want other people's. Because you own nothing you claim to be the owners of everything. The bourgeois class give us ploughs, they grade the seeds, they breed cattle, they sell us reliable goods. We pay them because they give us what we want. The same thing goes on all over the world. But what can you do for us? You do not know how to manage either industries or farms. You are ignorant as a blacksmith, a locksmith or a carpenter is not, though none of them is learned. And how can we manage without lawyers and their kind? Who will give us advice? You won't, anyhow."

"We can help you to get back the land stolen by the Czar and the gentry," interrupted Lenin.

There was a chorus of assent from the peasants. "That's more like it. We can accept your help there."

"Good!" said Lenin.

But the visitors were still smiling to themselves.

"To tell you the truth," muttered their old leader as

though in explanation, "there is something to add so that we shall not quarrel later on. We'll take the land back, but we shan't allow anybody to interfere with our business. The Government will be ours; we will tolerate no rebellions and no wars."

"What about the workers?" Khalainen burst out. "Do you think we can agree about that? We can start a strike that will make things hot for you."

Lenin quelled the comrade with an angry look. "We can try to reach a friendly understanding about that," he said. His voice was calm but his eyes betrayed him.

The old peasant paid no attention to the remark. He stood up as if to go.

"I can tell you at once what 'the land' thinks about it. We know that rebellions and disturbances always come from the workers of the towns. So we shall get rid of the huge factories where thousands of your people gather together, and have only small factories, spread out all over Russia, one far from another. If no factory has more than one hundred workers we can manage them all. We shall have peace then. As it is we can't settle down to work at all."

The workers in the room were furiously angry and started to curse the old man.

"Filthy bourgeois," they cried. "You can't even read, yet you are dreaming of how to suppress the workers. That's the lesson you have picked up from the flunkeys of the bourgeois class, from the Liberal scum! You are traitors, all of you!"

The situation was growing ugly, for the peasants were fighting men and they were prepared now to use fists instead of arguments. Some of them began to roll up their sleeves. Lenin saw what was coming. All he could do was to end the conference as quickly as possible.

"What's all this about, comrades?" He laughed easily, as though the whole affair were a joke. "Are you acting in a comedy? Can't you see you're both in the right? The peasant comrades are thinking of the land, which will be seized for them before anything else happens. The worker comrades are thinking of political power, which is quite right and natural. We must fight

together. When we have broken the enemy's front we can come to a peaceful agreement on other matters. What's the use of cutting up the bear before we kill it?"

There was still an air of hostility between the two camps. The workers and the peasants faced each other menacingly, but the peasants were satisfied for the moment.

"An agreement, yes," they said. "We are ready for one. But, first of all, we must have the land."

No sooner had the deputation left than the workers turned upon Lenin.

"What do you mean by negotiating with them? They are traitors against the revolution. What's the game? . . ."

Lenin sprang from his chair and cowed the men with angry gestures.

"Stop!" he shouted. "There are one hundred million peasants. Do you know that? One hundred million! You fools! I am forced to negotiate with them. I must. The struggle with them, when it comes, will be much worse than the fight against the Czar and the bourgeois class. Can't you see it?"

The workers were silent. They were all looking at Lenin's mad and contorted face. He saw what was passing through their minds, controlled himself with an effort, and even smiled.

"I'll tell you one more thing," he added. "When we proclaim the Social Revolution, the peasants will proclaim a bourgeois revolution on the land."

Although the meeting appeared to be a disastrous one, Lenin gained from it the satisfaction of being proved right.

"I have not been mistaken in a single point," he exclaimed, as he walked up and down the room when it was all over. "As a boy I saw it all among the Volga peasants. As a man I confirmed my ideas in Siberia. It is an unshakable conclusion. Without the initiative and the leadership of the proletariat, the peasantry is but a cipher in my revolution. It is only a cipher. But I will deal with them, even if I have to wipe out fifty million of them. They are just greedy slaves. I will

control them with a bloody knout, with tyranny, with death. They will be the new slaves of the proletariat, until they learn their lesson and go with us arm in arm."

He spat scornfully. At that moment he hated the lousy mob of ploughmen who barred his way. And yet the thought of battle elated him.

When he left on his journey he was accompanied by Nadezhda Konstantinovna, silent as ever, but an obedient instrument in his hands, and a few young comrades of an alien race.

"How is it, Vladimir Ilyitch," asked one of the comrades who came to see him off, "that your closest companions, Trotsky, Sverdlov, Yoffe, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Steklov are all Jews?"

Lenin answered thoughtfully: "You know what the Russian people are. If you start them on the road of great achievement they begin to dream, to yearn for the soul of the Universe, and to plan the whole happiness of man. Then, if they drop a button, they fall at once into despair, weep by the waters of Babylon, beat their breasts and call upon Heaven to help them. It would be best to have Englishmen, Germans or Americans for what we want to do. Failing them, I use others who have no Russian blood in their veins."

"But you are a Russian yourself, comrade. You are leading us now. Will you give up the struggle?"

"What sort of a Russian am I?" Lenin asked, shrugging his shoulders. "My father was a Kalmuk of Astrakhan. My mother's name was Blank—a foreign name. From the Kalmuks I get my boldness, my lack of reverence for accepted things. I can destroy them. And then I have the courage to build up a new world upon the ruins of the old."

He looked at the astonished comrade and stopped with a smile.

"I'm joking with you, my friend," he went on. "Would you call me a foreigner? I was born by the Volga, and from my earliest years I have listened to the tales of Razin, Pugatchov and the rest of the freebooters. They were rebels too."

"That's better," exclaimed the worker. "You have relieved my doubts."

"Have I? Good! Now I'll tell you some more. I will never despair and I will never hesitate. Whatever we lose to-day we will win back to-morrow. Because I believe that, I am not like a Russian. And I believe that because in my youth I drove out of my heart all love of myself and all care for my own life. I care only for the victory of the Party, and I will achieve it quickly. Don't worry about these men who help us because they are alien in blood. Do you bother your head whether a Russian or a foreigner makes your axes and saws? Of course you don't. And it does not matter whether a Russian, a Jew, a Pole, a Latvian or a negro gives us the Socialist State so long as he gives it to us."

Lenin's first destination was Zurich, where he stayed for a time, busying himself with the foundation of two newspapers at once out of the small sums sent from Russia by the scattered Party. His chief enemies now were the Mensheviks, and he prepared to battle with them. He could not even ally himself with the comrades of Western Europe, for they were bound by the democratic ideology.

In Stuttgart, in 1907, he first tasted the European Social Democracy at the Congress of the Second International. Lenin proposed a motion that in the event of a European war all the Socialist parties in every country should provoke a civil war against capitalism by proclaiming the Social Revolution. In this he was supported only by Rosa Luxemburg, and his motion was rejected by a large majority. Bebel approved the basic idea of it, but for tactical reasons he considered it inopportune at that moment.

"Remember," shouted Lenin with an expression of scorn, "within a few years you will either do what I tell you now or else pass over to the enemies of the proletariat."

He put on his cap and made to leave the assembly, but the thought came to him that he had better see the meeting through. Otherwise the Congress would adopt

some elastic formula that would be worse than none at all. So he remained, with Zinoviev and Rosa Luxemburg, and put through an amendment obliging the Socialists to declare against war and capitalism.

Next day, when he read the papers, he had to laugh aloud. The entire Socialist Press attacked him fiercely, calling him an anarchist, a Marat, a criminal and a madman obsessed by megalomania and personal ambition.

"Fools!" he muttered, "stupid fools!"

But he stopped laughing when he took up the Russian Socialist newspapers conducted by Plekhanov. He became thoughtful and read every phrase, every word, with attention. Then he sat and meditated with closed eyes.

"Have you read them?" he asked his wife, nodding to the heap of papers on the table.

"Yes, I have. It is a wholesale attack upon you right along the line."

"It is an attack," he agreed—"an attack that will end in their defeat. Meanwhile I have no use for European Socialism. It is well-bred and well-trained, like a circus dog. I'll settle my accounts with it later on. A day will come for that. For the present I must deal with the half-wits who follow Plekhanov like sheep. He knows what he is doing. So far he has not put his cards on the table. The others follow him blindly. I can't wait any longer. I must open the eyes of the comrades in the Party and desecrate the Socialist ikons. I must settle this business."

He picked up the *Dawn* and read aloud.

"Look here!" he shouted. "They're calling me a Niechaiev! They don't know me yet although I have been working with them for so many years. What has he in common with me? Class hatred? Faith in our salvation by revolution? The strength to fight? Plekhanov, Kautsky, Bebel, Lafargue—they all have their qualities. Even Chernov and Savinkov have! But Niechaiev was a poor fool who attempted to carry out his mad schemes without a notion where they might lead him. I'm not that type. I meditate for years



upon all I do. I know every stone and every blade of grass on my way. I know every impulse of the Russian soul, which has until now been unknown to the whole world. That is the best proof that they don't understand me."

Krupskaya laughed softly.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Lenin.

"Some time ago I read an article about you—I forget who wrote it—saying that you were the Jesuits' best disciple and that in you were united all the faults and all the talents of Machiavelli, Talleyrand, Napoleon, Bismarck, Bakunin, Blanqui and Niechaiev."

After the Congress, Lenin established a newspaper in Geneva, which was Plekhanov's stronghold, and there he carried on his war against the Mensheviks. After attacking them with abuse and argument for some time, he finally wrote an article which astounded even Nadezhda Konstantinovna. In it he proved that the Mensheviks had sold themselves to the bourgeoisie.

"You must not write like that," she protested. "It is an obvious calumny. Who will believe that Plekhanov, Deich and Tcheidze are corrupt?"

Lenin only laughed. For once he looked at Nadezhda Konstantinovna with such profound scorn that she left the room depressed.

The Socialists did not leave this accusation unnoticed. Lenin was summoned before a Party tribunal, where he appeared calm and nonchalant, although there was mockery in his eyes.

When he was asked whether he intended to spread distrust of the Party at large among working people, he smiled and answered:

"I used the words literally and I intended the workers to take them literally. I meant that you have been bought by the bourgeoisie."

"But that is an abominable charge," exclaimed one of the judges, jumping from his chair.

Lenin surveyed the assembly indifferently.

"When you fight an enemy," he observed, "you must use weapons which will inflame the mob. That is what I did."

"But where are your moral principles?" a judge asked.

"Who ever told you, comrade, that I had principles, or that I believed in morality?"

"Nevertheless, certain ethical principles go on unchanged . . ." began the judge.

Lenin interrupted him fiercely. "Comrade, don't waste words and time. The ideas you mention don't exist for me. My only principle is the Revolution. My only morality is the Revolution. That is all. Ways and means don't matter so long as they are successful."

"Even forgery or 'borrowing' from the police?" a youth in the body of the hall cried out. "What's your reply to that, Comrade Ulyanov?"

"Even that," Lenin answered indulgently, as though to a child. "If you have an engraving of a banknote I will print from it for the sake of the Party and the Revolution. Or if you happen to know a policeman who has money for my paper, the *Proletarian*, it will be very welcome."

In the clamour that followed, Lenin's voice was heard: "Comrades, I have no more to say. I am going. I declare now that your verdict will not tie my hands. I will obey only the needs of the Revolution and the orders of the Bolshevik Party—they are the true Socialists. I will have nothing to do with the lackeys who ingratiate themselves with Liberal forgers and democratic blackmailers."

From that moment his enemies in Geneva did their best to harm him on all occasions. When at last he found that no printer would bring out his paper he decided that it would be better to move on to Paris, where he lived in poverty with his wife. In Russia all the comrades were hiding themselves or surrendering to the inertia of the period. The Socialists were giving up their convictions, or joining the loyal Liberals, lamenting the hopes that were past and declaring that the Russian Revolution would probably never come. Only from distant Paris came a solitary but powerful voice:

"Do not be deceived! Our Revolution is in being, although Mensheviks and other traitors call it a chaos.

We have survived and we are still in revolt, not because the October Manifesto was proclaimed, not because the bourgeois class began to protest against rotten forms of Government, but because an armed rising did, in fact, break out in Moscow and for one month the Council of Workers' Delegates appeared in St. Petersburg as a morning star to the proletariat of the world. It will never fade. The revolutionary fury will soon revive. The Councils of Workers' Delegates will be restored, and they will conquer."

For some, these bold and hopeful words were the last echoes of a dying storm. For others, they were a kind of fireworks display, startling at first but harmless. For others, again (and they were now not many), the words of Lenin were a Gospel of hope to encourage the persecuted followers of a young Faith.

Meanwhile, however, the broken Party was unable to supply its leader and prophet with sufficient funds to keep his wife, Zinoviev and Kamenev. Yet what money they did receive was spent on a paper called the *Social Democrat*, in which the atmosphere was prepared for the moment when the Red flag would be raised once more.

Those were years of starvation and utter misery. Lenin, living on black coffee and stale bread, passed entire days at the Bibliothèque Nationale, where he prepared a series of new books which would later become the inspiration of the revolutionary proletariat. He paid no more heed to the attacks of the Socialists from their various camps. He worked on in devoted and concentrated faith. Even his own wife sometimes questioned whether the working classes could ever achieve the power that he sought for them; and that was an argument which he would take up keenly.

The Mongol Lenin would stand with head outthrust like some beast of prey, his eyes alert, his ears tuned to the whole world.

"The Great War is inevitable," he would declare. "I feel it coming in every fibre of my soul. I hear the rumble of the guns and the tramp of men. Then our time will come. That will be the hour of our battle and of our victory."

Pale and ill, starved and in ragged clothes, he went day by day to the Library, where his feverish energy betrayed a fear that the war would come before he was prepared for it. He, a poor emigrant, had his work to do, collecting and preparing the weapons which would destroy the enemy's citadel.

But after years of heavy oppression the conscience of Russia began to awaken once more. Near the Lena, in Siberia, the exploitation of the capitalists caused a revolt among the workers in the gold-fields. Defenceless men were shot down by the gendarmes, but before the echoes of their shots had died away there was an outcry in the factories, among the intelligentsia, in the Duma, and in the Press, both Russian and foreign.

The Government drew back a step, and at once the revolutionary elements raised their heads. In St. Petersburg and in Moscow extremist papers, *Truth* and *Thought*, took advantage of every loophole in the law. Lenin himself poured out a flood of articles.

He raised again the old hopes in the possibility of the Social Revolution. He derided the parliamentary system, he accused the European Socialists and the Social Democrats of bourgeois loyalty, he declared that only the Russian revolutionary proletariat was strong enough to destroy the old and to build up the new.

In this period of revival the Party demanded that Lenin should live near the Russian frontier, because his advice and leadership were constantly wanted. Leaving Paris, therefore, he came to Prague, where comrades from St. Petersburg and Moscow called on him daily. At once his relations with Russia were strengthened. He united and enlarged the Party, and in a paper called *Truth*, which he managed, he published articles on every conceivable subject. Not the least of his activities was the preparation of speeches for Malinovski, the boldest man among the delegates at the Duma. And when Lenin found that Malinovski was an *agent provocateur* he continued to use him under a threat of instant death.

Lenin was possessed now of an indomitable strength. He neither ate nor slept. He could spare no time for

himself, but received visitors in conference, worked at his desk, and despatched letters and circulars to all parts of the world. He was a leader again. He was preparing the Party for great deeds because he believed that the long-expected hour was at hand.

## CHAPTER XIII

LENIN was walking from Zakopane to his cottage at Poronin, a neighbouring village. He had come there with his wife and Zinoviev from Prague in order to be nearer to the Russian frontier. Every day he walked from Poronin to the post office or to Zakopane, where a few friends of his, both Poles and Russians, were living. There came to him also by various routes (usually across "the green frontier," as the smugglers' track was called) the revolutionaries of the Bolshevik Party to take counsel with their leader. When he had given them instructions, they returned again with his articles and pamphlets sewn into their coats, their caps and their boots, to spread them broadcast over Russia.

As he trudged along with his stick he drank into his lungs the fresh air of the mountains, invigorating after the storm, the distant rumbling of which could still be heard. He had a few kilometres to travel and he thought for a moment that he might borrow a bicycle from a Russian, Vigilov, whose cottage lay on his way, but the idea faded from his mind as he fell into meditation on the events that were taking place around him.

He remembered the inspired words of a Polish poet, thanking him for a work unique in history: he, above all others, was leading the human spirit along the path of progress. He smiled cunningly to himself and muttered: "I will shake the entire world by promising freedom to oppressed nations."

His thoughts ranged further afield, examining at every point the battle-field of his life and noting the disposition of all its forces. Any other man would have sunk into despair, for around him there were only appalling difficulties with which he had to contend. The European War, which he had foretold some years before, had already broken out. He reviewed the position with a

critical appreciation of the fact that all the resources of the European nations were now concentrated for a final settling of accounts.

"Now the imperialistic beasts of prey will slaughter each other," he reflected. The idea amused him and he laughed aloud.

Then his mind turned to Russia. A wave of patriotism, artificially supported by the Press and the Government, was sweeping over the country, so that the revolutionary parties were forced either to keep silence or to hide themselves like rats.

Lenin knew also that the Socialists of Germany and France looked upon him as a madman and a fanatic in his belief in the social revolution. The Mensheviks, headed by Plekhanov, Martov, Dan and Axelrod, were trying to foster division between their followers and the Bolsheviks by a furious campaign against Lenin's "anarchism"; while Trotsky, Yoffe and Yuritsky were attempting to reconcile the two wings. Within the very organisation built up by Lenin there was dissension over policy. Capable men like Lozovsky, Volsky, Bohdanov, Lunacharsky and Alexinsky attacked the Bolshevik centre directed by Lenin, Krupskaya, Kamenev and Zinoviev. It seemed at that moment that everybody had passed over to the camp of the enemy. Lenin asked himself who now remained in his ranks: only three faithful companions who might be hesitating at that moment to make a fateful decision. In addition, there were a few small groups of workers, like islands in a stormy sea. Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin . . . at any rate these would not betray the cause or forget the watchwords of the Party. But what direction would the mass of the workers take: those few millions organised by the Second International and directed by veteran leaders such as Kautsky, Bebel, Plekhanov, Vandervelde, Vaillant, Scheidemann, Lazari? Would this mass, so led astray, heed in the end the call of the revolutionary conscience and of common sense?

Lenin stopped and thought hard. "No," he decided. "I shall not find allies in the West." He laughed and gave a long whistle. "What then?" he asked of the

darkness, "what then? Shall I bend my head in humility, wait for better times, and be silent?"

His laughter grew louder and more mocking. In his mind's eye he looked out over the whole earth from the high mountain pass to which the Polish poet led him. He saw it as he had known it through many years of brooding sorrow and of bitter hatred. It was a world full of weeping and gnashing of teeth. Through innumerable centuries, from the days of the proud emperors seated on the thrones of Assyria and Babylonia, from the days of the mysterious priest-kings, the sons of the Egyptian Ra, the Sun, from the divine rulers of China and on without end, through epochs and dynasties, under conquerors, sages and saints . . . it was a world of perpetual and bloody oppression, of helpless myriads crushed down by a handful of the powerful, the learned and the well-armed.

"Ha! ha! ha!" The mountains looked down upon a lonely man clad in a shiny suit and broken shoes whose harsh laughter echoed up to them.

"Here is my army!" he cried aloud. "My ranks are made up of the men and women who have no rights left to them except the right to be miserable, to cry out in their despair and to grind their teeth in hatred. I am the chosen leader of the illiterate, the sorrowful and the oppressed against the first volley of their enemies. After them will come those who have learnt to suffer in silence. I will use their cold, unfeeling hatred and conquer at their head!"

He smiled softly, almost mildly, as he was wont to do when he knew that he had arranged his plans down to the last detail and was sure of success. He went on his way after glancing indifferently across the starry sky, which was alien and uninteresting to him because it was distant and intangible. Then he took in the ground about him, the dark wall of the mountains, and the windows of the cottages shining on both sides of the road. He could feel the earth with his whole being, his pulse ran with the vibration of the planet, with the rustling and the whispering that rose up from the fields, the forests and the cottages of the poor. All this he understood. His tranquil thoughts and the quiet joy



of his heart were in communion with the material world. Strange indeed is the inscrutable ordering of human events by the eternal mind! At that moment a lonely man walked along a sandy road between far mountain villages, but within his powerful domed skull he held an idea that would soon shake the world. As though he did not exist, the old currents of daily life, of rulership in the palaces, of finance in the banking houses, of faith at the shrines, of knowledge in the rooms of scholars, flowed in their age-long course. No one dreamed that in the quiet places of the Tatras there breathed a man who could proclaim himself a Messiah for all the races of the world, a Christ or an Antichrist. Men and women followed their old paths to the grave, no longer with faith, no longer with hope. They did not hear the footfall of this Mongol with compressed lips and hate-filled eyes who possessed the power of indomitable will.

As Lenin neared Poronin he saw a lonely figure on the road. He went on warily until he saw that it was a young man with a fine, spiritualised face and the shining eyes of an enthusiast. And when they had passed one another the young man spoke.

"I beg your pardon," he called back softly. "Have I the pleasure of meeting Comrade Vladimir Ilyitch Ulyanov Lenin?"

The Russian halted suspiciously, turning round upon the stranger, and ready to defend himself.

"I am Lenin," he replied shortly.

"I have been sent to you, comrade. I came from Russia to-day. I am a member of the Central Committee of Russian Revolutionaries. My name is Selaninov, Michael Pavlovitch Selaninov—my Party alias is Murometz. You see, I trust you entirely. May I ask you, on your side, to trust me, comrade?"

Lenin stood on his guard and was silent.

The stranger smiled slightly and added: "I have no weapons on me. You can search me if you like. I have not come to attack you, but to have a serious and final discussion."

Lenin nodded. "We are quite near my home," he said. "Would you like to drop in?"

"I prefer to talk with you here. In your own home you are not alone."

Lenin shrugged his shoulders. "Just as you like. Shall we sit down?"

They sat upon a heap of stones, but for some time neither of them would speak. Finally, Lenin raised his head and looked inquiringly at the youth.

"Just a moment, please," said the latter, answering the unspoken question. "I have some things to ask you and some demands to make. I want to express myself quite clearly."

"Demands?" repeated Lenin sharply. At that moment he saw clearly why the delegate had been sent to him. But immediately Selaninov asked his first question.

"Do you intend to start the revolution during the war?"

"Yes, I do."

"Do you intend to give all political power into the hands of the working class?"

"Yes, I do."

"Do you intend to give power to the submerged proletariat over the peasant class?"

"Yes, I do. You ought to know that already, for in my articles I have often described the full revolutionary programme of our Party."

"We do know it," replied the youth. "And for that very reason I have been sent by my Party to come to an understanding with you, comrade."

"What do you want?"

"We propose to ally ourselves with you along the whole revolutionary front . . ."

". . . Along the *whole* front?" Lenin's voice had a mocking note. "Have I heard you correctly?"

"Yes," replied Selaninov. "But only until the moment when the victory of the Revolution is achieved."

"But that is comic!" laughed Lenin. "Would you mind explaining to me the whole of your curious problem?"

"That is why I am here," replied the young man in all seriousness. "The Central Committee of the Social Revolutionaries will collaborate with you until the

moment when the dynasty is overthrown, the monarchy abolished, and the land expropriated. It will help you in regulating the conditions of the working proletariat, but it demands that you will not interfere with its policy for the peasant class, which has its own ideals and traditions."

"The traditions of the small bourgeois, who are much worse than the big," Lenin interrupted heatedly. "The peasants are illiterate and passive."

Selaninov looked straight into Lenin's burning eyes and repeated firmly: "The peasantry has its own ideals and class traditions. Our Party has the means to make of those hundred millions of people the most powerful social class to guide the future of Russia."

"I know what you want," said Lenin. "You want a revolt of the peasants and the small bourgeois. You want us to shed our blood for the sake of a new slavery which may be much heavier and more difficult to throw off."

"We will help you to obtain the rule of justice!" exclaimed Selaninov.

"No!" cried Lenin. "Justice will rule only when we establish it—we, the working proletariat!"

"Then you will perish!" whispered the youth. "Sooner or later the elemental power of the people of the earth will sweep you away like dry leaves from a soil not theirs."

"An extremely poetic simile, but not in the least convincing," Lenin sneered openly. "We can cope with one hundred millions of illiterate land-grabbers. *Est modus in rebus, comrade.*"

"A difficult task," smiled Selaninov. "You have not finished your Latin quotation, Vladimir Ilyitch, or perhaps you do not know how it ends. The Roman poet went on: '*sunt certi denique fines, quod ultra citraque nequit consistere rectum!*' What prevails in the end is a love of the soil that has been drenched with your own sweat, comrade. We will surrender our soil to nobody. I speak of that Russian soil ploughed and harrowed by countless generations of our ancestors."

Lenin took him up angrily: "As for us, we will divide those hundred millions of yours into three or four

wings to fight against one another. The great maxim of government is *divide et impera*."

"You will perish," repeated Selaminov emphatically.

"We shall succeed all along the line. Our social revolution will triumph!"

"You will perish!" The voice of the young man was like an insistent echo.

"We shall win!"

"So you don't accept our help on our terms?"

"No! A thousand times no!" shouted Lenin, striking his stick upon the ground; it broke in his hand, and the ironshod point was left sticking upright in the sand.

"Such will be your fate," observed Selaminov. "Your weapons will break and the earth will cover them."

"I don't play at magic, comrade," retorted Lenin indignantly.

"Nevertheless, remember what has happened to your stick, and remember my words."

"Don't pretend to be a prophet or a wizard," Lenin replied with irritation in his voice. Then he added: "Give your comrades my message. Because they have tried to turn me aside from my aims, our Party will string them up. That is what I wish you and Chernov and Savinkov with all my heart."

Lenin turned away and walked towards his home. As he went he heard behind him the ringing voice of the young man:

"You will perish! You and your Party will perish!"

But Lenin was not depressed by the prophecy. "They are afraid of me," he thought. "That is why they send me tempters. Selaminov's visit is a triumph for me."

At his home he found nearly all the comrades and the emissaries who had just come secretly from Russia. The room was full of tobacco-smoke and loud with the angry voices of an excited discussion. As soon as he arrived they rushed forward and surrounded him, all speaking at once.

"Have you seen to-day's *Vorwaerts*, Ilyitch? We have been defeated! The German Social Democrats have decided to vote the war credits through. Lieb-

knecht alone will protest in the Reichstag. No one will support him. It is a calamity, a treason. The German comrades despise the Stuttgart Resolution, which was confirmed at the Bâle Congress!"

Lenin forced his way through the comrades surrounding him, snatched the copy of *Vorwaerts* out of someone's hand, and read the report of the debate in the German Reichstag. He grew terribly pale. He rubbed his forehead, now covered with perspiration, and looked stonily at his friends. At last his face changed and he said with a chuckle:

"It can't be true, that's all. The Nationalists must have published a forged copy of *Vorwaerts*. These imperialist sharks are capable of anything."

For a long time they sat up to discuss this unpleasant news until, just before midnight, a telegram from Berlin was delivered to Lenin. It was from Clara Apfelbaum. When he had read the brief message, Lenin sat for a moment inert and breathing heavily as though his strength had left him. There was no longer any doubt about the news. The parliamentary Socialists of Germany, France and England had decided to vote the war credits.

Dead silence fell upon the room. Everybody was watching Lenin's face, which took on a hue of livid yellow and an expression of the deepest dejection. The piercing eyes were opened wide, the lips were compressed convulsively, the prominent muscles of his jaws and neck moved in a silent rhythm. The Mongol face, a personification of hatred and fury, loomed out of the darkness, while his fingers unceasingly moved here and there, plucking at his thin beard.

At last he stood up abruptly and spoke:

"The Second International is dead!"

The assembly was astonished. It was a blasphemy to speak in that way about the powerful organisation which covered with its ramifications both the Old and the New Worlds. But their astonishment was even greater when their leader and teacher continued:

"We still hold the trump card. We will establish the Third International. That won't betray the proletariat. That won't stab the Social Revolution in the back. We

shall be the makers of it. And now, good-night, comrades. I must write."

For a time he sat at the table lost in thought. Then he took up his pen and wrote till dawn, hurling terrible accusations and abuse at the betrayers of the working class. He invited the workers of all nations to protest against these compromises, these slaves of capital, these base cowards. He held aloft the Red flag of revolt, and his slogan was, "We must create a new International for the final and victorious struggle of the oppressed against their oppressors."

For some days, almost without a pause to eat or sleep, he worked on, writing a Communist manifesto against the war, sending letters to all parts of the world, stirring up consciences, calling for action, and anathematising those leaders who, admired only yesterday, were now become traitors to the cause and enemies of the working masses.

Suddenly one evening, while he was in the midst of these labours, Austrian police and a military patrol forced their way into his cottage. Somebody in the village had laid information against the mysterious Russian as a spy. Lenin's rooms were searched. He himself was arrested and sent to the gaol in Nowy Sacz. More important thoughts absorbed him than the possibilities of personal danger, but in fact his position was now a perilous one. The Austrian military courts did not inquire too closely into the facts when an accusation of espionage had been made. It was well known that, at the beginning of the war, arrests were made on all sides every day of the week and the innocent were shot with the guilty.

Knowing this, the Polish Socialists used every means within their power to have Lenin released at once from prison. They approached the leader of the Austrian Socialists, Victor Adler, who had a long interview with the Prime Minister, Count Sturgkheim. He urged with warmth and eloquence that the imprisonment of the well-known agitator could not but arouse the anger of the Russian workers, who had taken up a passive or an antagonistic attitude towards the war. He pointed out

the innumerable advantages of leaving Lenin free to work for an immediate revolution in Russia.

Adler's arguments were taken to heart by the Minister, who heard now for the first time in his life of the Bolshevik Party and its programme. He passed on the information he had gained to the General Staff and to the German Government. Immediately afterwards an order for the release of Vladimir Ulyanov Lenin came from Vienna.

While these negotiations were being carried on, Lenin remained, brooding profoundly, in his cell, which contained one other prisoner. This man also was a Russian, an ordinary landless peasant, who had come into Austria one year before in order to escape from starvation at home. He told his whole story to Lenin, adding that he had been arrested at the frontier while making his way back to Russia. When he was searched, they found on him a letter with a sketch-map of the military roads and a list of the Austrian regiments garrisoned near the Russian frontier.

"Who gave you the letter?" asked Lenin.

"The steward of the estate on which I worked as a farm hand," replied the simple peasant. "He gave me the letter, to be delivered to a friend of his in Moscow. I didn't know what was in the letter—and now they call me a spy!"

Lenin avoided further conversation with the man. He had more important things to consider than the fate of an illiterate bumpkin; for in his own mind he was arranging the plan of a damaging attack upon the power of the Second International. At last his work was complete down to the smallest detail and he set himself to listen again to the woes of the peasant, who lay stretched out upon his bunk. The poor devil must have felt an irresistible necessity to communicate to another the thoughts which troubled him. He talked incessantly, wandering from one subject to another.

At last the day came when he was taken by an escort to the tribunal. He returned in the evening, calm and curiously cheerful. His eyes shone with an unusual brightness, his features were full of real joy.

"Well, what's your news?" Lenin asked indifferently.

"It's all over," replied the peasant with a spontaneous smile.

"So you're all right, are you? Have they set you free?"

"Why, no." The peasant bent forward and whispered in a kind of triumph. "The verdict was death."

Lenin shuddered and looked up in astonishment at the condemned man, upon whose sunburnt and furrowed face there was not the slightest fear or emotion. He stood erect and combed with his fingers the ruddy beard that fell upon his chest. He smiled and asked softly:

"Do you believe in God? and in the Son of God?"

"I know nothing of God," Lenin replied with a forced laugh. "Still, I can appreciate Jesus of Nazareth because He frightened both the powerful and the weak."

"Nobody can know God. He must be felt. He is hidden deeply in you, brother, very deeply—and man's a powerful creature. It is difficult even for God to penetrate through his skull." He was thoughtful for a moment. Then he added: "It's a good thing that you appreciate Christ. I value that."

"Why?" asked Lenin, wondering inwardly why he continued to discuss ideas that would never enter his own head.

"Because then you can feel the shining glory of God in the most miserable of men. The Son of a poor virgin—her neighbours must have spoken evil of her—and then, suddenly, the Son of God. Nobody knew why He was the Son of God. He Himself could not explain it, yet He believed it. Then others believed it, and now people have gone on believing it for whole centuries. That is all because every man is the Son of God and the brother of Christ."

"And a Saviour to whom people pray when the priests tell them to," interrupted Lenin with an ugly laugh.

"No, dear man, not at all. There was one Saviour. And do you know why?"

"You speak like a scholarly monk," Lenin jeered.

"What sort of a scholarly monk am I?" asked the peasant, raising his arms. "After I lost my farm I



was a tramp for many years. I stayed at monasteries to earn the bread I ate, and I liked to talk with the learned men."

"So they were the fellows who taught you all this Church talk?"

The peasant shook his head. "No, not at all. I learnt the truth from a hermit who lived in the forests by the Kama river."

"Do you belong to a sect?"

"No," said the peasant. "I sought long among them for truth, peace and consolation. I did not find any. They were all humbugs."

"Of course!" exclaimed Lenin. "Still, you have not told me why you consider Christ to be the real Son of God."

The peasant sat on his berth, and leaning his head on his hand, replied: "Because He had the courage to create. It was a divine courage. He created truth in the midst of iniquity. He took His apostles from among poor men, peasants and fishermen. He raised the dead. He laid down the commandment, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.'"

"I don't understand," admitted Lenin, looking at his fellow with interest.

"It's quite simple," he replied, tapping Lenin's shoulder. "Listen! God is God, not because He remains in heaven, Himself within Himself, an almighty, all-knowing and immortal Creator. Not at all. He is God because, together with Him, archangels, angels, wicked spirits and weak creatures carry in themselves power, wisdom and creation. Every one of them has his lot and his destiny, his term of years and his appointed work to do. Christ was the first one and the only one to understand this. He did not think that He alone worked, suffered, rejoiced and wept. He knew that every other man suffered even more and rejoiced even more than Himself, because every other man was weaker than Himself. Christ understood and loved the whore, Mary, Martha, Judas, John the Apostle, and the Roman Emperor. His whole teaching was: 'Judge not.' But he did not add: 'Look into the depths of every heart and soul.'"

"Why didn't He?" asked Lenin.

"Because the time was not yet," whispered the peasant ecstatically. "Mankind had not atoned for Original Sin. Mankind had to pass along the *via dolorosa* trodden by Christ, our Saviour."

As he listened to this strange being, Lenin was reminded of the old vagrant, Xenophon. He smiled softly to himself. His smile encouraged the peasant to talk even more loudly and with greater confidence.

"We must pass through the reign of Antichrist with all its temptations. By God's will he will appear on earth as a second Son of God. His coming will be preceded by crimes, rebellions, plagues and wars. Then the peoples of the nations will give over their enmities. They will join together for their defence like soldiers, choosing leaders, forming companies, banding together in regiments and armies. Such will endure. But those who have not listened to the words of the Saviour will plunge to destruction like the Gadarene swine, and the waters will close over them. And from those who survive will come the Holy City, the heavenly Jerusalem on earth."

"In Holy Russia?" asked Lenin.

"Oh, what does Russia matter when such events are at hand? She is but a grain of sand on the shore, a drop in the sea. Russia may even perish, but we, the nation, will spread the Truth among all nations. It is we who will give them the Truth!"

"We!" laughed Lenin. "The Russian Truth?"

"And what else?" the peasant demanded. "Tell me, who else can give it to them? Other nations live in pride and prosperity, sure in their minds that they are equal in power with the angels of heaven. But no! Only from our gloomy forests, from our steppes, where earth meets heaven, from our smoky cottages, from our prisons, where innocent, ignorant men live in their chains—only from our Russia will come forth the dazzling Truth! We only, the nation of the plough, of the hammer, and of iron fetters, have the courage of creation. *We* have room enough. Our strength is inexhaustible. But our opportunity is too little in our own land. We are workers of the world. Say but the

word and we can construct a palace or a shrine such as the world has not seen before."

He said no more, but looked at Lenin fixedly; and after a time Lenin asked him, without mockery:

"How can you expect the power of creation from illiterates who follow the plough and who live in hovels?"

"Do not fear, dear man! Not only the poor and the illiterate but also the holy and the wise tread our soil. They will teach us, have no doubt of that. God does not exist merely for the sake of miserable worms. He cares also for eagles with broad and powerful wings. One sun, God's truth, shines upon all."

"I haven't seen even the dawn of such a sun, myself," Lenin muttered.

"Maybe you have not. But others have, many a time. . . . Now I have seen it on the last day of my life, and I rejoice that it is so bright. That is my good fortune."

The peasant spoke no more. Lenin observed him carefully. Slowly he grew aware that here was the true picture of the Russian soul, desiring everything or nothing, possessed of a mystical belief that a Heavenly Jerusalem might be founded upon earth; full of a mysterious faith in Russia's mission as a nation, conscious of a great responsibility which made martyrdom something to be eagerly desired, not as a triumph of patriotism or as a satisfaction of personal pride, but as a sacrifice for humanity. The martyr would offer himself as a victim on the altar of divine truth for the sake of all men throughout the world and even in the most distant stars in the sky.

The peasant did not touch the food that was brought in to him. He knelt with his face turned to the east and crossed himself. He prostrated himself, striking with his forehead the planks of his bunk. Soon after midnight the door of the cell swung open. A warder and a soldier took the peasant away. He went with them, silent, composed, unafraid.

For a long time Lenin listened for his return, but he did not come, and in the morning he learned that the sentence of death had been carried out.

"You said, 'Judge not,'" he burst out in a fury.

“ But you yourself have been judged and executed !  
Now I shall judge without mercy or commiseration. I  
shall carry punishment with me in all the strength of  
hatred and of suffering ! ”

The new day brought death to the illiterate boor who  
believed in the creation of the Heavenly City wherein  
men would not judge. And it brought freedom for the  
bold and proud man who burned with the desire to  
punish for the sake of vengeance.

## CHAPTER XIV

"HELLO, Mr. Lenin!"

It was a warm summer afternoon in 1915. Lenin had just left his belongings in a mean part of Zurich and was standing on the shores of the lake, watching the passers-by. He was surveying with contemptuous hatred the throng of well-dressed women, men in whites, and happy children, when a tall, athletic man, an American, dressed in a light suit and a soft hat, called out to him in welcome.

"Hello, Mr. Lenin!" he said, with a frank smile on his sunburnt and handsome face. He shook Lenin warmly by the hand, and his steel-grey eyes lit up as he slapped the Russian on the shoulder.

"Well, are we going?" he asked, filling his pipe.

"Yes," replied Lenin. "To-day I have more time on my hands than usual, Mr. King."

"I don't wonder you hesitate over my name," laughed the American.

"I find it difficult to say, I admit. Some evil spirits must have suggested it to your forefathers. King! Can you imagine it from me?"

The American laughed more heartily. "The old fellows did not foresee that their descendant would have such a revolutionary friend," he chuckled. "Now let us go up to Utokulm."

By the funicular railway they went up to the mountain top and then, from the verandah of the hotel, they looked over the landscape spread before them: at Zurich, a smudge of brown, like a molehill beside the blue lake, the green valley of Limmat, the ranges of glacier-covered heights, the Juras, the mighty Jungfrau, Stockhorn, Rigi and Pilatus, with the Feldberg hardly visible through the mist; far off was the volcanic peak of Hegan, and the clouded mirror of the Lake of Thonne.

"But you yourself have been judge the master-work of  
Now I shall judge without mercy  
shall carry punishment with me hardly appreciate a  
hatred and of suffering said King at last, breaking the

The new everywhere the landscape is cut by railways,  
the horizon is hidden by the smoke of factories, pit-  
heads and power-stations. Every five years I come here  
to get away from the rush of American life. I used to  
bring my sons with me—they must learn to love Nature  
and to understand that her age-long energies are finer  
than all the works of man."

Lenin was smiling enigmatically. When the American  
was silent he said in a mocking tone: "And I, when I  
look at a view like this with all its peace and contentment,  
see over there beyond Thonne the bare plains of Russia,  
the unpeopled mountains, the roads deep in mud along  
which my fellow-men drag themselves in chains. I see  
them now, bending under the Czar's knout, unfree, all  
of them, whether they are going to prison, to church  
or to the tomb. If I had sons and brought them here,  
they would cry out with hatred: 'We want justice, we  
want revenge, we want to live a new life.'"

"Last night I thought over your ideas," replied the  
American seriously. "They made a big impression on  
me, and yet I decided that you were a dreamer after all.  
You want a Utopia. You might as well try to jump from  
Utokulm to Rigi."

Lenin did not answer. He stood with his eyes fixed  
upon the Jungfrau, a dim outline seen through the soft  
haze.

"Let's go up to the very top," suggested King.

Lenin nodded absently. They took a narrow stony  
path through rocky gullies and among the shrubs which  
clung to the crevices and slopes of the mountain.  
Finally they reached the summit and sat down to rest  
upon some stones. Before them was the rugged chain  
of the Albis.

"Yes," said King, continuing the discussion, after he  
had been gazing for a time at the light clouds that  
floated over their heads. "I thought about your idea  
of creating a machine-man and a machine-state. There  
is nothing in it. You will always have outstanding

personalities to deal with, whom you cannot fit into the collective mechanism. If you try to control such people under a system they will destroy the system—or change it, or alter its proportions, even though they don't intend to. They act under the direction of the subconscious will, because they are people who stand out head and shoulders above the mob."

"Then the community will get rid of such heads," answered Lenin calmly. "It must do. Both the power and the right to rule belong to the essential majority."

"But the head would be the head of a genius."

"The mass of the people has a collective genius, and that is sufficient."

King shrugged his shoulders. "History won't bear you out in that," he retorted. "In fact, the genius is nearly always of a profoundly anarchic character. He does not surrender to the rule of the majority. He leads the mass of the people. He is not led by it."

Lenin was silent. King looked at him and continued: "The epoch-making periods in the histories of nations are nothing but the biographies of geniuses in various departments." He drew at his pipe for a moment, and then added: "So far as material things are concerned, America has gone ahead of all other countries by putting herself in the hands of great personalities. We have whole dynasties of men with capabilities akin to genius. And remember that they came from the very lowest, most degraded social classes. That by itself is enough to destroy your argument, Mr. Lenin, when you say that only a permanent bourgeoisie oppresses the weaker members of the community. You don't seem to appreciate the ideas that may spring from the descendants of shepherds, pedlars, grocers, seamen or even confirmed criminals."

Lenin raised his head and listened attentively.

"They transform a desert into cotton-fields," King went on. "They prepare plans and specifications for great dams on the Mississippi and its tributaries. They find out that the fertility of the soil may be increased by means of electricity at high voltages. They dream of replacing farm labourers by tractors, and factory workers by electrical machines; and electricity can

be generated in any quantity by waterfalls or rivers, by the wind or by the waves battering upon the coast. They are convinced that before long they will no longer have to use the coal-mines where men of all races now work like slaves in the sweat of their brows and in continual danger of death. All that will give way to electricity, which supplies heat, light and power. There will be no need of the hordes of workers that exist to-day. Their drudgery will be a thing of the past. Electricity and chemistry will be the nurse and servant of humanity. Moreover, a friend of mine, a chemical engineer like myself, maintains that within fifty years chemistry will supply us with textiles for our suits, with synthetic food, and even, by the help of electricity and biology, with a magic panacea against death. Again, I have met an agricultural expert who has perfected a system of underground farming lest the surface of the earth should grow cooler. Another man, a biologist, is trying to regulate the birth-rate of flies and to control the production of males and females, with the idea of creating geniuses artificially . . . at present among insects and lizards."

Lenin sat enchanted. His eyes, wide open, were filled with fire. He drank in every word. When the American saw how interested the Russian had become, he proceeded to further details.

"There are other fields of practical knowledge in which intensive work is also going on. In our selection of men we take care to acquire those who are most ready to accept and develop scientific doctrines and technical processes. We have formed an army of highly-qualified workers whose professional abilities are in complete harmony with their physiological and psychological impulses. We are even considering the establishment of a special bureau for the rational exploitation of time, so that not a single working moment shall be lost."

"Ah, but that is a brilliant conception!" exclaimed Lenin, full of admiration.

"Brilliant, but dangerous as well, old fellow," remarked King. "You will see what I mean by its being dangerous when you answer a few of my questions. Isn't there a risk that such experiments may produce a man of tremendous intellect who will subordinate every-



body else to his will? And what if his will is bent upon oppression? Again, isn't there a risk that the specialisation of the most capable workers may create the nucleus of a new privileged type which may even widen the gulf between the social classes? It may lead in the end to conflict and revolution. And finally, what shall we do with the millions of ordinary workers, systematically dispossessed by machines both animate and inanimate: the living machines being specialists selected on the basis of strictly scientific tests?"

Lenin did not answer for a long time. His forehead was knit in concentration and his long, narrow eyelids trembled. "The rank and file must remain," he hissed at last. "The surplus machine-men must be slaughtered, and the indispensable ones must be ruled with an iron hand. They must be compelled by violence and terrorism to serve Society as a whole, which will control their produce and distribute it scientifically."

The American laughed ironically. "Do you want to destroy a higher form of civilisation for the sake of a passive and illiterate mob?" he asked. "Do you want to return to the old system of economics?"

"Not at all!" retorted Lenin excitedly. "The proletariat is extremely resourceful in the way of terrorism. It can compel the professional classes to take up progressive work with real energy. Besides that, the proletariat, not unlike an ant-hill, will produce a strictly limited number of specialists of every description: That will be the next work to be undertaken by psychologists and biologists."

King opened his eyes wide with astonishment. "Good God!" he shouted. "You have one foot in the Middle Ages, with all their violence and cruelty, and the other among the fantasies of centuries yet to come. You can't build for the present unless you build on the present."

"We shall see!"

"No, we won't see!" retorted the American.

"The fear of death and a merciless ruler can work miracles, Mr. King."

"Miracles? No! Crimes? Yes!" was the decisive answer. King said it indignantly. Then he got up and

continued to speak, though without looking at Lenin. "I thought you were out for a revolution to shake a materialistic and bourgeois world, and to prepare for the reign of the spirit. I thought that, and I was wrong. All you want is banditry on a world-scale. It is a terrible conception!"

"It is for you, Mr. King!" shouted Lenin, looking up with hatred at the powerful American. "It is for you, though you come to Switzerland for a rest every five years with your pockets stuffed full of dollars! But remember, there are only a million people like you in the whole world. The other seventeen hundred millions haven't got a smart suit like yours. They haven't even got ten dollars for to-morrow. They are the ones who starve, Mr. King. Do you understand? They starve! We have a Russian proverb that says you can't feed a hungry nightingale even with the best of songs. And as for the spirit—the man of dollars dares to tell me of the spirit!"

He laughed with arrogance, his small black eyes fixed balefully upon the tanned and open face of the astonished American. There was no more argument possible. King turned on his heel and made his way down the mountain-path, leaving the Russian hunched up upon a boulder like some black and evil bird.

The Russian gazed down upon the radiating valleys, the small squares of vineyard and field, the shining threads of steel railways, the grey specks of village and hamlet, the crosses and cupolas of Zurich, the calm surface of the lake like a slab of lapis lazuli. He saw nothing. His eyes pierced the mists and clouds which gathered now upon the horizon until they beheld the poor fields of the Russian peasants—the same fields, yet changed immeasurably. There, gigantic tractors rolled along, driven by electricity, replacing the labour of thousands of sweating men and of exhausted horses. Into the Russian heavens rose the smoke of numberless power-stations and of a myriad factories. The windows of neat cottages shone brightly in the evening light, while well-dressed workers with clean hands and quiet faces were coming home to them without haste or pleasure. They were all like one another, all of one

type, in uniform clothing, wearing one expression and using the same gestures. Lenin understood that these figures born out of his imagination were machines endowed with harmonious movements and possessed of a terrible collective power, but deprived of passion. Suddenly the thought passed his mind: "Are these people happy?" And the answer came: "They are a quiet people." He did not hear the clank of chains, the moaning chorus of weary serfs, the whining arguments of priests, the superstitious bells. In the squares of towns and villages where once churches stood there were now theatres, museums and schools. Every sight and sound was gone that had once filled his soul with hatred.

Suddenly he pulled himself together. A group of tourists passed by, talking loudly. He caught a broken sentence: "The Socialists proved to be good patriots after all . . ." So that was all his vision came to! He felt the uncompromising truth looking straight into his own dark and piercing eyes.

He jumped up and hurried as quickly as he could down to the station so that he might be in Zurich as soon as possible. He wanted to write, he wanted to call upon humanity to fight for what had been taken away from it by the rich and powerful. He wanted to avenge the worn-out bodies of millions upon millions of men who worked by the sweat of their brow without rest or hope. "I bring you freedom," he whispered passionately to himself. "Follow me and the word of hope will become flesh." It was one of the crises in his life, his confirmation in hatred and in love.

From that day he worked with even greater intensity, until he found himself tired and in need of a change. Moreover, he found it necessary to disappear for a time from the sight of the Swiss authorities, for on coming into the country he had signed an undertaking not to disturb the public peace, and although he had not disturbed it physically, his polemical articles, printed in the Socialist papers, irritated public opinion and aroused the suspicions of the Government. He was watched at every step, and he could not be sure how far the influence of Russia's political agents or of her 'Allies'

agents might extend. He decided to leave Switzerland and to accept an invitation from Maxim Gorki, the Russian novelist, who was living at Capri. So, having made a secret arrangement with the Italian Socialists Nitti and Serrati, he left Zurich by stealth.

He found Gorki ill and depressed. The gigantic, clumsy man, in whose face the coarse and blunt features contrasted strangely with the thoughtful, straight-forward eyes, welcomed with enthusiasm his small and volatile friend, Vladimir Ilyitch. Lenin stood with his hands in his trousers pockets, examining the novelist with a critical eye and discussing his appearance half-aloud.

"A bad business! A very bad business! Muddy complexion, heavy eyes, pale lips, not a spark of animation! What does it all mean? Talent is so rare that it deserves very careful treatment when it appears. Now here I go, talking and talking, while he just listens and eats like the cat in the fairy tale. Swallowing pills, too, though how he can stomach the things I don't know."

The two men laughed together in friendship.

They spent days after that in the boat of an old fisherman, Giovanni Spadaro, floating on the calm waters of the azure sea while they talked softly of everything and nothing, as true Russians alone can do, threading together into one pattern a shifting variety of thoughts and impressions. Yet always some chance remark brought Lenin back to reality. Then his eyes set and the whole fine picture of white-sailed boats on the sunlit sea against the rocks of Capri faded from his mind. He saw instead the comrades searching in a panic for their leader, or the mobs upon the streets in Russia, armed and angry for the attack. Then Gorki, almost in tears, spoke of Russia's terrible defeats in the field and of the countless peasants falling before the German rifles.

"Think of the tears now flowing in our villages," he said, wringing his hands. "Think of the despair in every cottage of our land!"

Then Lenin looked at him with unsoftened eyes and answered: "Let it be so. There are too many crowded

together in those cottages. There are enough for a hundred wars. What now if famine comes to wipe them out? Revolution will swell up like a boil and burst when it is touched. The blood of our workers and peasants flows to-day, but we will shed a sea of blood from the veins of our enemies and murderers."

The old fisherman, who was attracted by Lenin's cheery laugh, listened at such moments with foreboding to the muffled anger of his voice.

"But that is terrible," protested Gorki. "A revolution made possible by a hecatomb of innocents! No! No!"

Lenin replied, with his Mongol eyebrows sternly knit: "Only a fool fears to dirty his sword once he has it in his hand and knows a use for it! Believe me, Alexis Maximovitch, the revolution cannot have too many victims. Remember, we are the sons of one rebellion. May our enemies help us to start another that will tower over the world like a wave of blood."

"You are true! It is a terrible truth!" whispered the novelist.

"Terrible!" laughed Lenin. "Is that a word for you to use, Maxim Gorki?—you who sprang from the lowest and most ignorant class in the community, you who understand the soul of a homeless river-man, of a prostitute, of a peasant or worker in whose brain the thought of revolution is beginning to simmer. Shame on you! We live in an Iron Age, and our work is not to pat people on the head. Our hands must fall heavily, smashing men's skulls and pulping their bones without mercy." He paused for a moment and then continued: "Our supreme end is to finish with violence for ever. A difficult task! We can only accomplish it by means of violence and oppression. There is no other way, for man cannot produce ideals capable of realisation once and for all. It took centuries of serfdom to create rebellion. It will take decades of a new oppression to produce a true liberty which will be a true equality."

Gorki made no reply at all. He did not want to provoke the bitterness in the heart of his friend who was speaking with such obvious conviction. The novelist knew that Lenin was not addressing

giant of thoughts and emotions, but the downtrodden mob which dreamt of equality.

Soon afterwards Lenin had a letter from his wife Krupskaya, to inform him of a Socialist Congress which would shortly be held in Switzerland. Without a moment's delay he said farewell to Gorki and returned to Zurich. From there he went to Zimmerwald and to Kienthal, where he argued fiercely with the leading Socialists of Europe. He fought them unscrupulously, vilifying them, setting them in the pillory as the objects of abuse and derision, destroying their high reputations, and inflaming the anger of the rank and file against them. He accused them of treason and of cowardice. He cursed them publicly. He distorted their words without the least compunction. At the same time he took care to make his own invective simple and clean-cut. His logic went home like a sword; and he repeated over and over again the main ideas of a speech. The audience had to accept his conclusions, for he gave them no choice. He spoke in a harsh, low voice, without a trace of pathos, but he accented it with the movements of his hands, of his head, of his entire body, with the expression of his face, in turn menacing, friendly and ironical, or with the compelling changes in his eyes. Step by step he fought his way through the ranks of his opponents, dispersing the leaders and winning the followers over to his side.

Next he impressed upon his supporters the formula that the imperialistic war had to be transformed into a civil war against the Governments of the day and the Capitalist system. Fearless of the accusation that he was betraying his country, he declared arrogantly that Russia might perish if only the Social Revolution were achieved; and in that crisis Lenin laid the foundations of the Third International.

He had clarified in his mind the thoughts that came from the peaks of Utokulm, and now he drove them into the minds of the Internationalists gathered around him, with all the arts of oratory that he possessed: said, is too stupid to be sufficient unto himself. It every

Then matter whether there are ten or a million of answered. The fools can only be a herd. Democracy and

Liberty are the shameless catchwords or the stupid prejudices of the bourgeoisie. The best form of government for the human race is an unhampered despotism, exercised not for the benefit of the oppressors but for the sake of the oppressed, and approved of by them."

The men who listened to Lenin's words were the most miserable of outcasts, men who had only bread to live on. Breathing revenge, inspired by hatred, their eyes shone and their fists were clenched as they repeated the words of this terrible gospel, "The unhampered despotism of the oppressed." The prophet of violence for the sake of love was followed more and more by the disciples of rebellion, destruction, blood and madness.

In 1917 came the thunderbolt. Suddenly the news spread along the shores of the blue Lake of Zurich that the Revolution had broken out in Russia.

"The Czar has abdicated."

Lenin read the message and repeated again and again :

"My day has come."

At once he looked about for a way to reach Russia. There were difficulties on every side and, moreover, after his speech at Zimmerwald he knew that he would be in danger from the Governments allied with Russia, or even from the agents of Russia herself. His best way was to go through Germany and Sweden. There was only one thing to do, and although he was well aware that he would be overwhelmed by accusations of high treason, he accepted the risk for the sake of the Revolution.

## CHAPTER XV

THE Swiss Internationalists, Platten, Pannekoek and Henriette Roland-Holstein, communicated with Liebknecht, who obtained a permit for Lenin, Krupskaya, Zinoviev, Bukovsky and others to cross German territory.

Lenin entered a German railway carriage on the Swiss frontier to begin his journey, after reaching an understanding with foreign Socialists and with his own followers as to his policies. For he was still afraid that the comrades of the Party would disagree with his decision. To avert a rupture in the Party he invited the Internationalists of all countries to Berne to sign a protocol stating the aims and the conditions of the journey to be undertaken by Russian Communists through Germany. At the same time he addressed to the Swiss workers a personal letter explaining his policy towards the Revolution and expressing his abhorrence of all imperialistic Governments, including the Governments of Germany and Austria.

In Berlin, Scheidemann, Noske, Ledebour and other opportunists expressed a wish to meet the leader of the Russian proletariat. But when Lenin heard this he jumped from his seat and shouted to his companions: "Tell the traitors that they may come in here if they want me to hit them!"

He was pale and furious. No one of the German Socialists braved the anger of the little man with the broad shoulders and piercing Mongol eyes.



## CHAPTER XVI

VLADIMIR LENIN, alone and cautious, made journeys of exploration all over Petrograd, noting every detail, catching up broken scraps of conversation, reading the faces of the passers-by. He was everywhere at once. He used to stand for hours in the long queues which besieged the grocery shops, and there he made cunning use of his opportunity to rouse discontent among the people. He mixed with visitors to the military hospitals where lay the broken soldiers carried home from the broken armies at the front. He talked with peasants who despaired of their crops, for the young men had been taken away and only the old were left upon the land. He prophesied an immediate famine. He reckoned the losses of the army at 3,000,000 men—killed in defence of the rich and of the nobility. With working women calling on their wounded sons he spoke about the ideals and slogans of the Bolsheviki, and he filled the harassed women of the middle class with the story of a new German gun capable of wiping out whole regiments with gas-shells. Another of the rumours set about by him was that the High Command had been bribed by the enemy.

"We Russians were not prepared for the war," he declared. "We must put an end to the tyranny we suffer under. We must compel the Government to stop the war, or we shall be drowned in our own blood."

"Oh, what's to be done?" asked an old woman wringing her hands.

"There is only one thing to be done altogether," Lenin into her ear. "The whole nation take him more take power into its own hands. If you join us! We shall build up a new reign of justice!"

"But what if the people refuse during a Revolution?"

"Then we must do it all ourselves after we make peace with the Germans. We have too much work to do at home to go on fighting with them."

"Yes, but when the Germans see Russia defeated they may rob us of our valuable provinces."

Lenin brushed the objection away with impatience and hissed: "What does Russia matter to us? We must fend for ourselves!"

"Ah, you traitor!" cried the old woman. "I know what you are now—one of Lenin's gang! A follower of that thief!"

A crowd collected around them at once. Lenin saw the danger of his position, and edging his way through them, he hid in the gateway of a neighbouring house. But not long afterwards he was spreading among the soldiers loafing outside their barracks the rumour that the Provisional Government was going to destroy the fruits of the Revolution by setting up a new Czar.

Within a few weeks Lenin knew all the cross-currents in Russian affairs. In the rooms of one of the comrades he walked up and down, discussed the whole situation, drew final conclusions, and rubbed his hands in satisfaction.

"Tell our friend Zinoviev," he ordered Krupskaya, "to summon all the responsible comrades to a meeting. I must give them a plan of campaign." And that evening he addressed them in a voice that showed no sign of the excitement raging within him.

"I have worked out our programme," he said. "It is quite simple and it can't go wrong. We must have agitators everywhere—in the army, in the streets, in the Councils of Soldiers' and Workers' Delegates and in the factories. The army must be rotted from within otherwise the line regiments will slaughter us. Everywhere the cry must be raised that the Bolsheviks Socialists demand for an immediate peace—that is the only way to broad the soldiers and the peasants. Whenever the and the loyal Socialists issue an order we way beyond it, demand more radical analyse their authority. That's all for continue to flood the towns with leaflets, as we've done up to now. ag units and arm ourselves as

quickly as possible. Remember, we must be ready to take full control of the situation at any moment."

Just as a spider weaves its web between the branches of a tree, so Lenin threw out the invisible network of his plot, and his agents, directed by Trotsky, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Lunacharsky, Steklov and Bukharin, spread further and further the Bolshevik influence. But the man in whose name these things were done remained in the shadow, hidden from human eyes, a small, inscrutable Mongol, with sharp and steady eyes. He hid like a spider awaiting its victim, ready at any moment for a swift attack.

He was the master of events. The bourgeois Ministers surrendered their portfolios one after another, depressed and hopeless. They were succeeded by a small lawyer of great ambitions, Alexander Kerensky, who aspired to be a Napoleon while he pretended to be a follower of the Zimmerwald formula. His efforts were in vain. Though he invited men of all types to join his Government, from a millionaire to a convict just released from prison, he could not satisfy the daily increasing demands of the army and of the mob, whose idol he wanted to be. In his mad efforts to gain popularity he destroyed the army with his own hands, drove out experienced politicians, and prepared the way for the Bolsheviks.

Rapacious instincts awoke in the mob until there seemed no way to satisfy them. Then Kerensky flung down his last cards upon the table: the whole military command was given over to the Soldiers' Council and capital punishment was abolished even for the crimes of desertion and treason.

Lenin was delighted when the news came to him.

"Hurrah!" he shouted. "The demagogue is done for! We have him! The army will soon be on our side, for now it is nothing but an armed, irresponsible mob."

"But he has abolished the death penalty altogether," observed Krupskaya. "That may make him more popular."

"Not a bit of it," laughed Lenin. "It is a sign that he has lost his grip. How can you afford to throw away a weapon like the death penalty during a Revolution?"

It shows weakness, cowardice, stupidity. That is the very weapon we'll pick up first when the Party comes into the open."

In the Councils of Soldiers' and Workers' Delegates an increasingly bitter struggle went on between the Social Democrats, the peasants and the Bolsheviks, who would not allow the Councils to support the Government or its policies. Meanwhile famine and disorder spread over Russia.

At last one day in the beginning of July Lenin summoned the comrades to another meeting.

"Now, comrades, shall we come out in the open, armed, and fight for power?" he asked them in measured tones. "Are you ready?"

A deep silence fell upon the room. Everybody knew that the words had been uttered that would decide the fate of the Revolution, of the Party and of the small group of the conspirators themselves.

"Yes! Let us begin!"

It was a bold voice that rang out, the voice of Stalin, a Georgian, and a man who had made his mark as an organiser of fighting units. But a number of protests were heard against a bold line of action, and after a protracted argument it was decided to postpone an armed rising for a time. They knew that the Council of Workers' Delegates could still keep back the mob; at the front there were regiments faithful to the Government; and the provinces were not yet sufficiently saturated with Bolshevik propaganda. Moreover, the countryside, the puzzling Russian countryside where God ranged with the devil, where martyred patience existed together with elemental passion, had not declared itself for either side.

But the work of the agitators was not wasted, for the mobs in the cities, grown beyond the bounds of discipline and crazy with hunger, appeared on the streets with weapons in their hands. The Bolsheviks immediately placed themselves at their head, but the attempt was a failure. The Government and the Council still had sufficient strength to quell the outbreak and to arrest the Bolshevik leaders; although "Alexander IV" (as Trotsky dubbed Kerensky when he took up his

residence in the Winter Palace) did not have the satisfaction of imprisoning the man whose name was for him the writing on the wall. Lenin and Zinoviev disappeared utterly. Kerensky and the leaders of the Council, Tseretelli, Chernov and Savinkov, sought them in vain. An enormous reward was offered for the discovery and arrest of these traitors, but it went unclaimed; no one knew where the leader of the proletariat had taken refuge.

Kerensky enjoyed a brief triumph, which he used to make high-flown speeches and to create a dictatorship over Russia, until he found that his rival's articles appeared in the papers nearly every day as usual. Then he began to panic again, so that none knew from hour to hour what he would do next. He proposed a military dictatorship under General Kornilov; a day later he betrayed the General, proclaimed him an enemy of the country, and all but outlawed him. He declared a new offensive against the Germans and swore that Russia would honour her obligations to the Allies until victory came; but at the same time he was demoralising the army by intrigues and betrayals, and by flattering the soldiers with lavish promises which he could not fulfil. He consulted with foreign Governments about strengthening the front, and at the same time convoked "the Democratic Council," which consisted entirely of notorious peace-mongers. He fulminated against every sign of rebellion and indiscipline without knowing that when his time came he would be defended only by cadets, by youths enraptured with his stale democratic phraseology, and by a battalion of women under the command of Madame Bochkarova.

Kerensky was as ignorant of the real situation as he was of his own resources, which he magnified when he found himself sitting in the Czar's study. But there was another who knew every possible detail. He paced about the attic of a house owned by a worker named Emilyanov near the Razilov railway station, not far from Petrograd. With every fresh piece of news he became more cheerful and he talked freely to comrades Emilyanov and Alilneva.

"There is a fable by old Krilov," he said, "about a

zealous fool being more dangerous than a foe. The bourgeoisie may apply it to Kerensky. 'Alexander IV' has been our best ally. He allowed us into Russia. He destroyed the army and made himself obnoxious to the people. Now we can go in and take away his power with our bare hands. There is no longer a Government. At most we have only to shoot down a few of the braver Mensheviks with a machine gun, but that won't take long."

"We must wait a bit yet, Vladimir Ilyitch. They say that the Generals are on the move. They'll set the Cossacks on us and create a few officers' battalions. Our time has not come."

"You're right," laughed Lenin. "I'm in no hurry, because I know that every day things go better for us. Our enemies will tear each other to pieces."

He continued to write letters, articles and leaflets, to spread a feeling of hatred, to organise the propagation of rumours. He accused the Government and the Socialists who supported it of imperialistic tendencies. He secretly recruited and armed his revolutionary forces. He insisted upon immediate peace in Europe, without annexation or indemnity. He demanded plenary powers for the Councils of Workers, Soldiers and Peasant Delegates.

Before long the Mensheviks discovered the unpleasant truth that the revolutionary spirit was growing among the factory workers, so they extended their inquiries and found clue after clue leading always to the hiding-place of Lenin.

Warned in time, Lenin left Razilov and went to Finland. On his way he halted at Vyborg and incited a massacre of the officers in the local garrison, which was echoed later in the massacre at Kronstadt, where the sailors, having cut the throats of their officers, captured the fortress and the whole Baltic Fleet. So Lenin left behind him a spoor of blood—and then suddenly it stopped. He had disappeared as if the ground had swallowed him up.

He was staying in Helsingfors at the house of the Police Superintendent Rovio, who was an adherent of Bolshevism and an admirer of its author. Close contact

was soon re-established between Lenin and Petrograd under the direction of a Finn who arranged the avenues of communication. The same man soon smuggled Lenin back to Vyborg disguised as Constantine Ivanov, a compositor. Aided by Smilga, Lenin prepared the Finnish regiments and the Baltic Fleet for battle against the Government's troops. He spread discontent among the Russian soldiers who guarded the frontier, negotiated with the old Wing of the Social Revolutionaries, and developed a tremendous campaign of propaganda in the countryside.

Most of all Lenin feared Kornilov, who wanted to save Russia by awakening the spirit of patriotism among her people. That was a danger which Lenin knew it would be difficult to overcome.

"How can we overcome him?" the revolutionary was always asking himself. "He is a professional soldier, an energetic and capable general. How can we oppose him when we have not a single officer on our side?"

Day and night this problem was running through his mind. He could neither eat nor sleep. The upshot of it was that he became obsessed, and one morning he even accosted a Colonel of the General Staff whom he met, surrounded by a Cossack bodyguard, in the streets of Vyborg.

"Comrade Colonel," he shouted, "come over to the side of the workers, who are bound to win sooner or later. If you don't join us you'll die on a rope or under our rifle-butts. But if you accept my proposal you will be made Commander-in-Chief of our armed forces."

"How dare you address me like that?" thundered the indignant officer. He nodded to the Cossacks. "Arrest the fellow," he said. "Take him for trial."

The Cossacks surrounded Lenin, who saw now the danger in which he had placed himself. He bit his lip and looked about for assistance. At the end of the street he noticed a group of soldiers, the very men who, two months before, had slaughtered their officers. In various stages of drunkenness, their uniforms unbuttoned, their caps on the backs of their heads, they walked about the town singing, swearing, and eating the sun-

flower seeds known in those days as "nuts of the Revolution." Some of them were looking now at the Colonel and his bodyguard.

Suddenly Lenin raised his arms and shouted: "Cossacks to the right! This bourgeois Colonel, the blood-sucker, stayed safely on the Staff and drove us to death! He arrested me for refusing to tell where our Ilyitch, Lenin, has hid himself."

In a moment soldiers were running upon them from all directions. The Cossacks, hopelessly outnumbered, fled in fear of their lives. The Colonel fumbled for the revolver in its holster, but before he could draw it he was struck on the head with a stone. He fell, pounded to death by the fists and boots of the soldiers.

Lenin looked back from a distance at the curbs surrounding a heap of bloody rags upon the pavement. "Even his mother would not recognise the work of this Colonel now," he said to himself with a satisfied smile. "Well, he has been paid in full by the soldiers of the Russian Revolution."

He made up his mind to write at once to Petrograd, warning the comrades against consultations, meetings, congresses, and nonsense of that sort.

"The Revolution needs only one thing now," he decided. "It needs men with arms in their hands—armed men!"

As he hurried home a rifle-shot, followed by the shouts of angry men, sounded in a side street. He peered cautiously round a corner. A crowd of people was dragging something along the pavement, beating it and cuffing it as they went. It was the body of a man. The head struck against the stones of the street and left behind it a trail of blood. The mob rushed by him, and he saw that they had the body of a young officer.

In that moment Lenin saw the judgment of the people after centuries of serfdom and oppression. He heard also in his ears the voice of the peasant in the Austrian prison: "Judge not."

"Now is the time for you to judge and for you to pass sentence, comrades," he muttered as he watched them.

"Long live the Social Revolution!" he cried aloud.



**"Long live the Councils of Soldiers' and Workers' Delegates!"**

**"Long live the Revolution!"** cried the mob, still sporting with the body of their victim.

Above their heads the bell of a church tower rang out, calling the faithful to the worship of God. Lenin looked up at it ironically.

**"Well, where is your gospel of love?"** he asked. **"Will you oppose us now? No, you will be silent, for we bear witness to the truth."**

## CHAPTER XVII

THE darkness of a November night was creeping over Petrograd. A strong frost gripped the deserted streets, lit faintly here and there by the lamps which had survived the bloody days of July and the outbreaks of the succeeding months. Along the Neva Prospect the cheerless windows of houses and of shops were roughly boarded up with planks.

Snow began to fall.

The street was deserted, but it was not inactive. Every now and then the pale face of a soldier or of a policeman could be seen peering from the deep gateway of a house, a bayonet gleamed for a moment in the light, or there was the metallic thud of a rifle grounded upon the stones. It was a living silence, a desert full of eyes.

Suddenly, along the Moyka embankment, a gate was flung open with a crash. The footsteps of a man walking quickly were flung back in echo after echo by the high houses of the street. The man, with the peak of his cap pulled over his eyes and his coat collar turned up to hide his face, appeared on the Neva Prospect and turned up Morskaya Street to the arch leading into the Winter Square. Under the great arch his footsteps rang out even more loudly, like the beating of a great drum. When he saw the Winter Palace and the tall silhouette of the Alexander Column before him, he made to cross the square towards the Vassiliev Ostrov.

At that moment shots rang out from the white Admiralty building. Bullets smacked upon the wall near him, breaking off the plaster, which dropped upon the snow-filmed pavement. The man staggered and fell.

"Ha! ha!" The laugh came from behind the granite pillars of the arch. "The demagogue, Kerensky, fears for his skin. But this shows there are still people

left to defend the Palace and the 'Play-boy of the Revolution.' What do you think, Comrade Antonov-Ovshenko? What will happen to-morrow?"

It was Lenin who spoke. His companion, a tall, lean man, dressed in a military greatcoat, shrugged his shoulders and replied: "I've told you my opinion, Vladimir Ilyitch. Petrograd will be in your hands by to-morrow night. For two days I have been going from factory to factory, and from barracks to barracks. At a word from Lenin 40,000 armed workers will be in the streets. They will be joined by the Pavlovsky and the Preobrajensky regiments. It all depends on you now."

"I am ready," hissed Lenin. His Mongol face was set. "I am ready. They are the ones who delay."

"Who?" asked Antonov. "Zinoviev? Kamenev?"

"Yes. Those two and some others, besides the youngsters, who are not confident of victory. I must persuade them. It is a betrayal of the proletariat to take the risk without believing in the triumph of our cause."

"But you must not draw back!" exclaimed Antonov.

"In your articles you fixed once and for all the date when the Communists would fight for power. It is too late to go back on it."

"I am not going back on it," laughed Lenin. "What I want is a universal enthusiasm and a maximum effort."

"If you lift your little finger, Vladimir Ilyitch, there will not be a single objector left. If you asked me I would kill off the whole Central Committee of the Party and the Council of Soldiers' and Workers' Delegates."

A third man hidden in the darkness muttered some remark to himself.

"What's the matter, Comrade Khalainen?" asked Lenin.

Khalainen replied in broken Russian: "You know the Finnish revolutionaries who protect you? You know what they will do for you? Give us any order and we carry it out. Nobody will dare to oppose you." He stiffened himself in the darkness and stood, rigid, like a young oak tree.

Lenin laughed softly. "We shall see," he whispered. "We shall see to-night. Now let us go."

Quite openly they entered the Neva Prospect and walked along discussing everyday matters. Near the Anitchkov Palace they were stopped by a patrol to have their identity cards examined, but no questions were asked because they were described as secretaries to the Council, returning from the Winter Palace, where the Provisional Government was then lodged. Further on, near the Ligovka, they noticed military patrols in front of the station, and in the gateways of the houses there were watchful groups of soldiers or of civilians dressed in military greatcoats.

As they moved on towards the Crimean Palace they found more and more soldiers concealed in dark alleys and at the corners of streets. More and more people, singly and in crowds, moved towards the Ligovka and Znamienska Square. The distant suburbs were pouring out into Petrograd these menacing shapes which slipped eerily through the streets.

"The vanguard of the Proletarian Revolution," whispered Lenin, rubbing his hands. "They won't betray us."

"No, they won't," agreed Antonov. "And there are more of them closing in on the Post Office, the Fortress and the State Bank."

They walked on quickly in silence until they reached a large, well-lit building surrounded by a large garden. They went in and entered a room filled with workers, soldiers and students. They were recognised at once. A whisper of astonishment went through the room: "Vladimir Lenin. Kerensky has ordered his arrest. Our Lenin does not know what fear is."

Meanwhile the three companions made their way through the motley assembly to the presidential table, which stood upon a dais at the end of the room. Lenin mounted the dais, snatched off his cap and crumpled it in his hand. There was a general silence. He began to speak in a voice that was full of brutal passion. His ideas were hard and uncompromising. His staccato phrases, sometimes cut short in the middle of a word, were in defiance of any rhetorical art. But it was a speech full of internal power, of indomitable conviction, of an almost insane fluency and hatred and blasphemy.

His bald skull gleamed in the dimly-lit smoke-filled room, his fists rose and fell like hammers upon the table. His eyes flashed with fire. They swept here and there, taking in every detail, examined every face, quelled every objector, threatened and appraised. The speech was long, but Lenin only repeated again and again the one train of argument, as though he were hammering nails home into wood. Now was the time for action, he said. To delay any longer would be a treason in the face of revolution. The rebellion of armed forces had to begin at once. The Government of Russia at that moment had neither intelligence nor a policy, neither forces nor resources. It would surrender inevitably. And peace with Germany would be proposed immediately, the land would be distributed among the peasants, the factories given to the toiling masses. The choice had to be made at once between the victory of revolution and the victory of reaction. The victory of revolution was assured only if the rising took place at once. Delay was a crime. Delay was treason. Only two or three days of fighting were needed for a complete victory.

"Long live the Social Revolution!" he cried. "Long live the Dictatorship of the Proletariat!"

A storm of shouts and cheers broke out. Workers and soldiers swarmed around Lenin, jostling him with enthusiasm. In the wild turmoil that ensued only a few voices were raised to call him a madman and a visionary, and they were silenced.

Suddenly a gigantic sailor jumped up on the dais and thundered in a voice that drowned the tumult: "The *Aurora*, the cruiser that has declared for Comrade Lenin, has dropped anchor in the Neva. Her guns are trained on the Fortress and the Winter Palace. They need only the command to open fire."

A wave of indescribable enthusiasm flooded over the whole room. Even the men who had just protested against Lenin shouted now in hysterical excitement: "Long live the Revolution! Long live the Dictatorship of the Revolution!"

Lenin banged the table with his fist and held up the cap in his hand for silence.

"Comrades! At dawn you must be in the places of

danger, leading the ranks of the revolutionary vanguard!"

"Long live Lenin!" An eager mob at once began to leave the room, crowding at the doorway, scuffling to be gone. Others crowded around the table where Trotsky was bending with pale face and compressed mouth over a map of Petrograd. He looked a sinister figure, with his black, dishevelled hair and his hook nose; yet he was given an odd after-effect of benevolence by the thick glasses which gleamed in the light.

"Yes, Comrade Trotsky is right," said Ensign Krylenko and the huge sailor, Dybienko, in chorus, looking at the map.

Lenin spoke: "Send a wire to Comrade Muraviev telling him to start the hurdy-gurdy in Moscow."

"The wire is ready," replied Trotsky. "Comrade Volodarsky will see that it goes from the telegraph office."

"Can I get past the Government censors all right?" asked the young student.

"The telegraph has been in our hands since noon," said Antonov. "The censors have joined us."

"Good for you!" said Lenin with a hearty laugh. Suddenly he became grave and nodded to Antonov.

"Go now, comrade. You must see that nobody has a chance to draw back at the last moment."

Antonov left the hall. Lenin sat by himself without joining the discussions of the mob-leaders who would carry the proletariat to victory or death in the morning. He took out a pocket-book and began to write. Trotsky came over and watched him.

"I am writing an article, something on the lines of our manifesto. It will serve as a preparation for the order," said Lenin in answer to the silent query. "Do what you can to get it into the papers to-morrow."

"I shall surround the *Pravda* offices with a battalion of the Pavlovsky regiment. The paper will come out with your article."

"Not bad," said Lenin. "Not bad, if you can't do it otherwise."

When the article was finished he handed the slips to Trotsky. Then he touched him confidentially on the

shoulder and asked: "What shall we call our Ministers? We must have another name for them. The word Minister is old and hated—Minister Pleve, Minister Goremeykin, Minister Kerensky. To hell with all that! But what is the alternative?"

"Well . . . why not People's Commissars?" suggested Trotsky after a moment's deliberation.

"People's Commissars," muttered Lenin. "People's Commissars. Not bad. It smacks of revolution right enough. Yes, it's definitely good. We will have it." He smiled again. "Now another point. I have just written an article asking whether our proletariat will keep the power they seize. That they will seize power is now quite certain. But you must explain to the masses how to keep it."

"That is a question for another day," replied Trotsky. "First you must get power. After that—"

Lenin frowned and there was anger in his narrow eyes. "After that be damned!" he rapped out. "We can't afford to put anything off. We must do everything at once—and I know what to do. But I'm not certain of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. There are a lot of compromisers there. They may get sentimental and take up bourgeois loyalty again. I saw all this when I was in exile. I know the Russian people from head to foot. On the surface there is utopianism and weakness of will. But way down beneath that are mighty forces unused and unawakened. Our task is to awake those forces, and that can be done. We know how to do it."

Trotsky looked up questioningly.

"How did we get where we are to-night?" continued Lenin. "By understanding the silent instincts of the masses and by using them. They are tired of the war, so our slogan is Peace. The peasants hate to be taken from their ploughs, so we demand the land for the peasants. They will come over to us, body and soul. The workers, deceived more than once by the Social Democrats, join our ranks at once when they see our banner: 'The Control of Production and Work by the Workers.' Now we shall give them even more."

"What about the bourgeois and the intellectuals?"

inquired an old bearded worker who had drifted over to them.

"They must perish, comrade! The victorious proletariat will do away with that whole class!"

"At last the hour of revenge is at hand," shouted the worker. "For the misery of my whole life, for the prostitution of my daughter, for . . ."

Lenin came up to him and laid a hand on his shoulder. He stared fixedly into the man's eyes and whispered between his teeth: "Comrade, you will have revenge without stint for every jot of your sufferings. I give you leave. What is your name?"

"Peter Bogomolov. I am a blacksmith at the Obukhovo factory."

"Comrade Bogomolov, remind me of this discussion when we are in power. I shall give you the opportunity for revenge. And your daughter may have her revenge as well. Bring her to see me. The punishment of her shame will fall upon the enemies of the proletariat."

At that moment the heavy thud of gunfire shook the windows of the room. The men were frozen into silence. It was possible almost to hear the beating of their hearts. Then rifle shots rang out from every direction. They blended into volleys and then died down. Far away a machine gun chattered once and again. A searchlight swept the sky with its white ray. Immediately afterwards a gun boomed. The window-panes rattled again. The electric lamp on the table flickered and went out.

"The *Aurora!*" shouted Zinoviev. "She is bombarding the Fortress."

"We have begun," sighed Lenin. He stretched himself taut, with his thick lips eagerly opened like a beast of prey.

"We have begun," replied the men at the table in a whisper.

"May we succeed!" said the blacksmith in a voice of grave enthusiasm, crossing himself devoutly.

Lenin turned to him in a fury of scorn. "Don't come to me, comrade," he shouted. "I will do nothing for you. You are a slave of the old prejudices, and your old God. You are no more a revolutionary than I am



an archbishop." He spat and walked across the room, saying, "Zukhanov, I'm going to lie down for a bit at your place."

But the blacksmith barred his way. "I'm ready to strangle priests with my own hands," he muttered hoarsely, "because they assisted the Czars in oppression. But God—that's a different matter. Why, God speaks to men——"

"Well, if He does, listen to Him. And leave me alone!"

"Yes," continued the blacksmith. "He speaks to you in the voice of your own soul. Listen to Him, Comrade Lenin. Do not be scornful, for often you will be in trouble, and then you will hear His voice. And when you hesitate whether to go left or right, He will guide you. Indeed, God is good."

Lenin did not reply, nor did he even pay attention to the speaker. The blacksmith stood for a moment looking at him and then left the room.

"An illiterate boor caught by the Church," said Lenin. Then he added, turning to Trotsky, "Did you hear the hatred in his voice when he spoke of revenge? That was the voice of instinct. If you make use of it you will win."

"But supposing the savage instincts of men like that break out of bounds?" asked Zinoviev.

The discussion drew the attention of a tall, thin man, with the sunken chest of a consumptive, who was leaning against the wall. His face twitched as he listened. His cold, distant eyes had an unblinking stare. He came across to the group and broke into the conversation.

"They must be strangled by a terrorism more drastic than any that has ever been heard of before: a tyranny upheld by ideas more valuable than the demands of instinct. Only find such ideas and then use them to destroy the mob."

Lenin looked at him suspiciously. Then he looked at Trotsky, who came over to him and whispered, "Comrade Dzhherzhinsky. You have not met him before, Vladimir Ilyitch, though he is an old and tried friend of ours. He gave me great help with our propaganda among the soldiers at the front. I find him the most

active and capable man in the Party apart from Djevaltowsky and Krylenko."

Lenin put out his hand. "Welcome, comrade. I am glad to hear so well of you. You are a Pole? I appreciate the Poles because they represent a genuine and historical revolutionary element."

"Yes, I am a Pole," said Dzherzhinsky venomously. "I am full of hatred and a desire for revenge."

"Upon whom?" asked Lenin and Trotsky with sudden uneasiness.

"Upon Russia," replied Dzherzhinsky unhesitatingly.

"Upon Russia?"

"Yes, upon the Russia of the Czars which sowed the seed of corruption in the Polish nation. The nobles were attached to the Russian throne, and the peasants were made to accept bondage and to follow blindly a love of the soil and of tradition."

"You yield to patriotism and nationalism, eh?" asked Lenin wryly.

"No!" Dzherzhinsky shook his head. "I desire only to see the Poles in the front rank of the proletarian army. But that is hardly possible, comrade, for they have a fantastic love of their country."

"We can solve that problem," said Trotsky to soothe him. For Dzherzhinsky's face twitched so terribly that he was obliged to cup it in his hands. His eyes stared and a spasm distorted his bloodless lips.

"Are you going to draw Poland within the sphere of your activities, comrade?" he asked at length.

"Just now we are dealing with Russia," replied Lenin evasively.

"Just now. And later on?" Again he was convulsed with a spasm. He looked with a mad and terrifying stare at the Russians.

"Poland will enter into the world plan of the Proletarian Revolution," answered Trotsky, for Lenin was absorbed in a careful scrutiny of the Pole.

"I think I understand you," he said after a few moments, stepping towards him. "You are a useful man. We shall entrust you with the work of prosecuting the enemies of the proletariat and the Revolution."

Dzherzhinsky raised his head on high. As if calling Heaven to witness, he answered with emphasis upon every word, "I shall drown them in blood."

"The Class Revolution demands it from you," whispered Lenin.

"I shall do it," replied Dzherzhinsky.

Just then a bareheaded student armed with a rifle entered the room.

"The railway stations have been taken almost without a shot. We are fighting now for the Post Office, the State Bank and the Telephone Exchange."

In the distance was heard the dull thunder of gunfire under which the windows rattled ceaselessly. And through them came the first rays of dawn.

## CHAPTER XVIII

A BIG limousine which had just left the English Embankment came suddenly to a halt. The chauffeur looked around cautiously on all sides. He was surprised to see no traffic of any kind on the streets although it was already nine o'clock in the morning, nor were there any passers-by. Then shots rang out and the rattle of a machine gun sounded in the distance. Flocks of frightened pigeons wheeled over the houses, dipped and wheeled up again in white circles above the city.

A scattered group of soldiers came out of a side street and doubled across the road towards the motor-car. They surrounded it with bayonets fixed.

"Who's in this car?" asked one of them threateningly.

"Engineer Baldyrev, Director of the tobacco factory," replied the chauffeur in an uncertain voice.

A soldier opened the door of the car and peered within.

"Climb out," he shouted. "The car is confiscated by order of the War Revolutionary Committee. You can go free, citizen. But I warn you to turn back or you'll get a bullet in you round this neighbourhood."

"By what authority?" asked the passenger, an imposing old man with long grey whiskers and moustaches.

A bayonet slid menacingly into the car. "Our own authority is good enough for you," growled the soldier. "Get out."

"This is an assault," protested the engineer, as he left the car. "I shall complain to the Minister."

The soldier laughed openly. "Be quick about it," he jeered. "The whole gang of Ministers will be in gaol in an hour. You've had enough motoring anyhow. It's our turn now. Ivanov, keep your eye on the chauffeur and deliver the car to the commander."

Baldyrev left the group without further protest and

walked on towards the Alexander Bridge. He was not particularly surprised at the occurrence. For months everything had suggested that civil war would come: the rule of the little barrister, Kerensky, who was swept into the position of Prime Minister by the wave of Revolution, his betrayal of Kornilov, who wanted to control the country and save the military situation; the rise of the Council of Soldiers' and Workers' Delegates, under the sway of foreigners like Ceretelli, which was a state within a state; the provocative articles in the Bolshevik papers demanding supreme power for the Council—it could lead only to one thing. He expected it, and because he knew the nature of the Russian people he knew that it would be savage. Yet he had not expected it quite so soon. He had imagined that measures like the calling of a Democratic Council at the Winter Palace would frustrate an armed Bolshevik rising, especially as Lenin was in hiding in Finland.

And now suddenly he was confronted not only with a rising but with all the evidences of a new Government. He had had his private car confiscated in the open street by hostile soldiers. He recalled the soldier's jeers, and they made him uneasy. It was not that he had any great desire that the war should go on. He knew that an army in which desertion was rife, in which orders were discussed by the soldiers and officers were killed with impunity was incapable of facing an organised enemy like the Germans. Still, he did not want Russia to betray her allies or to be destroyed from within with results that no man could foresee.

He walked on in the direction of the Liteyny Prospect, where there seemed to be no street-fighting. He saw clearly the clouds gathering above his country, and he tried to discover some hope of rescue for her. This distracted his mind, too, from the inevitable quarrel which he would have with his wife when he reached home. Such quarrels were becoming of daily occurrence, and he knew that his behaviour was the cause of them. It was impossible for him to justify himself, which made him all the more angry; and he was particularly tortured by the conviction that by no effort of will could he bring himself to change his life. He was helpless and power-

less under an influence which had taken possession of him three years before. He even knew that he was being made ridiculous, but there was no help for that.

Buried in thought, he reached the Prospect, which ran from the river bank to the city. But he had not gone more than a hundred paces before a machine gun rattled from the roof of one of the houses. He could see nothing, but he heard the hiss and spatter of bullets, and the echo of the firing thrown back by the houses. Plaster spurted from the walls. A shivered window-pane fell on the pavement. The firing ceased. At once heads appeared in the broken windows and a volley of rifle shots was turned upon the roof.

The engineer dashed for a gateway. At the same moment the body of a policeman rolled down the roof, crashed on to sheet-iron below, and fell at his feet.

In the gateway Baldyrev found a small knot of people who had taken refuge like himself.

"Holy Russia is dying," sighed an old woman.

"Bandits and traitors!" growled a fat and bearded merchant. "They are trying to get possession of the capital." He crossed himself as he spoke.

A starved and ragged youth laughed mockingly. "That's the old song," he said. "Who on earth wants your Holy Russia, where the prisons are always full? Who but yourselves? We, the workers, get nothing out of her. Now we are going to sing you our song. We've dreamed about it for years. Our time has come at last!"

A discussion began.

"The workers could have come to an agreement without bloodshed," said one.

"Of course they could," agreed another. "But they wanted bloodshed. They wanted a revolution."

"They have chosen a fine time for their rising, the traitors!" cried a third. "A civil war at the very moment when the enemy has crossed our borders!"

The young worker said angrily: "You may shout as much as you like, but you can't do anything. What do we want with agreements? We can snatch what we want out of your hands. You are too late, you traitors!"

The merchant, in a fury, sprang at him with clenched

fists. "You should defend your country, not start a rebellion, you dogs!"

The worker grinned again. "This is the best time for a rebellion. You would crush us if there were not a war at the same time. Now we will crush you instead. Yes, Mr. Bourgeois, you are finished with."

The merchant struck him on the chest and the poor weakling fell down. A man standing near began to kick him. But the worker scrambled to his feet and ran into the open, shouting, "Comrades, they attack the Bolsheviks!"

Baldyrev waited no longer. He left the gateway and ran into the next one. He saw a few armed workers run up and surround the beaten man. A moment later they dragged out of the gateway the old merchant and a Civil servant who had joined the argument. They were driven on with blows from rifle butts until they stood beneath a high wall. The workers crossed the street and fired a volley, then disappeared into the houses, leaving two motionless bodies on the pavement.

Baldyrev looked away. A cold shiver of horror passed through him. He knew that he did not fear for his own life, but he was terrorised by the pervading atmosphere of calamity hanging over Russia. A fusillade was heard in the distance and a crowd of people ran past Baldyrev, who joined them for a few minutes and then turned down a side street.

But again he had to stop. The street was closed. A crowd of schoolboys were building a barricade of paving-stones, logs, boxes and pieces of furniture. It grew up quickly under a fluttering red flag. Even as Baldyrev watched, somebody shouted "Soldiers!" and at once the boys, armed with you and I, lined behind it. As the soldiers appeared a volley was fired at them, and immediately a white flag appeared in the midst of the detachment. Then a bugle blew.

A few boys, waving handkerchiefs, ran up to the soldiers.

"What are you firing for?" they were asked.

"We are on the side of Comrade Lenin."

"So are we. We are marching to the Winter Palace to aid him."

At that moment some armed men came out of another turning. They stopped at once and shouted to the soldiers, "What is the password?"

"Proletariat!" shouted the non-commissioned officer in charge.

Shots rang out. The soldiers dispersed in terror, leaving casualties and two of the schoolboys writhing like landed fish on the pavement.

"My God!" sobbed Baldyrev and ran off, pale and distracted. He had no aim but to hide himself in his own flat as soon as possible. At last he bolted through his own gateway and made for the lift.

"The lift is not working," said the porter sullenly.

"That's too bad," said Baldyrev.

"It might be worse," retorted the porter. "Lifts don't matter. You don't live very high up. You can walk. Workers get on without them, so the bourgeois can as well."

Baldyrev looked at the man in astonishment. He had known him for fifteen years as a quiet and obliging servant; now he was an equal and an enemy.

"You have changed quickly, citizen," said Baldyrev.

"It's a pity this has come only in my old age," returned the porter.

Without answering him, the engineer went up to the second floor and rang the bell. The chambermaid opened the door and eyed him with antagonism.

"Is Madame in?" he asked.

"Yes. She would not let me go out this morning, and in the meantime——"

"To be sure," he interrupted. "Now please give me some breakfast."

"I've got something I should, important to do," she replied with spirit. "All the domestic workers should be at a meeting now. You can get your own breakfast. It won't kill you."

The situation was plain to the engineer. "The slaves are tasting freedom," he thought. "They will be the most dangerous of all."

He took off his coat and entered his study, where he walked up and down, rubbing his cold hands. He felt



an oppressive fear weighing him down, whereas he had generally come on these occasions under the spell of pleasant emotions.

At last he went into his wife's room and found her at her writing-desk. Even the sound of his footsteps did not make her raise her head.

"Marie!"

She was sobbing miserably.

"Marie! Marie!" he repeated tenderly.

"Now I know that I mean nothing to you," she said through her sobs. "At a terrible time like this you've left me alone. People are shooting one another all round us. The servants have turned insolent. And you! You prefer to stay with that woman. All your feelings are for her, not for me. A year ago when you left me alone I used to weep all night. I was in despair. But I felt that you would come back when you found the difference between that dancer and the mother of your sons, the woman who had shared both fortune and misfortune with you. I was wrong. This is not a late infatuation. This is love, if you cared for her, only for her, on such a terrible night."

She rose and confronted her husband with reproachful eyes. He was ashamed. Even then he noticed that she might still pass for a young woman, with her supple figure, her black hair only threaded with grey, her smooth oval face, her almost girlish lips. Nothing betrayed her age. Only two deep lines near the mouth and the expression of her eyes revealed her sorrow and suffering.

"Marie," said Baldyrev, "I know I am guilty and I don't deserve forgiveness. The woman holds me with a terrible attraction. It is stronger than I am. But I was anxious about you and I left her early. I couldn't cross the river for a long time, and then my car was confiscated. I have seen terrible things to-day. . . ."

He caught his wife's hand like a frightened child and in a broken voice he told her his adventures.

"An awful catastrophe is ahead of us," he repeated over and over again.

While they were still talking a tall, dark young man entered the flat.

"Ah! I'm glad to see you here together. Has Gregory come yet, Mother?"

"No," Madame Baldyreva replied, drying her eyes. "Do you expect him to come?"

"What, crying?" the young man asked, suddenly. He turned to his father. "Another one of your periodical honeymoons, eh? Father, it is rather ridiculous at your age. I only wonder that Mother hasn't got used to it after three years."

Madame Baldyreva rebuked him and looked at her husband uneasily. He sat in the armchair, pale and preoccupied, oblivious to his son's irony. She touched his head caressingly and looked down at him, at his weak well-groomed face. At times she hated his blue eyes, his full mouth, his soft side-whiskers, his luxuriant hair, with all the hatred of an abandoned wife. Yet she felt tenderness for him because he was so weak. She knew that he was rich now by chance, not by any effort of his own mind and muscles. His only merit was that he had not actually ruined his career, and he worked at his factory day by day, though without enthusiasm or ambition.

"What?" he asked suddenly, as if roused from sleep. "You asked me something, Marie?"

"Peter has just come in. He is waiting for Gregory."

"What news is there?" he asked his son. "How are your workmen behaving?"

"Very badly," replied Peter. "This morning only one in ten came to work. The rest have joined the Bolsheviks. The ones who came called a meeting and carted all the engineers off the premises in wheelbarrows. They only let me stay because they said I treated them like human beings and worked with them at the lathes. They elected me manager. My position was idiotic and a little dangerous—I resigned and asked to be dismissed. There was no other way out because I had the management to think of, and I wanted to stand in with it."

"Quite right," agreed the father. "The management will appreciate it, I'm sure, when normal times return."

"They won't return," said the son seriously. "Some time, perhaps, but not soon anyhow. I'm quite sure that the Revolution will succeed, and just such a Revolution

as the people have dreamed of. As a matter of fact, I'm rather pleased."

"How on earth can you say that?"

"Well, that is the way I look at it. The people can't bear their conditions any longer. Those who are working hardest are nothing but slaves or else indispensable machines to be scrapped when they are no longer efficient or when their owners can dispense with them."

But the system is the same all over the world," Baldyrev protested.

"Yes, it is wrong all over the world. The American capitalists know it, and they have introduced a system of making the workers partners in the enterprise. All other countries are threatened with revolt, and now it has broken out in Russia."

The telephone rang. Baldyrev took up the receiver and listened. Then he slid back into his chair, pale and shaken, letting the instrument fall out of his nerveless fingers.

"Our stores have been robbed by a detachment of Red soldiers and sailors. The factory is on fire. Our chairman rang up to tell me."

Peter Baldyrev walked up and down snapping his fingers. "That is what I am most afraid of. If the savage instincts of the mob get out of hand they will destroy everything. What will happen to Russia? I don't mind collaborating with a free people, but not with Vandals. Are you going to the factory?"

"The chairman says that the place is a battle-field between the rebels and the Semenov regiment."

Just then Gregory Baldyrev entered the room. Unlike the other son, he resembled their mother. He had the same black hair and swarthy skin, and his dreamy face marked him as a profound thinker.

"Hullo! Our metaphysician has turned up," exclaimed Peter.

"Terrible things are going on," said Gregory, wringing his hands. "They are fighting everywhere. I had to come all the way by side streets."

"What's the news?"

"No good news. The Workers' Council has decided

to close down our factory because it is making scented soap, eau-de-Cologne and tooth-powder. They are not needed for proletarians." He smiled sadly.

"But you make medical supplies also!"

"We pointed that out. They told us that aspirins were all right for the bourgeois but not for the working class. All our supplies were confiscated and carried away, nobody knows where. They put detachments of rebels from suburban factories into ours. With my own eyes I saw them unscrewing working parts from our machines if they were made of brass or bronze, and taking away instruments of platinum or silver. A real twentieth-century Revolution!"

"A Russian Revolution at all events," said Peter. "And it is quite appropriate. We are a nation of savages and our savagery has been increased by oppression. We have been driven into crime and treason."

"But the Revolution ought to unify the nation!" protested Gregory. "How can it do so if it is marked at the outset by crime and murder?"

"Your argument may suit Quakers and evangelical Christians, Gregory, but it is no use with us. We are a half-heathen nation enthralled by the powers of darkness."

"Yet our intelligentsia is equal to the best in Europe. Our art is admired everywhere."

"My dear fellow!" exclaimed Peter. "Your ideas are antiquated and not at all convincing. Our creative intelligentsia amounts to two or three millions. And the remaining 150,000,000 kill the doctors, teachers, agriculturists and veterinaries who come amongst them on the grounds that they are spreading cholera. Also, they drown witches. There is a gulf that cannot be bridged between us and the peasants."

"That is true," said Mr. Baldyrev suddenly. "I have known the working classes for twenty-six years. We understand one another perfectly on technical matters. But if I broach a general topic they cannot comprehend a word. They are embarrassed, incredulous, even hostile. Do you think the peasant even understands the townsman? He does not. When I was with my brother Serge in the country I found that the

peasants hate the landed gentry, they suspect everybody, they hate the townsman and scorn the factory worker."

"The trouble is that we are not a community," exclaimed Peter. "We are a collection of classes without any common interests, but with any number of territorial, religious and tribal divisions."

"Well, how is Lenin going to unite all these elements?" asked Gregory.

"That is the question. We'll know soon enough if he wins. Our proletarian leader is an enigma."

"Come into breakfast," said Madame Baldyreva, opening the door. "I have prepared it myself, for all the servants have gone to meetings."

It was a silent meal, with Madame Baldyreva keeping back her tears, and her husband still pale and troubled. She imagined that he was thinking of his mistress, who completely dominated him. But in fact his mind was too full of the Revolution to spare a thought for the coquettish Tamara; though he was at last aware of his own weakness and of the impatience with which his sons had come to treat him. He had now a presage that a new life was opening to him after a period of unknown trials. All he knew was that he could not meet them like a fighter and a conqueror.

After breakfast the men set out for the city to examine the situation. There was no more shooting. A squad of soldiers marched along the street with red rosettes on their chests and rifles, singing revolutionary songs. On the Neva Prospect, the very centre of the old life of the capital, crowds of people were gathered. A red flag waved from the tower of the Town Hall and the shout was raised now and then, "Long live the Socialist Republic!"

Through Morskaya they went to the square in front of the Winter Palace, where they found a regular military camp. There was a park of guns and machine guns, shells and shell-cases lay about, the snow was stamped down by the passing of feet. Military kitchens were smoking busily, horses whinnied, a barricade ran across the square in a broken line. And at the sides the walls

of the General Staff and the Foreign Office, pocked and chipped with bullets, their windows shattered, looked down gloomily upon the activity below.

Everywhere were groups of soldiers and armed workers discussing the events of the day.

"Workers from the Kolomenskaya factory have broken through the gates of the Palace. They are attacking now," shouted one of the rebels.

A Red Cross ambulance rattled through the square. Baldyrev noticed on the granite steps of the column raised to commemorate Napoleon's retreat there lay a heap of bodies. They were the victims of the Revolution: overcoats had been thrown over them; but stiff legs and marching boots protruded sickeningly.

There was a ripple of shots from within the courtyards of the gigantic Palace, then two full volleys, then a ragged volley, and after it a storm of furious shouting, which rose to a crescendo with a smashing of glass, a crash of iron and a splintering of wood. Immediately a series of well-timed volleys rang out and a mob of soldiers and workers came pouring from the main entrance in a panic. They sheltered behind the barricades and fired wildly.

They were followed by disciplined companies of soldiers in grey uniforms, who were fighting a brave but hopeless battle; for though they directed a withering fire into the square, their rear was engaged with revolutionaries inside the Palace.

"The cadets and the Bochkarova Women's Battalion are between two fires!" shouted the workers who were concealed with the Baldyrevs behind a field-kitchen. "And they are Kerensky's last defenders!"

A minute later: "The Winter Palace has fallen!"

A red flag crept slowly up the huge flagpole upon which the banners of the Czars had waved for so long, and flew proudly in the wind. At the signal everybody in the square dashed upon the stricken defenders and a massacre began. Baldyrev saw the cadets hemmed in from all sides and smashed to the ground under the rifle-butts which rose and fell like flails. He saw the workers fight with one another for a place in the swarm near enough

to brain a cadet or to blow out his stomach with a shot at close range. He saw a pack of workers surround two of the young soldiers, snatch their rifles from them, fell them to the ground and fight over their bodies like wolves tearing the flesh of a hunted animal. It was a pandemonium of maddened men, howling and cursing in their frenzy, trampling on a bloody mass of broken bodies, of hair and rags and brains.

In another part of the square even more terrible events were going on. The soldiers of the Pavlovsky regiment were attacking the remnants of the Women's Battalion as they fell back on the Palace. The women defended themselves bravely, even at close quarters with the bayonet, and at times they made ground; only to fall back again in a hopeless retreat. They were cut off and isolated by a ring of steel. Then began a wild struggle in which they used even their fists and their teeth. Time and again women were seized from the broken ranks. They were pulled this way and that, their clothes were torn from their bodies.

"Ugh! An old witch! Away with her!" shouted a soldier in disgust. The bones of a middle-aged woman cracked under the thud of his rifle-butt and her half-naked body was swallowed up in the *mêlée*. Other soldiers, excited by the struggle, dragged the young volunteers by their hair, by their naked shoulders or by the rags of their uniforms into neighbouring houses.

A freckled giant with a girl slung across his back ran through the crowds. Dishevelled chestnut hair fell across her pale face, her white body hung powerless, exhausted by the struggle, paralysed by the terror of shame and death. The soldier ran up to an ambulance and peered inside. Then he poked his rifle through the canvas curtain and fired, driving out a doctor and a nurse, who hid in the crowd.

The soldier flung his booty into the ambulance, then crawled in after her and pulled the curtains across. People stood around in silence, hearing his heavy breathing and the faint moans of the girl.

At the same moment an armoured car drove under the arch of the General Staff. Soldiers with red ribbons on

their caps and tunics stood on the steps of it or clung precariously to the mudguards. And standing up amongst them was a man in a black overcoat with the grey cap of a worker. It was Lenin, smiling calmly, taking in with his inscrutable eyes every detail of the massacre. He was recognised at once.

"Long live Lenin! Long live Comrade Lenin, our leader! Lenin! Lenin! Long live Lenin!"

The air was shaken with the cries of the people. They stood on tiptoe, jostling one another, to see the man who was opening for them the future of their rosiest dreams.

"Make way, comrades," shouted his bodyguard. "Make way for Comrade Lenin."

"What's all this about?" asked Lenin jovially when he passed the ambulance surrounded by a crowd of ghouls.

They laughed in answer. "A soldier got hold of a bourgeois girl from the Women's Battalion. Ha! ha! When he is finished with her she won't defend the Winter Palace and the bourgeoisie any more!"

Lenin's mouth curved in disgust. Involuntarily his eyes half closed and the pupils smouldered ominously. But he appreciated the atmosphere. It was his genius to make use of the desires of the people. He saw their pale faces, their hungry eyes, their drawn lips.

He laughed aloud and shouted: "Let the faithful defender of the proletariat enjoy himself. From to-day onwards, comrades, everything is yours. Take what has been taken from you!"

The mob howled with delight. "Long live Lenin! Our leader! Our father! Lenin! Lenin!"

The car moved on slowly and stopped near the walls of the Palace, where the last of the cadets and women were feebly struggling.

"Get rid of them!" he shouted. "Be quick about it, so that you can inspect the Palace! It is yours, comrades! It is yours, my brothers! It is yours, fighters for liberty, for the happiness of the proletariat, for the golden future of mankind!"

Meanwhile the freckled giant had jumped down from the ambulance. He adjusted his uniform, smiling lazily and looking round with a boastful air on the crowd.



"She liked me well enough," he said. "And she may be the daughter of a General! Ha! ha!" He made an obscene gesture, then suddenly shouted, "Get in the queue! Hurry, up! Who's the first? The General's daughter is ready for you!"

The crowd, grinning sheepishly, shuffled into line and a dirty youth with one eye sprang into the ambulance. He had no boots, and his right foot was wrapped in filthy rags.

"The girl has a rich fiancé," shouted somebody, and they all laughed.

Suddenly there was a commotion. Gregory Baldyrev pushed through the people and made for the ambulance with staring eyes. He jumped in after the youth.

"He's in a hurry!" they shouted. "Hi, you! Take your turn! Be fair! There's a fiery fellow for you!"

But their cries were cut short when the youth rolled out on to the snow like a log and Baldyrev appeared with a gun in his hand.

"I'll brain anyone who dares to touch this woman!" he cried. "It's a shame! You, the proletariat, who fight for liberty—you begin by violating a defenceless girl."

The mob was spellbound, but only for a moment. "Shame is a bourgeois prejudice," cried a voice. "The proletariat knows no shame!"

A soldier crept up unobserved by the side of the van and swung his clubbed rifle against Gregory's chest. With a groan the young man fell back and disappeared.

His father, who witnessed the whole scene, was overcome by fear of what would follow. He felt in a flash the power of the mob, the uselessness of defence. Without looking back he turned and ran like an automaton towards the archway. He heard running feet behind him. He turned and found Peter, pale and trembling. They looked at one another like criminals who had just committed a crime. In their eyes shone fear and shame and hatred.

They did not speak. After a little time they went back to the square, but the ambulance was gone, the crowd had dispersed, and from all sides the people were converging on the Winter Palace. As they wandered

aimlessly about, the Baldyrevs were swallowed up in the mob and were separated from one another. In their hearts they felt scorn for themselves and shame for their cowardice.

Around them the mob howled and shouted : " To the Palace ! To the Winter Palace ! "

## CHAPTER XIX

THE last defenders of the Provisional Government were killed in the square as Lenin entered the Winter Palace. Khalainen and Antonov Ovshenko, at the head of the Finn and Latvian revolutionaries, made a passage for him through the mob. Soldiers, workers, criminals released from the gaols, beggars suddenly cured of their infirmities, Imperial servants, porters, prostitutes, working women, and even children, thronged the splendid rooms, which showed the marks of the recent battle. The windows were smashed and the priceless marbles chipped by bullets.

A drunkard surrounded by laughing women stood in front of an enormous mirror in a carved and gilded frame. He regarded himself for a long time with great seriousness, adjusting his fur cap and smoothing out his beard. Then a playful notion entered his head: he began to execute a folk-dance, in the course of which he lurched heavily against the glass. He stopped and looked angrily at it, then swore violently and kicked the mirror with all his strength. It shivered into fragments and the glass crashed to the floor. The mob howled with delight and, as though this were a signal, they began to destroy everything in sight.

They broke mirrors and carved vases. They pulled the pictures from the walls and stamped upon them. Some boys broke up a chair and threw the pieces at a Venetian cut-glass chandelier, so that broken glass flew all over the room. Women tore down the curtains, stripped the silk coverings off the furniture and pulled tapestries from the walls. A worker shivered with his rifle a malachite statue of Cupid. And everywhere went the chorus: "Take what has been taken from you!"

The splintering of furniture and the crash of falling objects mingled with the curses of men fighting for booty.

Soldiers lifted their rifles and shot at the capitals of the marble columns. They struck with clubbed rifles at the marble table-tops and at cabinets shining with enamel and mosaic. With their bayonets they cut the carpets into ribbons and slashed at Chinese and Turkish hangings.

In a small study there hung by itself a portrait of Alexander III, before which the victorious mob halted for a moment in terror. The heavy, immobile face of the Czar faced them in the half-darkness opposite the door. His cold blue eyes seemed to be alive. The bearded figure stood looking sternly down at them, in a black uniform with the white cross of St. George upon his chest, and his hand within the lapel of his coat in a Napoleonic attitude.

"Alexander Alexandrovitch, the Emperor!" cried a fearful voice. "The terrible Czar! The father of Nicholas!"

"A murderer of peasants and workers!" shouted others. "Away with him!"

The portrait was dragged down from the wall. Dozens of hands descended on the canvas, tearing it with long nails and piercing it with fingers, so that blood smeared the white face of the Czar. An old woman wrapped round with priceless silks jumped upon it furiously so that the stiff canvas collapsed in the frame. Even then part of the face remained visible and the stern eyes gazed up at them.

"Do you still threaten us?" screamed an old worker in a mad fury. "You sent me to Siberia! You drank my blood and drained my health. Now I shall repay! Wait! Stand back!"

He pushed the crowd away and deliberately defiled the face of the hated Czar as only a slave could defile it.

"Lenin! Lenin is speaking! Hurry up, comrades!" The crowd pushed its way out of the room and joined the seething mass in the corridors. Lenin was standing on a table in an enormous marble hall which was filled with the stench of cheap tobacco and littered with shreds of sunflower seeds. He was haranguing the crowd. His overcoat was unbuttoned, his face moved from side to side, and he punctuated his sentences with violent movements of his hands.

"Comrades! Brethren!" he shouted. "You have conquered in the capital! The workers of the world will never forget your courage and your zeal! Now you will establish a new state, the commonwealth of the proletariat. With it you will crush your enemies. The struggle will be a long one, but you must never retreat. Remember that your comrades are now conquering Moscow and that others are spilling their blood in all the towns of Russia. Yours is the victory, comrades! You, and none but you, will govern and judge. You will use for yourselves the wealth of the country. There will be no laws to bind the freedom of workers, soldiers and peasants. There will be no more privileges! no more wars!"

He was interrupted by thunderous applause. He stood watchful and unmoved, prepared to express again the hidden desires of the mob. At last he silenced them with a gesture.

"To-morrow we shall propose to all the warring nations a peace without annexation or indemnity. We shall arrange an armistice between ourselves and Germany. The land held by the Czars and the bourgeoisie will pass to the peasants!"

A shout of satisfaction rose from the audience.

"Factories, banks, railways and ships will pass to the workers. They will rule the land!"

"Long live Lenin! Lenin!"

Cheers of joy and enthusiasm broke out again. A rush was made at the table and a thousand hands were raised to Lenin. Men seized him, raised him on their shoulders and carried him as they had been used to carry statues of the saints in religious processions.

At that moment Lenin became a new Messiah, a god, for the oppressed and ignorant mob. He waved his cap and shouted something, but his words were drowned in the storm of a thousand voices.

At last he was surrounded by his bodyguard of Finnish revolutionaries and the sturdy Kalinin stood near him. Then there came up through the ranks of the Finns the leaders of the July and October revolutions: Trotz<sup>ki</sup> Zinoviev, Kamenev, Unslight, Dzherzhinsky, Volod<sup>ski</sup> Uritsky, Kalinin, Krassin, Yoffe and the rest.

Lunacharsky approached Lenin and whispered in his ear: "Comrade, the proletariat is getting out of control, destroying incomparable treasures and carrying away the pictures from the Hermitage Gallery."

Lenin had his eyes upon the savage and excited faces of the crowd before them.

"This is their day," he replied, unmoved. "They don't need masterpieces, comrade, and Russia can get on without them too. They may do what they like—for a while. They may have their will and exercise their lust . . . for to-day, comrade."

Preceded by the Finnish sharpshooters, they walked through the gorgeous rooms among the maddened crowds of rebels. Broken glass splintered under their feet and they tripped over torn carpets, marble fragments and pieces of plaster.

When they came out into the open air a man pushed through the soldiers and confronted Lenin. It was Baldyrev, in disordered clothing and without his hat, which he had lost in the crowd. There was on his face a look of decision, almost of despair. His lips trembled violently, his eyes were feverishly bright. He spoke through his set teeth.

"Citizen, my son could not stand free people violating a defenceless woman. He was wounded. He was taken away—I don't know why or where. I come to you to demand justice, citizen."

Lenin glanced round. The crowd had been left behind in the Winter Palace. They could not hear what their idol was about to order.

"Comrade Antonov," he said, "assist the first bourgeois who appeals to the justice of the proletariat. We have the best right to dispense justice because we have endured centuries of servitude. Our right is a summary trial and summary mercy."

Lenin entered a motor-car and drove away along the river, accompanied by Khalainen and a few Finns. In the cars that followed were the future People's Commissars and their escort.

Antonov Ovshenko questioned Baldyrev for particulars of the incident. He telephoned to the hospitals from his

headquarters. And at once he told off two soldiers as an escort for Baldyrev to the Red Cross central depôt, where his son lay.

At the approach of night the mob was slowly driven out of the Winter Palace, and Antonov, accompanied by Frunze, the organiser of the Communist fighting groups, went on a tour of inspection over the building.

After seeing that the rooms on the ground floor were emptied they were attracted to the apartments of the Imperial family by the voices of men and women in song and laughter. Antonov pushed open a door and stood aghast.

It was a large well-lit room, the walls of which were hung with gold brocade. It held two enormous beds, some upholstered furniture and a white dressing-table littered with fragments of a mirror and broken scent-bottles. In the corner there hung pictures of the saints and a beautifully carved lamp held by silver chains; although many of the sacred pictures were scattered about the floor.

It had been the bed-chamber of the Czar and Czarina. Now it was in the possession of some drunken sailors and their whores. Some of the women lay, naked and inviting, upon the coverlets of yellow silk embroidered with the black eagle of Russia.

"Hullo there, comrade! I'm a Czarina! Would you like to be a Czar? Come over here!"

Appalling excesses, a dark mystery of madness, took place without regard for privacy.

Frunze knitted his brows. Antonov rubbed his forehead and saw in his imagination his own earlier vision of this first day of the people's liberation. During sleepless nights in many prisons and in the water-logged trenches he had often looked forward to this day. It should have been a day of blood alone, of blood raining from the sky and spurting from the ground, the blood of the people's enemies.

He set his teeth and was about to shout something when one of the sailors, with a naked girl in his arms, caught sight of them.

"Hullo, comrades!" he cried. "Come and enjoy

yourselves. Come on! To-day we live and to-morrow we die! Ha! ha! Come on, darling, entertain the guests."

Frunze looked at Antonov's pale face, and his eyes flashed, but he restrained the anger aroused within him by this degradation of the proletariat.

"Gluttony, drunkenness and lust are their highest ideals," thought Frunze. "The best and boldest minds worked for the deliverance of the people. Thousands of them, fighters for the new era, perished in prisons, in the Siberian mines, on the gallows, in the torture-chambers of the Secret Police. Sacrifices without number were made, all for these drunken beasts and naked harlots."

Antonov's reflections were simple and to the point: "Dogs and bitches!" he thought to himself. "I would like to put you against a wall and shoot you with my Colt, one after another."

He was filled with a fierce anger at the sight of the pollution before him. Through the mists of his blood-shot eyes he noticed the ikons in a dark corner of the room. The sorrowful and severe face of the Khazan Madonna gazed at him above the compassionate eyes of Christ, whose hand was raised in blessing. He grew suddenly more pale, and he started to look at the sacred pictures as though for the first time. His mind worked dully in a new direction.

"See what myths you are. If you had ever existed you would strike us dead, together with the swine who wallow in abominations before you, on the very day when the poor and downtrodden, whom you blessed, are set free. But you are silent. You are only a nursery tale, so much wood, so much canvas, a mess of gaudy colours. Away with you!"

He pulled his revolver from its holster and fired again and again. With every shot the frames of the ikons were shattered, glass fell to the floor, and the sacred figures were torn with holes.

The sailors and the women bolted in panic, the men cursing, the women shrieking wildly, leaving behind them rifles, uniforms and dresses. One of the women hastily wrapped herself in the yellow coverlet embroidered



with Imperial eagles, tripped in its heavy folds, and crawled on all-fours to the door, chattering in terror.

In silence Antonov shook hands with his friend, who was still cold and furious. His heart was heavy with despair, for he had seen the reality of his most cherished dream. Then they continued their inspection of the Winter Palace.

It was soon empty except for military pickets lounging in halls and at the doors. Nodding to the soldiers of his regiment, Antonov examined everything and saw that no cigarette ends had been left smouldering. Finally they reached an inner courtyard, where they came upon a number of drunken men and soldiers staggering up from the cellars, singing, shouting and brandishing bottles.

Antonov ran down the steps and came suddenly to a halt. In the gleam of candlelight he saw before him the feast of the conquerors. Men and women were drinking themselves to death in a bacchanalian orgy. They were emptying whole bottles down their throats, swaying unsteadily on their feet, hiccoughing, and letting the wine dribble down their chins. Others were bending over the barrels, noisily drinking the wine as it flowed from the spigots. Drunken figures were lying everywhere around the cellar, snoring loudly.

Antonov clenched his fists and shouted harshly: "Get out of here!"

The soldiers of his guard grounded their rifles on the stone floor.

"Break the barrels!" ordered Antonov.

The mob, a little sobered by his anger, began slowly to leave the cellar. The soldiers went round breaking the bottles with rifles and mallets, and smashing the barrel staves, until the red and white wines were bubbling over the floor.

But when at last the soldiers had left the Winter Palace, dark figures crept back to the wine-filled vaults. Men with bottles, women with buckets even children with tin mugs in their hands came in stealthy crowds from all over the town to steal what they could of the wine by the flickering light of matches and candles. They did not notice the dead bodies which floated now

on the tide of the liquor. These were found only in the morning, when more people came for the last dregs of wine and dirt in that ghastly place.

And as the latest of the robbers slunk away from the Winter Palace, placards were posted on the walls exhorting the people to sobriety and abstinence in honour of the high ideals of the proletariat which had opened an era of happiness in the history of humanity.

## CHAPTER XX

**LENIN** proceeded to the Fortress of Saints Peter and Paul. Red flags waved from the corners and from the cupola of the great cathedral, and from the lofty heights of the belfry. The square in front of the church, the ramparts and the courtyards of the citadel were packed to suffocation with soldiers, workers and a varied mob drawn by curiosity.

Lenin was received with storms of cheering. Surrounded by his comrades and a strong escort, he made his way to the centre of the square, where a tribune had been prepared for him, from which he was to address the people. He mounted the tribune and stood surveying the crowd. Every murmur ceased. He threw out his arms as if he wanted to embrace the whole assembly standing there in passionate expectation of his words.

"Comrades!" he shouted. "For the first time in the history of our country Revolution stands within these terrible walls. For the first time the Red flag waves over them victoriously. For centuries past these walls have looked down upon revolutionaries—but they have been on their way to the scaffold or loaded down with shackles in the dungeons of the fortress. For centuries past there have been banners dyed in red hanging here before the eyes of the Russians who carried out the commands of the Czars and the bourgeoisie. But these were the red and bloody bodies of martyrs who died for liberty!"

"Death to the Czar!" shouted the people. "Down with the bourgeoisie!"

"The Czar will be tried by the court of workers, peasants and soldiers," continued Lenin, when the shouts had died down. "The bourgeois class will be rooted out. It is the most terrible enemy you have, the enemy of the proletariat. But it will disappear because you

have decided on its doom, and from it you will take the land and the factories, capital and power. The proletariat will be merciless when it secures for ever the victory of Revolution. Comrades! all things belong to the workers! Nothing will be done unless by their will and accord!"

"Death to the Ministers!" a worker cried. "They are in the citadel. Hand them over to us!"

This dangerous and critical demand had hardly died away when Lenin, anticipating support for it, took up the challenge.

"The comrade who spoke then does not express the will of the proletariat," he said with one arm raised. "He demands a bourgeois revenge upon harmless fools. Kerensky fled like a coward. Now he is attempting to raise troops against the capital. But we know that already our comrades have spoiled his plans. His regiments are melting away, not a single company will reach Petrograd!"

"Long live Lenin! Lenin!" The crowd was completely in his power. They were wild with enthusiasm, and the Finns of the bodyguard could not quiet them.

"Comrades!" Lenin went on at last. "Who are the Ministers we have in our power? That poor fool Tereshchenko, that puppet, and a few more who could do nothing either right or wrong because they had no brains, no will, no power. But they must be spared to tell us all the secrets of the Czar's rule, the hidden treaties, the whereabouts of confidential documents. That will be their service to the proletariat. We shall release them for a time because we have need of them. But Kerensky's Ministers are not more dangerous than the sparrows on the roof-tops."

The crowd roared with laughter. "Lenin!" they shouted. "Our Ilyitch! A fine fellow with a tongue like a razor. He's no more afraid of the Ministers than he is of a lot of sparrows."

"Lenin! Lenin!" Others shouted more loudly: "Let the sparrows out of their cage! They don't matter to us! We spit on them!"

"Very well, comrades. Your wish will be fulfilled. The Ministers will be set free after they have been

examined by Comrades Trotsky, Preobrajensky, Zalkind and Rykov. Now go home after a hard day! Keep your eyes on the enemies of the Revolution and the proletariat. Don't let them raise their heads again. Long live the Socialist Republic! Long live the workers of the world!"

Lenin stood with his eyes upon the shouting mob. He examined keenly every face in sight, caught every grimace, noted in that confused roar even single words which expressed ideas hardly yet conscious in the dull minds of the people. His brain became a sensitive microphone vibrating to every feeling among them. He saw before him a sea of heads, of wildly staring eyes and shouting mouths, but no secret thing was hidden from him. He appealed to them with their own ideas, fulfilled their most shadowy dreams, called up what lay at the depths of the dark souls of slaves. He was the idol of the mob. And yet he was the servant of the mob. He knew that he could not oppose them, for he would be left at once without supporters. If he tried to cry a halt he would be crushed down at once by their mad stampede for new victims, new thrills, new promises. Their demands had the strength of forces suddenly released, after having been paralysed by the cruelty of the Government and the frauds of the Church, and stultified by the failures of the compromising Socialists.

The Finn bodyguard and a battalion of the Pavlovsky regiment cleverly edged the crowd away from the tribune. In a short time they had shepherded the people off the ramparts and cleared the square, leaving only a dense mass on the steps of the cathedral. These were of a type distrusted by Lenin—normal folk, servants, clerks, women with handkerchiefs on their heads and shawls around their shoulders—who passed from one side to the other throughout the course of the Revolution. "The political jelly," was his name for them.

For a moment he was going to have them removed with the rest, until it suddenly occurred to him that they were just the right people to spread what he wanted known through the town. Here was an opportunity to demonstrate that the victory of the Party was consummated.

"Comrades!" he shouted light-heartedly to those about him, "let's look straight into the eyes of our oppressors. Let's go into the cathedral."

He left the square and mounted the steps of the portico. With difficulty the crowd made way for him, pressing back on either side and crossing themselves piously. Without taking his cap from his head, Lenin entered the great doors, followed by an arrogant group of Commissars, Khalainen and the Finns, and a number of soldiers. The people were astonished by their irreverence and watched the impious group with horror. If the church had been crowded Lenin would not have risked an outburst of popular anger, but he had calculated very carefully the strength of his escort and he was determined to "preach his first sermon" without fear of the consequences. During his Siberian exile, as a prisoner and as an emigrant, he had often meditated upon its important place in the scheme of revolution.

Now fortune aided him. The gilded doors, known as the Czar's Gate, in front of the high altar were suddenly flung open and the priests in gorgeous vestments, with processional crosses and thurifers, and with the Gospel carried by a fat Archdeacon, appeared to welcome the new rulers of the capital. Lenin halted and gazed at them scornfully as they advanced, chanting, while the pungent odour of incense spread over the church. Then the appointed priest began to deliver an address.

"Did not Christ our Saviour say that all power comes from God——" As he spoke he eyed with repugnance and fear the short, thick-shouldered man who wore the cap of a worker and whose piercing Mongolian eyes blazed back at him in anger.

"Stop this buffoonery," Lenin interrupted sharply. "The power of the working class comes from no gods, but from workshops and ploughs, from sweat and blood. Enough of your fables about gods! We want no more of that opium which binds the will of the people. There are no gods on earth or in heaven."

The priests drew back in panic. One of them lifted his heavy robes and stumbled away. Lenin's burst of laughter was taken up by the Commissars and soldiers; then suddenly re-echoed by the crowd which only a

moment before had been scandalised by his sacrilege. This change of feeling did not escape his notice. At once he drove the point home by a new attack on the priests.

"Even if your God did exist," he stormed, "He would abandon you now, you flunkeys of the Czar, you gluttons, drunkards, whoremongers and oppressors of the working class. If he did exist He would punish me for what I say: But you are the ones who are filled with terror when you hear the truth at last!"

Here and there in the crowd men covered their heads and an old woman who was about to cross herself dropped her hand. Lenin walked up the church towards the altar in the midst of a group of Commissars. The tombs of the Czars and of their wives were ranged along the walls—masterpieces of fine marble surmounted by crowns and engraved with inscriptions in gold. Khalainen stopped in front of one and struck at it with his rifle. At once the soldiers and the mob set about the destruction of others, tumbling out of them the coffins which held the remains of Russia's earlier rulers. They split open the coffins, rifled them of jewels and draperies, and dragged about the floor of the church, with terrible obscenities, the embalmed bodies of the Emperors.

"Fling those dolls into the Neva," said Lenin benignantly, regarding the suddenly courageous mob with all the indulgence of a father. They followed his suggestion. The bodies were dragged across the square, hoisted on to the ramparts, and tumbled, one by one, into the river.

As the rabble came trooping back to the cathedral again, bandying jokes with one another, to complete their work, Lenin met them on the steps. He was laughing merrily, and he held out his hands to the people as they ran up to him.

"You have thrown away a lot of rubbish, the relics of the bourgeoisie," he said. "You have shown the whole world what you think of hangmen, even though they have worn crowns."

"But, comrade!" shouted a fellow in postman's uniform, "we've left Peter the Great inside there. We want to play with him as well."

Lenin laughed unaffectedly. "Ah, comrade," he

retorted, "you don't like to leave me anything, do you? Will you please present me with Peter the Great?"

"Ha! ha! A good joke! Yes, you can have Peter the Great, body and bones—what there is left of him! All for Lenin!"

"Do you know why I want him?" asked Lenin, fingering his beard.

"No! We don't know! Tell us why, Comrade Lenin!"

"I respect only two Czars, Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great. Yes, I honour them. Both of them bled the boyars and the priests: in one word, the bourgeoisie. Ivan protected the peasants and Peter was the first revolutionary. They will be your masters in the art of destroying your enemies. Do you understand me?"

Lenin smiled mockingly as he looked at the people crowding around him.

"Hurrah!" shouted someone. "We present you with the body of Peter the Great and his bowels into the bargain for ever."

Lenin nodded his acknowledgment. His soft hissing laugh accompanied the roaring of the people. Then, turning to Sverdlov, he said with emphasis:

"Comrade, have those tombs restored."

He was extremely happy. On this, the first day of the Revolution, he knew that he was the born leader of the people. He knew the goal to which he would lead the masses, blinded by hatred. His was the will to achieve. He had learned now that he could enforce his will. An elemental force had raised him to the heights of power. He would not oppose the people and yet he would use their power to drive them along the way he had prepared.

As if to confirm his thoughts, an old countryman with a haggard face came up to him. He wore a torn fur coat and a cap from which strips of soiled cotton hung down about his neck. His uncombed beard, to which bits of straw and crumbs of bread were clinging, almost covered a face that was grimed with coal-dust. He peered up with furtive eyes and took off his cap.

"Your lordship——" he began.

"What makes you call me a lord?"



"What else? You are in power here."

"Cover your head, comrade. You are in power, not I. And I wager that your job is heaving coal on the railway."

"You are right. I am a coal-heaver."

"Well, what do you want to tell me?"

The man muttered to himself: "People say that Lenin wears a crown of gold and carries a 'white letter' on his head. Now I see that they are liars. He has neither a crown nor a letter."

Lenin laughed. "I wear no crown. How could I when I want to snatch them from the heads of all the Emperors in the world? But I have the letter, comrade. I have freedom for you, equality, and a happy life. Now you need not take off your cap to anybody, or fear anybody. You are the salt of the earth and a power in the land."

"Then can I stand covered when I talk to my boss?" asked the man.

"Why on earth have you ever done anything else?"

"Because if I didn't take my hat off he gave it a clout and knocked it off. Once he hit me so hard that blood ran from my left ear and it has been deaf ever since."

Lenin was thoughtful for a moment. "Well, then, go to your boss at once and pay him back," he said at length. "Don't spare him anything."

The men who listened to this dialogue roared with laughter, when the old man rushed away across the square with his powerful fists doubled up, shouting, "You wait! I'm going to shake the soul out of you!"

Lenin turned to the bystanders, who regarded him with fear and admiration.

"The proletariat must smash its old enemies to pieces," he said emphatically. "They must be paid out for their tortures. Their punishment will come from the Government chosen by you, comrades. Meanwhile, anybody may avenge himself for any injury in the past committed by the bourgeois. All proletarian crimes will be pardoned. No bourgeois crimes will be pardoned."

"Death to the bourgeoisie!" shouted Trotsky.

"Death to the servants of the bourgeoisie and Civil servants," added Zinoviev.

"Death! death!" roared the crowd in fury.

"If that is your will, comrades and dear brothers, do what the proletarian conscience demands," cried Lenin, drowning their voices. "I hear you now, saying to yourselves, 'How can I kill *all* the officers and Civil servants?' Among them may be the sons of workers and peasants!"

"Yes! That is so," cried several.

"Then you have found the answer in your conscience. I hear it. Some of the officers and Civil servants are ours, men who came from the proletariat and who will serve it. But there are others who have been overwhelmed with the favours of the Czar, with decorations, money and land stolen from you, the oppressed. Death to them! Death to Princes, to bankers, to Generals who have treated us like filthy cattle!"

The crowd dashed out of the gates of the citadel like leaves in the winds of autumn, madly howling, "Death to Princes, bankers and Generals! Death to oppressors!"

Lenin rubbed his hands, screwed up his eyes, and stood in silence.

"Mob law!" whispered Trotsky, plucking at his beard.

"Mob law," repeated Lenin. "Terrorism. We have no time to lose. The ranks of our enemies must be decimated."

Soon afterwards Lenin, the Commissars and the escort drove out of the gates of the citadel in their motor-cars. They met at once with a knot of cursing men striking at an enemy of the people. Their fists rose and fell, they swayed from the pavement into the street, dragging their victim with them. Lenin stood up in his car and saw that they had hold of an old, white-haired man, who wore a General's greatcoat with scarlet facings and the zigzag silver braid that marked an officer on the retired list. His hair was soaked with blood. He staggered under the blows that rained upon him, but he a face not allowed to fall. Lenin knitted his brows in with fury. Then he sat down and waved on the driver.

"Your first day," he muttered. "Their day of  
"What make

The car passed quickly along the Neva. At the palace of the Grandduke Nicholas Nicholaievitch a gang of youths were throwing stones at the lower windows, while others were running down the staircases with their loot.

"It is their first day," repeated Lenin.

He began to count the Red flags waving over all the buildings and to watch the delirious excitement of the crowds. Here and there they passed patrols of soldiers with red badges on their sleeves. In other places there were groups of armed workers. Somewhere in the distance there were sounds of machine gun and rifle fire, the last echoes of the fading battle for possession of the capital and the death-knell of Kerensky's last defenders, while Kerensky himself, disguised as a peasant woman, scoured the neighbouring country for regiments faithful to the Ministry which he had betrayed.

Lenin spoke to Khalainen. "Comrade, let us go to the telegraph office. I want to know how things are in Moscow."

## CHAPTER XXI

IN the Pyeski suburb of the capital, surrounded by old lime trees, is the famous Smolny Palace and its church, built by Rastrelli for the Empress Elizabeth. The walls of the palace witnessed the romantic intrigues and the high ambitions of the Czarina; they heard the prayers of devout nuns to whom the buildings were afterwards assigned; and they hedged in the barren lives of the schoolgirls who were known as "the Noble Virgins." During that period the gossip of the Court related that Alexander II made use of a private key for secret visits to the convent.

A strange chapter in the history of the Smolny Palace opened when the Red flag, the symbol of the Revolution, waved over its walls. Here the staff of the Bolshevik Party and of the Council of People's Commissars resided under the personal direction of Lenin.

Lenin worked in a large bare room, furnished with a few chairs and a sofa, and a writing-table which was heaped with papers, books and galley proofs. Absorbed in the details of his work, he would stride up and down the room, with his hands in the pockets of his coat and his head bent forward. He could neither eat nor sleep, but he took care to secure each day an hour of solitude, which he called "the drainage period," when he weeded out of his mind ideas and half-impressions which were not necessary and swept away memories of no account. At the same time he tabulated and docketed whatever was of value. And when that was done he deepened the channel of his mind, let new streams flow into it, and brought them to refresh the cells of his great brain. His mind worked calmly and with regularity. Nothing seemed able to prevent the Dictator of Russia from carrying out his plans unerringly as soon as they were conceived. Not for a moment would he confess that

insurmountable obstacles ever stood in his path. There was nothing that he could not overcome; and this was not the conviction of a dreamer, for he was the greatest of living realists. Every idea of which he approved he carried out at once, and if it proved harmful in practice he abandoned it without hesitation.

Nothing existed for him but his goal. To reach it he surrendered his privacy willingly, he sacrificed the comforts of family life, he put love on one side, he denied all meaning to happiness unless it were to work for the sake of the cause. With his goal before him he would neither hesitate nor be tempted. He would stop at nothing: crime, meanness, falsehood, treachery were only words for him. At best they were means to his end, instruments, landmarks on his way.

He lived outside the domain of morality for an aim so tremendous that no one had ever visualised it before. He was a sculptor setting himself to a tremendous task; but he had at hand the chisel of his mind and the solid mass of the Russian people—an uncut stone, 150,000,000 Russians, passive, powerful, apt for guidance and indifferent whether they lived or died. Nobody before him had ever had such an army at his command. The promises that he had made had already attracted to him the hearts and hopes of a downtrodden people. He was like a new Spartacus who had called out the slaves to destroy the Roman prætors. But Spartacus perished when quarrels arose in the ranks of his followers. Lenin would triumph by subjecting his followers to discipline, not by terrorism but by pretending that the mob was more important than himself. He would allow the mob to enjoy the triumph; he himself would reap the full success of the cause.

And in fact the mob was not at that moment in his power. The many-headed Giant Russia was the prey to many forces which flung him this way and that: from heroic martyrdom, fanatical patriotism and ascetic endurance under one regime, to a sudden eruption of bloody revolt on the barricades and a massacre of the Czar, or of any other idolised ruler. It was Lenin's task to crush those tides of feeling, to teach the sea humbly to lick the shores of Communism.

Such were the thoughts in the mind of Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin, President of the Council of People's Commissars, Dictator and Messiah of Russia, as he paced up and down his bare room in the Smolny Palace. His face was set, he pulled at his beard, and his whole nature seemed to writhe under the intensity of the thoughts which controlled it. But in fact his heart was calm and his steady eyes gauged every event with a cool precision.

He raised his head. Somebody was knocking at the door.

"Come in!" he shouted.

Khalainen appeared. "A citizeness here wants a moment with you."

"Has she a favour to ask? Is she of the proletariat?"

"She says she has no demands on you. She is a doctor."

"Oh, well! Show her in, comrade."

There came into the room a small, thin woman of forty-five, dressed in black with a mourning veil around her face. When she saw Lenin she smiled spontaneously.

"So my intuition was right," she exclaimed. "It is Vladimir Ilyitch—our serious 'Vola.'"

Lenin was on his guard. "Vola?" he repeated. "I was called Vola only in one place—"

"—at my father's home. My father, Doctor Ostapov."

"Helen?" he cried softly. "Helena Alexandrovna?"

"Yes," she whispered. There were tears in her eyes. "You would not recognise me easily. There has been much water in the Volga since we parted at Samara."

"There has indeed," he agreed. "How much everything has changed! It seems as though centuries had passed. And you are in mourning. Is it for your father?"

"No. My father died long ago. So did my husband. This is for my son, who was killed in Galicia during the retreat of General Brussilov's army."

"Then who did you marry?"

"Doctor Remizov. And I am a doctor myself."

Lenin laughed mockingly. "So that is what happened to you," he said. "And you said that you would

never forget me. But all things change, all things pass away, Helena Alexandrovna. Will you sit down?"

He placed a chair for her, and then, sitting at the writing-table, he looked at her carefully, examining her face, marked with lines of suffering, and her whole person from head to foot. He remembered her mouth and saw that it was still fresh and red. He noticed a lock of her fair hair visible beneath her hat. And she gazed back at him very calmly, without fear and without adulation, as a woman of experience might look upon a child.

"So that is what happened," he repeated.

"I waited for you a long time. Then my hopes died away for ever. And now I see that I was right."

"You do, do you?" He smiled quizzically as if he were prepared to listen patiently.

"We were very fond of you, all of us were," she went on. "We followed your career. At times we heard news of our friend Ulyanov, but always he disappeared again."

"Yes," said Lenin bitterly. "Prisons, conspiracies, life in hiding, exile in Siberia, emigration—the cursed emigration that corroded my soul."

She nodded: "Yet we heard that our Vola Ulyanov had become a powerful journalist who signed his name Ilyin and Tulin. Then I heard that you had married in Siberia."

"Of course," he drawled. "And then you decided that I would not come back to you. Eh?"

"No, I felt that much earlier."

"Why?"

"Because I saw from your articles and pamphlets that nothing mattered to you except your aims. I had always suspected it, but, like a woman, I wanted to have a small and personal aim of my own. You see, I am still full of bourgeois prejudices." She smiled to herself.

"At the moment," said Lenin, "that is the most innocent of the bourgeois prejudices."

"At the moment?" she asked. "How can women ever be otherwise?"

"Well," he replied, "I won't cast about for obscure

examples. I will take my wife, Nadezhda Konstantinovna. For her only the general aim exists. For her I am only a vehicle to carry herself and the whole human race to its goal."

"Is it possible?" she asked.

"I stake my life on it that Nadezhda Konstantinovna will have the courage and the spirit to deliver a political speech over my grave without a single tear. She will exploit my death as propaganda."

There was pride in his voice, and she recoiled from it.

"That is appalling," she exclaimed, raising her hands.

"But it is entirely fitting in the wife of Lenin," he replied grimly.

A silence followed which Madame Remizova was the first to break. "For a long time," she said, "I did not know that the pseudonym of Lenin was yours. I had to verify it, and I wanted to see you again."

"Well, Helena Alexandrovna, the name of Lenin was taken in honour of you." He laughed carelessly. "Have you anything to ask of me? I shall be glad to do anything for you, believe me. They say I have millions of faults, but I have one virtue—I do not forget my old friends."

"There is only one thing I could ask. I am the doctor in charge of an orphanage, and I heard to-day that the heads of all the institutions were about to be changed. Can you see to it that I shall not be dismissed? I have always carried out my duties conscientiously and I want to continue with them. I have a great influence over the children."

Lenin wrote a few words on a slip of paper and passed it over to her.

"Will you carry this devil's bargain about with you?" he said jokingly. "It may come in handy in a hundred ways. Meanwhile there are more important places than orphanages. When I begin my work of reconstruction I shall turn to you."

She stood up to go, but he prevented her. "Would you mind staying here for a moment?" he asked. "It is a long time since I've talked to anybody like this. I feel as if I were talking out loud to myself without



choosing my words and without having to take my listener into account. I know you understand me."

"Years ago I understood you," she replied.

"Years ago things were different! I was completely under the impression caused by the death of my brother Alexander, and you were also."

"Oh," she said softly. "After we parted I read a pamphlet about the way in which the attempt on Alexander III was organised. It was your brother who thought of making a bomb in the shape of a book which the conspirators could throw into the Czar's carriage. Those brave revolutionaries would be alive to-day if they had not been betrayed."

Lenin nodded and walked across the room. With his hands in his trousers pockets he began to speak as if to himself, softly.

"His death, the tears of my mother, the persecution of the gendarmes, those frequent searches, the mockeries of my teachers, the intrigues of my rich schoolmates, the stupid and abominable moral teachings of our priest, awakened in me a great hatred and a desire for revenge. Yes, I educated myself to avenge the death of my brother and the oppression of our people. I brought myself up to be an iron leader. I rejoiced on the day that I saw a mob of cooks, porters and labourers drag the embalmed body of Alexander III along the gutter. The crash of his empty skull where it hit the pavement sounded like music in my ears. That scene I dreamt of twice in my youth—and my dream was exactly fulfilled in my waking hours."

"I heard about it," whispered Helena. "I was struck with fear. The people might have turned against you."

Lenin laughed grimly. "Peter the Great found Russia an untamable stallion and he forced it to do tricks like a horse in a circus. I can do the same. The mob and the whole Russian people will be forced to spit upon the idols which they thought divine until yesterday."

Helena listened in silence. Lenin stopped suddenly and looked at her.

"You used to be a follower of 'The People's Will,'" he said. "You wanted me to bomb the Czar, didn't

you? Have you remained a Social Revolutionary or have you passed over to the Social Democrats?"

"I have nothing to do with the Social Democrats," she replied.

"Why not?"

"I don't believe in theory, compromise and evolutionary Socialism. That is the long way round, and longer for Russia than for any other nation."

"You are right," he shouted, rubbing his hands. "I felt the same from the moment when I first studied Marx."

"I have remained a convinced Social Revolutionary," she went on. "But I don't belong to the Party, for I am no hand at conspiracies."

"Do you follow Victor Chernov and those who want a Constitutional Assembly?" he asked, knitting his brows.

"Names do not matter," she replied. "The point is that Russia is a vast field in which a hundred million ploughmen should be happy first of all. Russia belongs to them and always will."

"No, she won't," exclaimed Lenin angrily. "She won't belong to them. That is the whole idea of Chernov and his gang. For eighty years they have always created agitation, and in moments of crisis they have always gone into hiding."

"What are you saying?" she protested with spirit.

"I repeat it, Madame. You must not believe the scribblings of these men. They are the blackmailers of the Revolution. Like the Social Democrats, they have neither clear ideas nor perseverance. They put their faith in altruism, in the common-sense of Governments and of the landed bourgeoisie. They are blind! They will not succeed. If they did they would produce at once a new bourgeois peasant class, which no revolutionary could manage."

"But what do you want a new Revolution for if the mass of the peasantry already holds the whole land?" she asked in astonishment.

He walked up and down the room, heaving his shoulders and shaking his bald head as he replied harshly: "There are periods of violent change in history. Some-

thing breaks and a bottomless pit opens suddenly before mankind. And then what should you do? Stand hopelessly and wait? Wait for what? For the moment when some other agency bridges the chasm or until its mouth closes? No, that certainly never happens. Never. In Russia for many years past we have had a chasm before us and we have stopped, helpless and without a plan for bridging it. I am the first one to produce a plan."

He looked at Helena and added quickly: "I'm of no account here personally, of course. Yet I consider myself the man in whom all the ideas and the desires of the oppressed are summed up, and that is why I have ventured so far."

"What are you going to do?" she asked in a whisper.

"I am going to rouse the dormant energies of our people, of which the chief reservoir is among the simple village folk. When the first fury of release is over, the deeper powers they possess will come to light. They will soon be roused; and then our people will leap across the chasm, calling upon all the other people of the earth to follow them. Nobody will stand in their way, Lena, because their impulse will be love and a care for the happiness of mankind. And if anything does oppose us, we shall crush it by the strength of materialistic humanity."

At this moment a number of the comrades came in and Helena had to depart. Lenin shook off with difficulty the impression made upon him by her visit, which had caused him to discuss ideas which he had not expressed in public for a long time.

"What news is there?" he asked, and listened attentively to reports on the agitation of other Socialist groups for the immediate calling of a Constitutional Assembly to accept a project of land reform and to make peace with Germany.

"Yes," he muttered, "they want to anticipate us. That won't do, comrades. An hour ago wires were sent to Berlin and to our Commander-in-Chief proposing peace. It is now being negotiated. The matter cannot be entrusted to any Assembly. The Council of People's Commissars must meet to-night."

As soon as the men had left the room, Lenin had himself put through by telegraph to General Headquarters at the front. Standing near him by the apparatus were Stalin and Ensign Krylenko. The exchange of messages lasted nearly an hour, for the Commander-in-Chief, General Dukonin, refused to carry out the orders of the Commissars to make peace with Germany. He demanded authorisation from the central Government acknowledged by the whole of Russia. Lenin smiled as he read Dukonin's answer. At once he dictated a final message :

"General Dukonin. The Government of the Russian Republic dismisses you from the post of Commander-in-Chief. Ensign Krylenko is appointed to succeed you."

Lenin told the operator to leave the room. When the door had closed he gave Krylenko further orders.

"Comrade, go to Headquarters at once with a detachment of sailors and assume command. The General must be killed. If any disorders occur in the army, do not hesitate to carry out a mass execution. There must be no half-measures."

At the meeting of the Council of People's Commissars Lenin outlined his conditions of peace with Germany and produced his list for the peace delegation, which was to be headed by Leon Trotsky. The comrades listened with amazement to the names of almost unknown men : Bryliant, a chemist ; Ostashkov, an illiterate peasant ; Pietrovsky, a surgeon-barber ; von Schneur, a secret agent of the Czarist Intelligence Service ; Matislawsky, a revolutionary student of Karakhan ; Bisenko, an elementary school-teacher ; Rosenfeld-Kamenev, an obscure journalist and emigrant. These were the people who were to negotiate in the name of "Holy Russia" with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk ; and the German delegates would be cultured, patriotic men, diplomats, scholars and generals.

A few of the Commissars protested. One of them even shouted in despair, "We are selling Russia!" Lenin noticed the feeling of uneasiness and indignation in the room.

He looked meaningly at Dybienko. The huge sailor left the room at once. A minute later the door was

flung open by Khalainen, who was at the head of the Finns. After him came the seaman Zhelezniakov, the murderer of the Kronstadt officers, with a squad of armed sailors. They came to a halt, their rifles grounded with a crash, and they stood stiffly to attention.

There was not another sound in the room. Slavish fear sat upon the faces of the forty-two members of the Executive Committee who attended the meeting of People's Commissars.

Lenin alone was openly cheerful. His eyes shone with exhilaration.

"In accordance with the decision of the Council and of the Executive Committee," he announced casually, "we are opening negotiations with Germany. Comrade Trotsky will head the delegation. Your consciences are quite clear, comrades. Remember that any treaty with the imperialistic German Government will be only a scrap of paper, because we shall soon sign another with the German proletariat and the Government of Karl Liebknecht."

Although the consciences of the comrades were effectually silenced the peace negotiations were by no means successful. The practised diplomats who represented Germany saw very clearly what the situation was in Russia, and they proposed such hard terms that even the Bolshevik envoys did not dare to accept them without permission from Petrograd. This was a blow for the new rulers of the Russian Empire. Lenin pondered over the situation for a long time. He had to persuade his colleagues that peace at any price was necessary to give a breathing space to the Revolution at a moment when the Council of opposition groups among the Socialists was still in existence and when the patriotic fervour of Kornilov and Alexeiev was still alive in the provinces.

But the very delay was a help to the Germans and Austrians who drove the disorganised Red army before them. In the south they invaded the Ukraine, in the north they captured Pskov. To put pressure on the Bolsheviks they sent their aeroplanes more and more frequently over Petrograd itself.

Still the President of the Council of People's Com-

missars debated the problem. "We must become the only masters of the situation," he decided. "The Constitutional Assembly is a danger. We must scatter it to the four winds." But careful preparations were needed for so bold a stroke. For one whole night Lenin walked up and down his room. "When we have the most vital and most active social classes on our side we need fear nothing," he decided. "When that moment comes we can carry into effect at once the decision of the Council."

Next morning it became known on all parts of the front and in the most distant provinces, wherever telegraph offices existed, that the Council of People's Commissars had declared its policy. The work was done by a sure and experienced hand. The manifesto of the new Government granted permission to the troops to make peace with the enemy as best they could and to return home. It permitted the peasants to seize the land and property of the landowners without waiting for the decree of the Constitutional Assembly. It recognised the principle that peoples of non-Russian origin might detach themselves from the former Empire and establish their own Governments. Finally, it invited the workers to take over all capitalist enterprises and to conduct them with their own resources.

Meanwhile Trotsky and his brother-in-law, Kamenev, tried to stop the German offensive by interrupting the parleys, by evading a settlement, by introducing specious but meaningless phrases into the protocol.

Both Lenin and Trotsky were waiting for the results of the elections to the Constitutional Assembly. It soon became evident that the Peasant Party was winning and that the Bolsheviks would not have a majority in the Chamber which was to establish a Government and to rule the country.

Lenin rubbed his hands and laughed when he heard the news.

"Very well. We shall achieve our victory in the normal way."

"The normal way?" queried Trotsky.

"Yes," exclaimed Lenin. "The normal way is through blood and civil war, crushing all our enemies

at once. It is more radical than the slimy path of compromise and discussion."

"We can't defeat the Assembly," remarked Trotsky.

"Don't talk nonsense, comrade," retorted Lenin sharply. "A few months ago the Duma said the same of the Czar. By the way, see to it that the Czar and his family are moved from Tobolsk to Ekaterinburg. I was thinking it over last night. We should have him near us so that we can lay our hands on him at any moment. Ekaterinburg is a good place. We have steady people there in the Workers' Council—the Yurovskys, Voykov and Byeloborodov."

"Yes, you are right," Trotsky agreed. "But, Ilyitch, can we attack the Assembly?"

Lenin halted before him with clenched fists. "Why can't you shake off those superstitions of yours?" he hissed. "Some people prostrate themselves before statues and crucifixes, others before institutions and officials. There is darkness, blindness, slavery all around me!"

He spat on the floor with disgust. But a moment later he was calm again, even smiling, and he touched his companion on the arm.

"Physician, heal thyself," he said. "Remember there are no people and no institutions on earth possessed of immortality. All things must die. All things turn to dust. Even your Jehovah knew that, and He was a wise God, for He had scourged the people."

Trotsky went away thoughtful and uneasy. Lenin remained alone, walking up and down the room snapping his fingers together. Finally he half-opened the door and shouted for Khalainen.

"Hurry, comrade," he said, when the stolid Finn appeared. "Bring Felix Dzherzhinsky to me. Tell him to come with men whom he can trust absolutely."

Khalainen went away, and Lenin began to walk up and down again, humming a song and whistling. He was quite calm and did no more thinking. He refreshed himself with a glass of tea, sat at his writing-table, unfolded a newspaper, and settled down to solve a chess problem which he found in it. His face was unperturbed; an easy smile passed across his thick lips.

As the clock outside struck midnight somebody knocked at the door.

"Come in," cried Lenin, standing up.

Dzherzhinsky opened the door. His lean face twitched convulsively and his knotted fingers writhed together.

"Do you want me?" he asked, in a soft but piercing voice. "I have reliable men with me—Yuritsky, Volodarsky and Peters. We used to be together in the Intelligence Service."

"Yuritsky?" asked Lenin with his head on one side.

"Yes," replied Dzherzhinsky with a grimace that passed for a smile. "He started the massacre of the officers. He also sent the sailors to kill Shingariiev and Kokoshkin, the sick Ministers who were in hospital. By his orders, also, the sailors killed Ivan Goremykin and his family in Socha. That's the very man for you."

Lenin shook hands with them all.

"I shall be quite frank with you," he said. "Sit down and listen to me. What I say now must be kept secret for the time being. I expect that a civil war will break out before long—a very Russian war in which even one's own people will not be spared. I wonder if you understand? You are not Russians, but I assure you it will be an undreamt-of war. The days of Pugatchov were nothing in comparison." He laughed aloud and continued: "To win a war, even a civil war, it is necessary to have an army. We have any number of bayonets and of men to use them, but we have no officers. The other side will have plenty of officers. Comrades, your work is to get hold of all officers who are now unemployed or in hiding. You must get them on our side, either willingly or by force."

"Good!" said Dzherzhinsky. "That is just what we have been waiting for. Don't worry, Vladimir Ilyitch. We shall win them over with horror, hunger and imprisonment. If they have arms or resist, we shall slaughter them. If they have a revolver it shall be reported as a howitzer, and a penknife will become a poisoned dagger. We shall establish a secret counter-revolutionary society and draw thousands of White officers into it. When we have ensnared them we shall make a selection: the best will be given to you, the



remainder to the grave. We can easily make them obedient. Why else have they mothers, sisters, wives and children—all hostages for our dungeons? The officers will have a choice. They can be faithful to our army or else see their families die. And for those who refuse to serve, Peters will prepare a special torture according to the recipe of the Grand Inquisitor."

"Yes," said Lenin. "I see that you understand me, comrades. And now we have other matters to discuss of equal importance. Listen. You must have people ready to destroy Nicholas the Bloody and his family. I want a few reliable terrorists for any emergency."

"Won't the Czar be tried?" asked Volodarsky with the same callousness. "They had a trial in the French Revolution."

Lenin paused before he replied. Then he said decisively: "It would be a dangerous tragi-comedy to try the Czar in public. We don't know how he might behave. Supposing he said enough to win over the people? Or, again, he might die a hero's death. We have had enough martyrs and enough saints already. And we can't let him live, for he might be rescued by his German or English relations, or by counter-revolutionaries who would make fetishes of him and his family. Is that clear?"

"Yes, we understand," said the comrades.

"Now can I rely on you not to betray one word of this?" His sharp eyes swept the circle of faces. "I promise you that the proletariat will not forget your services in defence of its cause. The proletariat can give splendid rewards and it can smash to pieces all men who betray it. Now go. Begin your work to-morrow. We have no time to lose."

After Lenin had cordially ushered them out he crossed over to the window and stood looking out. He stretched himself lazily and yawned. He looked up at the gilded cross of the cathedral, shining brightly in the moonlight.

"Away with you!" he said aloud, with the tolerant smile of a conqueror. "You weigh upon the earth too heavily. And what is your message?—martyrdom and humility when we want life and rebellion."

His eyes fell upon the clock. It was nearly one.

"This is the hour of ghosts and visions," he thought. "Yet they do not come."

He closed his eyes and shuddered as the face of Dzherzhinsky came into his mind. It was pale and vacant with sunken eyes, twitching eyelids, and a twisted mouth. Then Lenin roused himself and laughed.

"There is a comrade who will remain firm as a rock," he said.

At that moment the door creaked slightly and the greasy hangings were pushed aside. A man slid gently into the room.

"What do you want?" asked Lenin. His eyes suddenly lit up. He remembered the road in the Tatra mountains and the young fanatic who came to give him terms.

"What do you want?" he repeated, watching the man carefully, and moving slowly towards his writing-table.

"Do you recognise me? I am Selaninov. I met you at Poronin, comrade. I have come now to warn you once more. If you attack the Constitutional Assembly——"

He did not finish his sentence, for a bell rang loudly and angrily in the corridor. Lenin had cautiously reached the table and pressed the bell. Immediately Khalainen and the sentries rushed in.

"Take him away," said Lenin carelessly. "He threatened me."

The Finns seized Selaninov and dragged him from the room. Lenin threw himself upon the sofa and fell asleep at once, worn out with the labours of the day.

He did not even hear a revolver shot beneath his window and the voice of Khalainen: "Throw the body into the street."

Far away a clock struck two. The hour of ghosts was past.

## CHAPTER XXII

AFTER a time the Baldyrev family found peace, or if not peace, at least the possibility of existence. And bare existence, in that period of blood and storm, was the highest happiness.

Their flat was confiscated by the Communists as soon as they had control over Petrograd, but, fortunately enough, it was granted to men who had been employed in the Baldyrev factory. They had always been on good terms with Baldyrev, and they did not treat him badly now, but left him two rooms while they occupied the remainder with their wives and children.

The Baldyrevs had to endure it patiently when they heard their china being broken, their furniture overturned, and the constant running about of undisciplined children. They heard, too, the quarrels of the women over their own settees and carpets and their angry rivalry for the use of the kitchen.

Gradually they grew accustomed to the changed situation. They went on living quietly, careful not to show themselves too much abroad or to talk with strangers. They also schooled themselves not to object when they saw their belongings being taken out of the flat and sold in the town.

"We can't do anything about it," whispered Baldyrev to his wife. "Don't worry, Masha. When this storm is over we shall get back all that we have lost. I don't blame the workers. What can the poor devils do? They confiscated everything, and now they are starving. The factories are derelict, and there is no work being done because all sorts of committees are consulting and quarrelling together. There is nobody who can pay for work done, there is no bread, no meat and no butter in the market. The people are simply compelled to steal and to sell their booty. The Lord be praised, nobody

interferes with us, and we have got at least a shelter for ourselves and the boys."

He crossed himself devoutly and folded his wife in his arms.

"You are right, darling," she whispered. "Yesterday when I was out hunting for some porridge and milk I met the wife of General Ushakov. She is having a terrible time. The Red Guards burst in on them day after day, ransacked the flat, abused them, hit them, and at last they took the poor man away with them. Madame Ushakova has been hunting for him all over Petrograd for two weeks."

"Has he been killed?" asked Baldyrev with a blanched face.

"That's what she thinks. And yet she goes on hoping. These are terrible times. They are a punishment from Heaven upon us."

But despite their fears the Baldyrevs were almost happy. Late in the night after the storming of the Winter Palace Baldyrev and Peter had found Gregory in hospital with a badly bruised chest. Armed with a permit from Ovshenko they moved him home, and from that time the family lived quietly together. All their money in the bank passed into the hands of the conquerors, but two days later it became nearly valueless, for the Council of People's Commissars abolished the monetary system, making their stocks and shares worthless. Still, the family possessed a fair quantity of silver, jewels, clothes, linen and furs, which they bartered with the peasants who came to town.

In this way they supported themselves. Madame Baldyрева cooked their modest meals on an oil lamp. She never went near the kitchen, which became the scene of fiercer and fiercer quarrels between the workmen's wives; and it was not long before the men joined in the fray. In the evenings, after the workers had come back from their endless meetings, the flat would often be in an uproar. The Baldyrevs had to listen to their raised voices and their obscenities. They had to endure the thumping of heavy furniture thrown about and the crash of broken glass until late at night. Some-

times, too, they were called in to dress the wounds which resulted from the battle.

Fighting was soon a matter of routine, and the drinking of spirits made it worse. Although alcohol was prohibited, nevertheless the all-powerful soldiers, pretending to search for counter-revolutionaries, began to plunder the wine stores and the shops of the Spirit Monopoly, thereafter selling their booty openly in the streets. In all of this the intelligent and cultured Baldyrevs had to acquiesce. Madame Baldyreva noticed that her weak and fickle husband changed under the blows of fortune and that there was now a closer understanding between him and his sons, who for some years had been scandalised by their family life. For that reason she often felt that she was quite happy again, as she had been during the early years of their married life. She cheerfully put up with all her troubles, and she was always busy, although the men did as much work for her as they could.

It seemed extraordinary that old-established services like the water supply and the power stations began to go wrong as soon as they were controlled by the Bolsheviks. More than once both of them failed together. Then the water and drainage pipes froze and burst. The young engineers had to mend them, meanwhile carrying water in buckets from the hydrants. They waited for hours in queues for oil, coal, bread and other victuals distributed according to the new law. More than that, they succeeded in mobilising all the workers of the house in a communal effort to keep the house in order and to mend whatever went wrong.

This last scheme lasted only for a month and then it ended in disaster. A worker who needed a length of pipe for the house took it from a machine in his factory. Somebody who saw the theft reported it to the Bolshevik Commissar; at once the worker was arrested, charged with stealing the property of the people, and executed. Soon afterwards the rooms occupied by the Baldyrevs were searched and all their valuables seized. Because Peter had ordered the worker to procure the length of pipe he was imprisoned in the dungeons of the Extra-

ordinary Commission to Combat Counter-Revolution Sabotage and Speculation—the notorious Cheka. At his trial the Public Prosecutor, who was an ex-dustman and a perpetual drunkard, threatened him with death and even put a revolver to the young man's forehead. But fortunately enough the workers of his factory made an application for his release and after a fortnight he returned home.

Even in his own home he would only make allusions to what he had experienced in the Cheka building, and he refused to go into details, for they knew that the families in the flat were capable of eavesdropping at the keyhole; already there had been occasions when they had denounced one another. But sometimes when they took a walk together Peter would speak more freely. The conditions of the supreme court in which proletarian justice was dispensed cried to Heaven for vengeance. Every day suspects were shot out of hand; as in the days of the Czarist police, *agents provocateurs* were put in among the prisoners; bribes were taken for the release of prisoners; prisoners were beaten and tortured with a brutality unheard of even in the worst of the old days.

"Everybody who goes there should have a coffin ordered and a Mass said for him at once," said Peter with a wry smile. "It is only by luck that anybody ever comes out alive."

They looked at one another with horror in the depths of their eyes.

"Times are bad. They are getting worse," said Baldyrev.

Amidst all his troubles, the searches, the frequent panics, the continual fear both for himself and for his family, Baldyrev seemed to have altogether forgotten the woman whose influence had so completely dominated him. One day, as he went along the Neva Prospect, he remembered the charming Tamara. On the spur of the moment he crossed the river and made for the house where, a year before, he had installed the dancer in a comfortable flat. His first surprise, after he had rung the bell, was to see the door opened by the maid whom he had known a year before, although a new law

forbade the employment of hired labour under the severest penalties.

"Tamara takes risks," he thought.

When he asked if the dancer was in, the maid dropped her eyes demurely and replied: "Madame is in but she cannot receive anybody. The Commissar of our district has just come, so . . ."

Baldyrev understood everything. He heard laughter within the flat, the coquettish chatter of Tamara, an excited man's voice and even, it seemed to him, the sound of kisses and the clink of glasses. He looked into the hall and smiled. He saw on the hat-rack a Swedish leather coat and a wide-brimmed leather cap—the favourite uniform of the new Commissars—and a sabre and a portfolio, the invariable symbols of the new Communist power.

He laughed aloud. "Tell Madame that I came to wish her good luck," he said. "And I can't tip you these days. I have no money." Then he went away, but when he had descended one flight he stood and rocked with silent laughter. It was the funniest thing that had happened for a long time.

He had a long walk home, for all taxi-cabs had been confiscated and the trams were out of action, while the drivers debated at their meetings, or left their work to deliver radical speeches in favour of the Council of People's Commissars and its President, Comrade Lenin.

He arrived home tired in the evening, but he held his wife's troubled head in his hands and kissed her joyfully.

"Have no fear, Masha," he said. "All is well. I have done with everything that troubled your life and debased my own."

A week later Baldyrev and his sons were summoned to the Labour Commissariat, where a worker in a leather cap interrogated them.

"Well, bourgeois," he asked brutally, "would you like to serve the proletariat? We need your knowledge for the time being until we can get hold of our own experts. If you don't want to serve us, we'll take away your ration cards, for only those who work may eat." He laughed heartily. "That's what our Lenin said."

Well, do you agree? Remember, if you refuse you'll be punished, and we have a lot of punishment left for the enemies of the Revolution."

The Baldyrevs exchanged glances. Then Peter replied for all of them.

"We accept your proposal," he said. "But we are not enemies of the Revolution."

"I know you, you cunning dogs," the Commissar shouted. "Nearly every one of you carries on with the sabotage and boycott of proletarian Russia. The Social Revolution is not what you want at all, you want to oppress us as you used to. Eh?"

Baldyrev could no longer control himself. "Comrade," he said with a conciliatory smile, "you were a worker or a foreman yourself. I can see it from your hands. Now tell me frankly and honestly: did the bourgeois in the office ever talk to you as you talk to us now?"

The worker did not expect such a question and for a time it nonplussed him. But after a moment he resumed his arrogant manner. He threw over to them a slip of paper with the address of the factory where they had to report next day, and so their work for the proletariat began.

With few exceptions the workers passed entire days outside their workshops. They debated and argued fiercely about how to control the factory, they worked out fantastic schemes for running the concern with their own resources, they fixed their own hours of work, they sang the Internationale; and in the meantime they mutilated the machines or raided the stores for the raw material.

Very soon the engineers, who demanded some sort of efficiency from the workers, became very unpopular and were accused of using bourgeois methods. Fortunately for the Baldyrevs, the matter was taken up by the Supreme Commissar of Labour, an intelligent man, who summoned both parties before him. He listened patiently to the accusations of the workers and to the explanations of the engineers. The case aroused widespread interest. The room and the corridors outside were packed with workers who smoked and gossiped,



cheered their representatives and repeated the old catch-words: "Long live Lenin! Long live the Revolution."

Suddenly there was a commotion at the door and the leader of the proletariat himself came into the room surrounded by his Finns. After exchanging a few words with the Commissar, Lenin sat down. He first scrutinised carefully the intelligent faces of the engineers standing before him, then turned to their accusers, who were endlessly repeating a nonsensical rigmarole of phrases picked up from the flood of Bolshevik literature. They had no doubt what would be the verdict of the Dictator, and he smiled at them in a friendly fashion.

"Comrades!" he called in a harsh voice, "clear the room at once."

Khalainen and the Finns were well practised in their art, and soon there were only a few spectators left.

Then Lenin asked the accusers what work had been completed in the factory during the period since the engineers had taken charge. One of the men read out a list of the work that had been done.

"Why did the work stop?" asked Lenin.

"Because we had important meetings to attend. Also we ran out of raw materials, for the stores of the factory were open to the comrades."

"What has the comrade engineer to say to that?" asked Lenin.

"It is true," replied Baldyrev. "Materials were missed from the stores. Why that happened I don't know, for the control of the stores is not my business. I am only technical counsellor. If I had some bronze, copper and steel, I could mend the machine. Also I pointed out to the factory committee that the men should work for six hours a day at least if the factory was to be productive."

"And how many hours did the comrades work?" asked Lenin.

"The committee arranged that," Baldyrev replied.

"You must ask them, Comrade President."

Lenin nodded to the accuser, who looked through the papers in his portfolio and replied: "On the average, for two hours—not every day, but most days."

"Comrade, what is this?" said Lenin, starting to his

feet. "The theft of public property—a shameful waste of time—sabotage under the disguise of revolutionary meetings! It was you, comrades, who set up the dictatorship of the proletariat to crush the bourgeoisie and any other social group which opposed us. The concentrated activity of every worker is needed to maintain that dictatorship—not six, not eight, but ten, fourteen or twenty-four hours' work every day. Do you understand?"

At once the workers jumped to their feet and began to protest angrily. "That is slavery, worse than under the bourgeoisie! Where are the gains of the Revolution? Where is the Socialist paradise you wrote and talked about? Where is the freedom of the working class? We ought to be well fed and allowed to rest after our labours under the yoke of Capitalism!"

Lenin smiled good-humouredly, though his thick lips twitched and trembled.

"Comrades," he said, "you made the Revolution. It was your victory that made possible the paradise you speak of. But the paradise is not here yet. You must work—not chatter, as you have done these past three months. As I look at you I say to myself, 'These brave revolutionaries, having climbed up a high tree where they are admired by the whole world, are now sawing off the branch they sit on, just for fun!'"

There was laughter in the room, and Lenin knew that he had partisans among the workers. He continued to speak with a malicious smile.

"Nothing is being done against your will. We obey your orders. You decided to work hard and to make peace with Europe, which has outstripped us by fifty years. But, instead, you work for two hours and chatter for six. I wonder your throats aren't swollen by it. Why, you seem to be envious of Kerensky, who talked day and night. They say he made speeches even in his sleep. Yet I was always hearing at meetings that you opposed Kuzma Putkov, who advocated a cautious policy of delay. Remember that our enemies never sleep, and if they start an attack, no talk will help us: as it is, you will waste your energies and you will cease to talk

only when the nooses of the White Generals tighten around your necks. Work, comrades! Work! Work! You must make an effort if you want the Revolution to succeed and your own happiness to follow."

He stooped and whispered a few words to the Labour Commissar. Then he gave judgment in a steady and decisive voice.

"In the name of the working class I order that the engineers shall remain in the factory. The committee must see to it that the weekly production equals the production in the first weeks under these engineers. Otherwise you will be court-martialled for sabotage. The proletariat has no room for laziness and no belief in mercy."

There were no protests from the workers, who went away in a state of dejection. They felt that a heavy and ruthless hand had been laid upon them. The engineers, encouraged by Lenin's decision, exhorted them to increase the production of the factory. They did their best by example and by words, but the workers shook their heads.

"It's too late now," they muttered. "The machines are half ruined. There are no raw materials. Nothing can be done."

One after another they joined the Red army or fled to the country, from which the Russian worker never quite cut his connection. The more intelligent among them applied for work in the innumerable offices which were transforming Russia into a nation of parasitical bureaucrats.

At last the factory closed down altogether. The Baldyrevs were free. But they were depressed by the event, for they did not agree with the men of their own class who boycotted the Bolshevik rule as a government of invaders and traitors, under the impression that it would not last long. Baldyrev and his sons considered that the new order would endure for some time. They looked upon the Revolution as one period of a powerful movement which would pass through several transformations in the course of many years. Moreover, they were responsible citizens, and as such they could not leave

their country in the lurch, even though they clearly saw that it was being torn to pieces by the clumsy hands of dreamers, criminals and illiterate louts.

"We professional men must remain at our posts," Peter Baldyrev used to declare; "for every successive Government will need us. Remember, the peasant will decide the issue in the end: he will arise in his anger against these lunatics and bring about the final settlement. But even the peasant will need the help of the professional class. He won't put up with these things in leather coats, the Commissars, who are at once ruining Russia and ordering the country-side to give them food. Our peasants never did have much in common with the towns; and now the towns are overrunning them with Commissars like vermin, who are neither known nor respected. The authorities demand bread, meat and butter to feed the Red army, but the towns have no goods to give in exchange except newspapers, pamphlets and specious catchwords. We must wait for the time when the peasant descends upon the towns with a thick stick in his hand. That is the cure."

Prompted by these principles, the engineers registered once more with the Labour Commissariat, and they were told that they would be called upon when their professional help was needed. But at the same time some of the workers who lived in their flat left for the country and the District Commissar billeted new families upon them. They were beggars and nondescripts who came out of the worst slums in the capital. Immediately thefts were followed by fights. As a result, search-parties of the militia and of soldiers broke into the flat. At each visitation "the bourgeois" suffered worst of all, for their possessions were seized and they themselves were insulted as "robbers of the working class." Their life became more unbearable every day.

Then the women spied upon Madame Baldyreva and reported to the authorities what supplies of food she bought. They also declared that she owned an excessive amount of clothing, linen and footwear. At night a party of robbers, pretending to be agents sent to investigate charges of speculation, raided the flat and took away the food of the bourgeois family.

Finally the patient was taken away in a stretcher in the same fashion. But Gusev suddenly turned round and looked at the doctor in a furious way. "You are cursing me," he said.

"You are cursing me, you bourgeois bloodsucker! You are cursing us, you bourgeois bloodsucker! You are cursing us, you bourgeois bloodsucker! You are cursing us, you bourgeois bloodsucker!" he cried, his face white with rage. "You must hand over—and look occupied by workers' hands, and light a peasants' bonfire."

"There must be some sense in this," said Madame Baldyreva.

"What sense?" asked Baldyrev, and she left the room, only to return a few minutes later, and shaken.

"Gregory," she said, "go and always been your friend. Ask him to come at once. The doctor has declared that there was not a moment to lose, but the room was so filthy that she was threatened with infection and death."

Madame Baldyreva looked at her men. "Go out for a while," she said. "We'll have the poor creature in this room. We can't leave her like that."

When the men came back they found poor Madame Baldyreva in tears.

"Can you imagine how mean that woman is?" she sobbed. "We saved her life, but as soon as the child was born she declared that she would stay in the room for good. They have all moved in now—her husband and four children."

"We can't do anything," Baldyrev decided. "We must get away from here."

"But where to?"

"To the country, to my brother Serge. He sent us an invitation long ago. In the country we will be undisturbed."

A few days passed before the Baldyrevs could get a permit to leave the capital. In that free country everybody except the members of the Bolshevik Party was held to one place like a convict fettered to his wheelbarrow. However, friendly workers helped the Baldyrevs, who were quite destitute, and they moved to Rozino, an estate near Novgorod. Here they breathed freely, and they realised how easy it was to get along without the luxuries of civilised life.

"I used to be angry with the laundress over a badly ironed shirt-collar," said Peter, laughing. "Now I can

their country in the lurch, even though all. Everything is that it was being torn to pieces by the wave of revolutionaries, criminals and illiterate led by a gang of peasants

"We professional men must be led by an evil-looking Peter Baldyrev used to declare. Government will need us. Renegade demanded that the pro-decide the issue in the end: I come out at once to see against these lunatics and bring them into the ment. But even the peasant professional class. He worked in leather coats, the Comrade lord," although they nudged sly winks.

"We have ordered you on important business, Comrade Bourgeois," said the stranger roughly, assuming the rôle of spokesman.

Baldyrev looked up at the sound of his voice and examined the man closely.

"Ah!" he exclaimed at last. "I didn't recognise you for a moment. Klim Gusev, eh? It's a long time since we have met. You drank away your cottage and land and then left the village. What are you up to now?"

Even then Baldyrev did not say all he knew. He remembered that this chronic drunkard had been imprisoned for some crime in the neighbouring town and that he had been exiled from the "obshchina"—the primitive and aboriginal peasants' commune.

"I have full power from the Council of Workers' and Peasants' Delegates in this district," said Gusev boastfully. "We have come here, comrade, to demand the surrender of the whole estate, with its cattle and its buildings. Everything belongs to the peasants now."

He raised his closed fist threateningly to enforce his argument.

Baldyrev frowned. He did not like this new jargon in the mouth of a ne'er-do-well.

"Keep your fist to yourself, my man, or we'll get nowhere. I know from the papers that the Constitutional Assembly will meet in January. When it meets, it will pass laws about property in land. Let us wait for them. January is not far off."

Baldyrev stroked his grey beard and looked at the

peasants in a friendly fashion. But Gusev suddenly broke into a storm of curses.

"Don't try to deceive us, you bourgeois bloodsucker! You have squeezed enough tears and sweat and blood out of us already. Now you must hand over—and look out we don't strangle you and light a peasants' bonfire into the bargain."

"Are you threatening me?" asked Baldyrev, and turning to the peasants he exclaimed: "You are silent, neighbours. Why? I have always been your friend. You know that I never squeezed blood out of you. That is the story of a drunken gaol-bird. Speak! Does justice live in your hearts?"

The peasants shifted about uneasily, muttering, "Well . . . certainly . . . so to say . . . we've lived on friendly terms . . . no oppression at all. . . . We can't complain. But the order has come to take the land and everything else from the landlords . . . to distribute it. We only came to advise you in a neighbourly way, to advise you . . . whatever happens, we shall take the land."

"Indeed! By what right will you take it? Are you all going to turn criminals? What will happen to you when order is restored again? Have you thought of that?"

"In your lifetime, bourgeois, there will be no order except the rule of peasants and workers," replied Gusev with a grin. "If you don't give in we must use force."

It was not easy to frighten Serge Baldyrev, a retired colonel and a hero of two wars. He stiffened proudly and replied: "I give up nothing until I see a law published and confirmed by the Government. If the Constitutional Assembly commands it, I shall give way at once. And now you can commit any crime you like, but you will atone for it bitterly. So I tell you to be sensible while there is time. Go home, think it over, and send the headman to me with your decision."

He waved his hand in dismissal, and the peasants left the manor house without more words.

"The master was right," one of them muttered as they walked away. "We can wait."

"Wait? Wait?" sneered Gusev. "You will only

wait for a new set of policemen, new prisons, new knouts. The bourgeoisie will restore the old regime at the Assembly and back you go under their yoke again. The thing to do is to take what you can while there is time."

"That's true. Why not use the chance we have?" they said to each other.

An hour later the headman was at the manor, twisting his cap in his hand and looking uneasily at Serge Baldyrev.

"The Lord have mercy on you, sir! The Lord have mercy! The people have gone mad. The Last Day is at hand. They have decided to take everything from you—land, house and cattle—and to expel you and your wife. They told me to tell you that you must send your relatives away. Gusev said that they were battenning on the peasants. Sir, it is not we who want this, but Gusev. He drove them along like a fiend in hell. Oh, what an evil day this is!" Then he approached Baldyrev and whispered in his ear: "Put on a peasant's suit and wait here. I shall send a cart for you, and my godson will drive you to town, where you will be safe."

"Thank you, headman," replied Baldyrev after a long silence. "Send Ivan up with a cart."

When the man had gone he went to the parlour where the whole family was assembled.

"I must give way," he said calmly. "But I shall remain here to see that the poor fools do not destroy the farm. I shall be their counsellor and assistant. I must not desert my post. If it passes into the peasants' hands they must get the best possible profit out of it, and I alone can help them to do that. As for you, the peasants insist on your leaving. Valerian, you must go with your family and my wife to my friend Kostomarov. He has a small farm which he cultivates like a small peasant, and they won't take that from him. It is the best possible refuge."

But his wife protested. "I am going to remain! I won't be parted from you. I went with you to the war as a nurse, and I cannot leave you now. We have no



children, we have lived for each other. We can die together! Oh, let me stay!"

Serge Baldyrev was deeply moved, and he did not try to oppose her.

"Thank you, Julia," he said simply.

He took counsel with his brother, whom he asked to safeguard some of his documents and valuables which could be sold in course of time. He also asked Valerian to prepare Kostomarov to take him in with his wife, in case they would have to leave the manor in the end.

"I am afraid," he said, "that the peasants will get out of control like your workers. When I have lost hope I shall come to Kostomarov and help him."

The Rozino manor was soon empty except for the old couple, who sat in the half-darkness and talked in low voices.

"Is there a single man in the district to whom we have ever done an injury?" asked the old woman. "Serge, why do they hate us?"

She sobbed quietly while her husband walked up and down the room.

"It is a complicated business," she said. "We are answering for the sins of others. We must atone for the sins of the Government, of the nobility, of the officials and intelligentsia. We are punished for the crimes of the Czars. They looked on the peasants as cattle, to be lashed on with a whip. They left the peasants in darkness, they created a gulf between them and the rest of Russia. We have lived long enough to see the day of revenge. And now we are no longer just good neighbours known for fifty years, Serge and Julia. We are the gentry, people of education, in league with the old authorities. So we are their enemies."

They talked together for a long while, their troubled grey heads bent close together. Suddenly a window-pane shivered with a crash and a big stone fell on the carpet. A cloud of frosty air blew into the room. A muffled noise sounded from the courtyard.

Baldyrev saw through the window a great crowd of peasants led by Gusev, and the women of the village who all had sacks in their hands. "return,"

"Open the door! Open!" came a shout from without. Baldyrev crossed himself and opened the massive door. At once Gusev and the women pushed past him. Without any preliminaries they began to fill their sacks with whatever they would hold, pulling down the curtains and breaking open the locked cupboards.

"Take away everything!" was the cry. "It all belongs to us. The bourgeois are done for."

"Come to your senses, people!" shouted Baldyrev but he was pushed aside; and from the courtyard where the farm buildings stood came cries and shouts of triumph.

Encouraged by Gusev, the women fell into a fury of destruction. They broke the mirrors and the furniture, smashed the piano to pieces, and finally went away bent double with their sacks.

"Set the old barn on fire!" shouted Gusev, waving on the mob.

At once a peasant set a long torch under the wooden roof. Another threw kerosene against the walls and set them alight. Tongues of flame began to lick the blackened planks of the old building and smoke poured from the gables of the roof. In a few minutes the whole house was alight.

"Barricade the doors!" a woman shouted. "Roast the rats in their hole!"

And at that command the peasants, who had been humble and devout, the women and girls who had come day by day with their troubles to seek advice, the old men who came over and over to "the lord" for advice in their domestic affairs or for protection from tax-collectors and the police—all of them went mad in the fantastic glare of the flames. They shouted and raved as they piled up beams and timbers against the door. They ran from one part of the building to another, exulting in the hot breath of the fire, in the crash of falling rafters, in the sparks whirling upward in the frosty sky.

An old witch, in whose mad eyes the glare of the fire won't horribly, lifted her arms above her head and as a nurse in a shrill frenzy: "Burn it down! Burn it

down, good people! When that lies in ashes the lords will never return!" Her words were received with shouts and blasphemies. "Chaste Mother! Christ! Lord! We have lived to see the day of joy!"

Her voice broke suddenly in the acrid smoke and she fell to cursing.

"The master and mistress are coming to the window!" shouted somebody. "See, Orthodox people! The fire has reached them!"

Serge Baldyrev seized his wife, who had swooned with terror, and dragged her to the door. With all his strength he could not break down the barricade. He took up a chair and smashed a window in the hall. Then he raised up his wife, and the peasants saw his grey head through the window. A youth jumped forward and hurled a stone at him. The crowd howled with delight, and a hail of stones fell upon him. Baldyrev disappeared with a loud cry, and at the same time the ceiling of the hall came crashing down, sending an eddy of sparks and embers into the sky. For some moments even the roar of the fire was drowned by the hysterical shouts of the Russian peasants.

"Get the horses out!" shouted a voice. At once the crowd rushed to the outhouses, but they were too late. The thatched stables were alight from end to end. They could only stand and listen to the shrill neighing of the horses, the hissing of the flames, and the crash of woodwork as the place was consumed with all its tractors, machines and ploughs.

"The peasants' bonfire," one of those innumerable holocausts which lit up Russia from end to end, died down with the dawn. The peasants returned to the village, driving before them the cattle from the lord's fields.

"I shall light a thick candle to St. Nicholas for this night's work," said one of them in sudden gratitude. "We've settled the whole affair with no harm done. The land is ours. We alone have a right to it. The land is our mother and our nurse."

"Let us see to it that the Baldyrevs never return," said another.

"We may be driven to Siberia for this," said a third.

"Lord have mercy on us and save us."

They all looked round fearfully and crossed themselves. Gusev laughed boisterously.

"Don't fear, comrades. They will come no more. To make sure of it, we'll set up an aspen in the ashes. Then no Baldyrev can come back."

"Yes," said the peasants, reassured. "We'll ward them off with an aspen pole. Why not?"

At that moment the printing machines in Petrograd were striking off Lenin's proclamation to the peasants. "We tell you, wait for no law. Take back the land which was taken from you by the servants of the Czar, by the bankers, by the nobility. Sweep your enemies aside; they are exploiters and oppressors. You are the oppressed and you have now thrown off your fetters. Do your work quickly. For the landowners are waiting for reinforcements led by the Czarist Generals. They are advancing upon you with court-martials, the death penalty, prison, hard labour and the knout. Hasten with your work. Remember that nobody can ever take from you what you seize at this moment. Long live the Social Revolution! Long live the Government of Peasants and Workers! Long live the Dictatorship of the Proletariat!"

Lenin wrote this proclamation after attending a meeting of the Commissars. As he listened to their speeches he felt sadness and fear stealing over him. As he walked along the corridors of the Smolny Palace he said to himself: Am I really a Dictator of millions? Shall I ever be? Have I the power that I need? Can I stamp my will upon them all? I must, for my will is not selfish. I want to free the workers from serfdom, even at the cost of my life. Yet I feel that the mob dominates me, gives me its orders, and only by an effort can I achieve a tithe of what I want. Am I a slave to the mob—a victim of fanatics, demagogues, illiterate peasants? Can I only become a Dictator by yielding to them, and gain my power in the end by controlling food supplies? I am compelled now to make the peasants destroy the best-cultivated farms. But I need not fear. The Dic-

tatorship is within my grasp, and when I have it I can do what I will."

At the same moment Felix Dzherzhinsky lay on a sofa in his room, guarded by Latvian revolutionaries under the command of Peters and Lacia. A victim of insomnia for many years past, Dzherzhinsky lay with staring eyes. Through days and nights of suffering this ex-convict, this neurotic Socialist had to live face to face with terrible thoughts and appalling memories. He hated the entire world. He wished to revenge himself upon all that lived or was the work of living hands. He wanted to bathe in blood, to surround himself with broken bodies and ruined things. In the end he wanted to be all alone with the stillness of death.

Occasionally his swollen eyelids flickered down for a moment over his bloodshot eyes. He pressed his hands to his convulsed face and groaned with pain. His mouth curved in a terrible smile of suffering and he ground his teeth together.

Late at night a message from Lenin was handed to him. The Dictator wrote that he entrusted Dzherzhinsky confidently with a task upon which might depend the future of the Revolution. Civil war was imminent. A large army would have to be raised, with a special guard to defend the Commissars. It would be made up of Latvians and Finns and of the Chinese imported by the Czarist Government for military labour. These men had been kept well supplied. The soldiers fighting on the internal fronts would need all the provisions possible. And the towns could not be left without food because rebellions might break out in them. But the peasants would not willingly give up their food, because they had not much themselves: the Commissars ordered Comrade Dzherzhinsky to produce measures by which the peasants would be forced to bring their food to the depôts. He was to have an entirely free hand to carry out his plans as soon as possible.

All night Dzherzhinsky writhed upon the hard sofa, sleepless, thinking how he should accomplish his task. He had no scruples. He would squeeze the last drop of blood from the peasants, who were slaves and

savages. He would see to it that they never forgot his name.

He clapped his hands and a Latvian soldier appeared immediately at the door.

"Well, comrade," Dzherzhinsky asked, "you hate the Russians, don't you—the whole mob of gobbling workers and illiterate peasants who used to oppress all the conquered nations, the Poles, the Latvians, the Finns, the Tartars, the Ukrainians and the Jews?"

"Yes. They are mad dogs," growled the soldier.

"Mad dogs," repeated Dzherzhinsky. "We must have no mercy on mad dogs."

The soldier stood erect and silent. Dzherzhinsky scribbled a few words on a piece of paper.

"Send this off to Malinovski, comrade, and tell Peters to come to me."

Then he fell back again, exhausted by the effort, and even by the sight of a human being. He hissed with pain and bit his tongue to keep back a cry. Outside there was a tramp of feet and a click of rifles. It was the changing of the guard.

At Rozino, faint wisps of smoke rose from the blackened ruins of the manor house. In the village the peasants shared out the cattle, cursing and quarrelling with one another. At last they dispersed to their cottages, looking up at the growing light in the sky with grateful eyes.

"Jesus Christ our Saviour, may Thy name be blessed for ever! Thou hast comforted us and set us a reward for years of oppression and misery. Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!"

Above the forest rose a cloud of crows and ravens, wheeling in disorder, calling clamorously for prey.

## CHAPTER XXIII

JUST before Christmas, signs of uneasiness became noticeable in the Smolny Palace, the residence of the Council of the People's Commissars. The corridors were usually filled with people who came thither on business or else out of sheer curiosity to see what was going on and to meet face to face the Commissars who were shaping Russian affairs. Now, the corridors were all but deserted. Only here and there the Finns and Latvians were posted, while behind the closed doors the troops were concealed.

At noon a group of men surrounded by armed workers entered the building and were ushered into the chamber where the Commissars were gathered with members of the Executive Committee and of the War Revolutionary Committee.

An armed worker with a red arm-band announced them: "The envoys of the Council of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates!"

"Good-day, comrades," said Lenin, seated at a table on the dais.

A lean, middle-aged man appeared at the head of the deputation and spoke in a trembling voice: "We represent the Social Democrats and the Revolutionaries. We have come on behalf of the Council which inherited the power of the Government."

Lenin smiled and replied: "The comrades are now at the headquarters of Russia's only Government—which is not hereditary but revolutionary. But that is unimportant at the moment. What do you want?"

"The Social Revolutionaries ask the People's Commissars by what right they have usurped the policy of giving the land to the peasants?"

Lenin lowered his bald skull on the table and laughed.

His broad shoulders shook with merriment. When he looked up again his eyes were full of cunning enjoyment.

"Your policy for the land is not in accordance with our opinions," he said. "But we used it because the peasants want it at the moment. Why did we hasten the publication of your plan? Because we can make it effective, while in your hands it would remain a scrap of paper."

"You are a demagogue!" shouted the deputation.

"Is there any harm in that?" asked Lenin, smiling.

"It is a shameless usurpation," they cried.

"Everything is a usurpation to somebody when what they want has been snatched from under their noses. But the usurpers look at it differently. Now what else?"

Another comrade came to the front. He was terribly pale. His lips trembled and he spoke only with an effort.

"In the name of the Social Democratic wing of the Council I protest against the shameful peace which the Commissars are proposing. The Russian nation will never forgive such a disgrace."

"Do the comrades want the war continued?" asked Lenin sympathetically.

"Yes! The nation's honour is at stake!"

"Have the comrades an army they can rely upon to carry out a campaign?"

"No, unfortunately. You have managed to break up the army completely."

"Excuse me," broke in Lenin, "for pointing out an inaccuracy. You did the first work in breaking up the army. It is too bad, but history proves it. It is enough to mention the tactics of your 'Napoleon' Kerensky. Then there was Sokolov with his famous Order No. 1, and your own orders when you wanted the front line. There was nothing for us to do but to dot the 'i's,' and we did it."

The deputation was silent and discomfited. Lenin noticed it, and went on in the same disarming manner.

"You were kind enough to prepare our way. You volunteered to do the dirty part of the work. You are



well aware that war is impossible at the moment. The people are exhausted. There are no more recruits. The army has had enough fighting. There is no alternative but peace at any price. That is our policy. Even the great Grand-duke Nicholas, if he were in our place, could do nothing else. As for myself, I have always been convinced that it is better not to fight at all if you can only wave your arms about and be hit on the nose. I advise you, comrades, to remember that, day and night."

The deputation felt the concealed threat in his words. But their indignation mastered them.

"We shan't allow usurpers to torment the country," they shouted, "and to threaten the Assembly, which alone can establish a system of laws and prepare the terms of peace. We will defend the Assembly with all our strength. You must remember that on your side."

Lenin leaned back and stretched himself luxuriantly. He spoke without a trace of anger or excitement.

"You will be shot down with machine guns," he said.

The discussion was over. The deputation departed, angry and crestfallen. The Commissars surrounded their leader and expostulated with him fearfully.

"A split with all the Socialists . . . at such a dangerous moment . . . it is a great responsibility," muttered Kamenev without looking at Lenin.

"A gauntlet thrown down before the Constitutional Assembly," added Tomsky.

"I agree," said Trotsky, taking off his eye-glasses. "You don't know which way the peasants and the army will jump."

A silence set in which was broken at last by Sverdlov: "A threat is no longer a threat when it is backed up by action."

"Yes," said Stalin, baring his white teeth. "We can flood Petrograd with troops this minute. The Grenadiers, the Pavlovsky regiment and the machine-gunners are enough for that."

Lenin listened attentively. When the comrades had exhausted their arguments he said firmly: "The Party to which all of us belong demanded the Dictatorship of

the Proletariat. We cannot betray the Party. It amazes me, comrades, that I am forced to lecture you on our principles. I see more danger here than in an attack upon the Constitutional Assembly, which seems to have hypnotised you."

He went on speaking gravely, without rancour, as though he were discussing some trifle with a few friends.

"A Dictatorship implies power based immediately upon violence. It acknowledges no legal limitations: the power of the State means violence and nothing else. The logical conclusion is that the Dictatorship of the Proletariat exercises the functions of the State. That is the only source of law. The law must be strong enough to crush all opposition groups out of existence. Only traitors or fools can desire tolerance for those who oppose the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Such are the principles involved: to surrender them would be worse than madness. It would be treachery. So when the right moment comes the policy of the Party will be backed up by bayonets and machine guns."

Lenin's courageous declaration made an impression upon them all, though some still deliberated whether it would be better to prevent the calling of the Assembly or to face an open struggle with it. Lenin saw the situation, and recalled to them the words he had used to the deputation.

"When you *do* strike," he said, "strike hard enough to destroy Heaven. Comrades, we shall discuss this later on. It is a matter of the first importance."

Leaving the room, Lenin met Nadezhda Konstantinovna in the corridor.

"Any news?" he asked.

"Delegates from the Jewish communities are waiting to see you. They have been waiting for two hours. I told them to come to-morrow, but they said they were leaving Petrograd at once."

"The Jews?" he pondered. "What do they want with me? And with so many of their compatriots on the Council. Do they take me for a Jew as well?"

"No," she laughed. "You are Ulyanov and a nobleman for ever."

"An ex-nobleman," he corrected her quickly.

"An ex-nobleman," she repeated, taking his hand.

"But they know it, at any rate."

He opened the door of his room and stopped in astonishment. The Jews were seated stiffly along the walls in formal silence. They were not the revolutionary Jews of the Bund, a type which he knew of old. They were dressed in furs and silks and velvets, and broad fox-skin caps. They had old, patrician faces and long silver beards; their grey hair fell upon their shoulders, their wrinkled hands lay upon their knees in priestly immobility, and they looked straight ahead with their red-rimmed and bloodshot eyes. Lenin inspected all his visitors carefully and waited for them to speak.

One of them rose and addressed him in Russian. "We salute you, the leader of the oppressed. We are the Rabbis and teachers of Israel, sent by the Council of the Synagogues with a heartfelt entreaty."

Lenin motioned him to go on. He sat down at his writing-table full of astonishment and curiosity.

"We have to request you to dismiss the men of our race who sit on the Council of People's Commissars."

"Are you all mad?" shouted Lenin. "Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek—they are our most valuable comrades! They are laying the foundations of the new order. History will set their names next to those of Marx and Lassalle!"

"Leader of the people," replied the Rabbi pontifically, after he had explained Lenin's words to his companions in Hebrew, "Leader, you are aware that conditions in Russia have turned the Jews into revolutionaries. The persecution has led us to educate our sons so that they may fight for us. Since the days of slavery in Egypt and Babylonia we have been internationalists and nationalists at one and the same time. We live and work peacefully everywhere, but we never pass over the boundaries of our own community. Our community is a beehive: we are the bees. We know very well that in Russia the Jews alone were fitted to produce practical revolutionaries. We blessed and encouraged them up to the moment when the Empire of the cruel

Romanovs was overthrown and the nation turned to the Constitutional Assembly. At that moment the work of the Jews was finished. It was then their duty to become ordinary citizens of the Russian Republic."

"The Constitutional Assembly again?" escaped from Lenin. "This is a damnable day. Nobody talks of anything else."

"The Constitutional Assembly is the highest expression of the impulse of the soul and of the wisdom of the nation," replied the Rabbi, with uplifted hands. "If you do not believe a thousand elected representatives, collect two million Russian citizens together and ask them what is their will. Woe upon you thirty men if you want to rule the destinies of millions! The Semitic nations have a proverb: 'Unless you are a born horseman, do not ride upon the horse's neck.'"

Lenin was silent, and the Rabbi took up his discourse again.

"The Council of the Synagogues has definite information that the Commissars, amongst whom are many Jews, are conspiring against the Assembly. Some of them, such as Volodarsky (or Moses Goldstein), Guzman and Moses Radomylski (who has adopted the name of Yuritsky) have become veritable executioners. They are cruelly slaughtering without trial the enemies of the Council of People's Commissars, which has never been acknowledged by the people. We cannot tolerate it."

"But why should it worry you if the Jews destroy the men who have started pogroms in the past and may start them again in the future?"

The Rabbi translated Lenin's remark. The old men nodded their heads and looked at Lenin. One of them made a remark which the Rabbi repeated in Russian.

"The venerable Rabbi says, 'Woe upon us! The foolish action of the Commissars will bring down upon us a calamity worse than any recorded in the annals of the Jewish nation.'"

"Have you made your opinions known to the Jewish Commissars?" asked Lenin.

"At this moment our demands are being communicated to them."

"Then," said Lenin, "if they come to heel——"

The Rabbi lowered his head and whispered sadly: "But they are heretics from the religion of the Chosen People. They have renounced our faith and our law. They will not agree. We entreat your condescension to get rid of them. Yours is a Russian affair. Let the Russians do what their conscience bids them."

Lenin jumped out of his chair. "How dare you interfere with the activities of the Council of People's Commissars?" he roared.

He quickly controlled himself and looked again at these unusual visitors. They sat immovable and upright. They gazed ahead of them with no other emotion than sorrow. After a long silence the old Rabbi said a few words which were translated for Lenin.

"The venerable Rabbi says that if our demands are not considered, a dark cloud will overshadow it. From it a merciful rain may fall or a destroying thunderbolt."

"My dear old man," replied Lenin mockingly, "you can entreat, argue and desire as much as you will. But keep away from demands and threats. That is the privilege of the proletariat. Do you hear?"

He turned his back and said no more. He was seething with anger, and his hand itched to ring the bell. Why not order the Finns to remove these priests of a non-existent Jehovah and put a few bullets through them? He restrained himself, not through fear, but because nobody could take the place of the Jews in the Party. Certainly not the aristocrats and the bourgeoisie who were the natural enemies of the proletariat. And the peasants, his allies up to a point, could easily become his worst foes. No! Even the illiterate, talkative Russian worker was only good for cannon-fodder or to break the necks of defenceless victims. The weak and illogical Russians swayed between extremes of asceticism and anarchy. The Jews were full of hatred. Consciously or by tradition they followed the instincts of the beehive. That was Lenin's conviction: they could not be replaced. So he waited patiently until the door closed behind the last of the Rabbis. Then he walked up and down the room, thinking over the interview and deciding not to mention it to the Jewish Commissars.

"They are suspicious and watchful," he thought.

"They may decide that I am an anti-Semite at bottom."

But he felt all around him the influence of the Rabbis and the calm certitude of their threat.

"A merciful rain or a destroying thunderbolt! When will it come? Upon whom will it fall?"

Lenin laughed at last. "Let them do their worst," he said, clenching his fists.

## CHAPTER XXIV

A SECRET meeting was being held in the house of the Rabbis in Kiev. The synagogue and the buildings adjacent to it were carefully guarded by young Jews posted at the corners of the streets and in the gardens near by.

At a round table in the council-room the Rabbis were seated in their robes of ceremony, serious, concentrated and awe-inspiring. The deputies sent from the Jewish communities stood around in deep silence, with their eyes fixed upon their seniors. The ancient Rabbi, supported by the arms of two of his colleagues, arose and addressed them.

"Isaiah the Prophet said: 'Woe to the sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a wicked seed, ungrateful children: they have forsaken the Lord, they have blasphemed the holy one of Israel!'"

He sat down, shook his old head, and panted heavily.

Then a young Rabbi from the provinces addressed the assembly. "Ye Judges, faithful to the Law of Moses! You laid upon me the task of examining the important matter which we are here to discuss, and I have done my work. I accuse these wicked sons of Israel who conceal themselves under false names. They commit iniquities and they walk in blood. They sin against the Lord and against the people, for they have spilt the blood of Israelites. When the Russians and the men of other nations see Jews among these murderers they will hate our whole race. They will shed the blood of the Chosen People, the blood of innocent and guilty, the blood of men, women and children. We approached these men with words of reproof, but they would pay no heed. I demand, then, the penalty of death upon them according to the Law of Moses."

Again the Rabbis raised up their venerable chief,

who said in a grave voice, his hand raised above his head: "Hear ye the words of Jehovah according to Ezekiel: 'I also will deal with them in my wrath: my eye shall not spare them, neither will I show mercy: and when they shall cry to my ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them.'"

"Amen," said the Rabbis with bowed heads.

"Amen," sighed the crowd.

An urn was placed upon the table and they all stood around it in a crowd. The young Rabbi read out slowly a list of names, and at each name one of the elders took a slip of paper from the urn. There was no other sound in the whole room.

"Solomon Shur!"

"A white slip!"

"Moses Rozenbuch!"

"White!"

The reading out of the list went on for a long time, and after each name the old Rabbi, taking a slip of paper from the urn, called out, "White!" Suddenly there was a dramatic change.

"Dora Frumkin!"

"Black!"

The old Rabbi held a slip of black paper over his head. There was a solemn pause. Then the ballot went on again until black had fallen to Dora Frumkin, Kanegisser, Fania Kaplan, Yankel Kulman, Moses Ester and five others, who were thereby chosen from the list of volunteers to carry out the sentences of death passed upon the criminals who were bringing down the hatred of the Christian world upon the people of Israel. That same night the executioners were given their secret commission and the world knew nothing of what had passed.

Meanwhile Lenin was working unceasingly and with all his energies to realise his schemes for the building up of a new world. He confided only to Nadezhda Konstantinovna, or even more properly to himself alone, for she sat silent while he mused aloud.

"Socialism . . . Socialism is a Utopian dream. The development of industry and making the whole community proletarian is not sufficient for it. No! Some-



thing must come out of my own head to complete it. I am an avalanche clearing away the ground where Socialism will be built up in the future. I must destroy everything that stands in my way—private property, individuality, the Church, the family. These are the barriers in my way! I don't trouble so much about capitalism and the bourgeoisie. In a month or two nothing will be left of them. They are not organised. They do not dare to oppose us. But the peasants are a more difficult question—they are the strongest element of all. They hang on to the land by their teeth."

"Have you any schemes for dealing with them?" asked his wife.

"I gave them a jolt when I told them to seize all landed property without consulting any authorities whatever. At the present moment our obedient and pious peasants are running amok, destroying what they can. They have betrayed their own principle of property and they have slaughtered their lords. Also I have split the Social Revolutionaries by drawing their Left Wing over to our side. I tempted them with jobs in the Cheka, where they can have as much blood out of the big landed proprietors as they want. Now I'm going to convince the peasants that the Constitutional Assembly is of no use to anybody, for they have taken possession of the land for ever."

"You have been sitting up writing at night again," she said, looking anxiously at his lined and yellow face.

"What else can I do, my dear? Our Dictatorship has become a Dictatorship of journalists." He laughed grimly. "We alone hold the power of the printed word—though of course we back it up by swift action."

The telephone bell rang and Lenin took off the receiver.

"Yes! Good! Please come now! I am waiting for you."

He turned to his wife. "In a quarter of an hour I shall have a visitor."

She asked no questions, and soon afterwards she left the room. A few minutes later, Lenin's secretary announced: "Helena Alexandrovna Remizova."

"Ask her in," said Lenin eagerly.

Helena entered the study. Her face was pale and

excited, her lips trembled, and there was anger in her eyes.

"I come with a complaint," she said, before he could greet her.

"What's the matter?" asked Lenin, smiling ironically.

"I was in church with my pupils. Oh, it was terrible! You wouldn't believe it! Suddenly the soldiers of the Cheka rushed in and began to drive away the people who were looking for consolation and peace. Remember, it is Christmas time. The soldiers blasphemed terribly. They struck the people. They tore the sacred pictures from the walls. They broke open the Czar's Gate. They dragged the Bishop from the steps of the altar and tortured him. It was horrible! It may cause a riot and civil war!"

"Did the people object?" asked Lenin calmly. "Did they rebel?"

"No. They fled in panic, fighting each other to get away." She shuddered at the memory.

"Well," he laughed, "can't you see that the experiment was successful?"

"But it was sacrilege!" she cried. "And everything was done in your name."

He shrugged his shoulders. "Why are you speaking in the name of God? Was God angry? Did He thunder? Did He punish the Cheka? You are silent! God does not care. So why are you so troubled, Helena Alexandrovna?"

She looked at him in horror. He took her by the hand.

"Dear Helena," he said. "Calm yourself. All this was done by my orders. It is my guilt, it is my sacrilege, and I take upon my own shoulders the full weight of God's anger." Watching her face carefully he added: "You see, I must destroy the Church and uproot religion. They are the heavy chains that drag down the spirit of man. The Orthodox Church cannot fight like the Roman Catholic Church. She can never free herself from the old Government. She is its tool, its spiritual police. For years she had taught passive obedience and slavish humility."

"It is terrible," she whispered.

"Perhaps it is. But do you understand what I am doing?"

She was silent, obsessed with the fear of what she had seen. He leaned towards her and touched her with his warm hand.

"Helena! Helena! I am no phrase-monger! You must trust me. You must. God! If there is any higher power in the Cosmos, in that mysterious Heaven discredited by Copernicus and Galileo, it will be much better even for the believers to pass through a period of upheaval and persecution."

"I don't understand you," she said.

"Why, the people who believe because it is customary to believe will become active crusaders for their God. He will be in their hearts. Their religion will be no longer an educational system, but an ardent faith of apostles and martyrs, a faith that can move mountains. That faith will restore the true principles of Christianity, the first of which is sacrifice—and sacrifice is the beginning and the end of my own aspirations. There will then be socialism upon earth. Do you understand me, Helena?"

"Yes," she moaned, almost in despair.

But when at last Helena went away she was calm and affectionate. She felt once more that she understood Vladimir Ulyanov. She pardoned him his ruthlessness: he was both a fanatic and an ascetic, so it was inevitable that he should be hard and unyielding. He was an unusual man who frightened and yet enthralled her. She thought with sorrow of her dead son: if he were alive she would hand him to her mighty friend, to serve him faithfully. Lenin's only aim was the happiness of Russia and of mankind.

Lenin had many difficulties to face, but now he never lost heart. His enemies, who suspected him of designs against the Constitutional Assembly, brought a multitude of false charges against him, and one of their chief weapons was the report of a secret inquiry which was instituted during the Kerensky regime. The Mensheviks, who were able to quote from documents in their possession, asserted that Lenin and his associates

were in the pay of Germany. The accusation was, indeed, founded on fact: the Council of People's Commissars had received certain sums from Germany through a man named Sumenson who lived in Stockholm. The charge was plausible and it made such an impression on the great mass of the people that even the Communists were in doubt. They noticed that Lenin did not defend himself. When Lenin heard of it all he laughed carelessly and dictated a short statement to be printed in the papers:

"The money referred to was received from Comrade Sumenson. Its origin is well known to Karl Liebknecht, Clara Zetkin, Rosa Luxemburg and other Internationalists abroad. The sum in question was not a large enough price for selling Russia to Wilhelm II and there is no proof that it came from the German General Staff, as these blackmailers assert. I shall use other arguments against them in a short time."

He laughed heartily and repeated his instructions: "Put that in the papers to-morrow in the heaviest type possible."

When the stenographer had left the room he telephoned to Dzherzhinsky and Peters, and later on an answering call came from Dzherzhinsky.

"We have done the job," he reported. "The Latvians found three journalists who had all the documents of the inquiry on them. They were executed fifteen minutes ago."

"Thank you," replied Lenin. "Keep your eye on the curs."

"We know all their plans," Dzherzhinsky went on. "To-night they are holding a preliminary demonstration in support of the Constitutional Assembly, which meets on January 6th."

Lenin frowned angrily. "I've told you what to do," he rapped out.

"We are ready." Dzherzhinsky's voice had a note of malicious triumph.

A few hours later, in spite of a bitter frost, Lenin was standing by an open window, listening. The crisp air of the winter night magnified the sound of rifle fire in the distance and the incessant chattering of machine

guns. Suddenly a motor-cycle rushed into the courtyard at full speed and a Finn soldier jumped off it into the building. A minute later he was in the Dictator's study.

"The demonstrators have been dispersed," he said. "About five hundred of them are dead. The people are quiet. Our patrols are guarding all streets and crossings."

"Thank you, comrade," said Lenin. "You may go."

His black eyes shone as he whispered to himself: "Well, gentlemen of the Mensheviks and Peasants' Party, you have had two arguments from me so far. Expect no delay. Others will follow!"

He had worked out one of these arguments during the preceding night, and now he sent a soldier to summon Comrades Trotsky, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Stalin, Antonov, Yuritsky, Muralov, Piatakov and Dybienko.

"What is the news from the front?" he asked.

"Very bad," replied Trotsky sulkily. "A German offensive is being prepared against Petrograd itself. The fall of Petrograd would mean the end of the Revolution. The counter-revolutionaries are looking to the Germans as their saviours."

"That really is treason," Lenin muttered. "Yet they blame us for it. All we want is peace."

"The people of Petrograd and Moscow are waiting for the Germans," said Zinoviev, running his hand through his hair. "They will bring back the old regime, restore the dynasty and finish us off."

Lenin was unmoved.

"The Comrade President should not make light of the present situation," said Yuritsky maliciously. "We must decide on a policy and carry it out at once. At present we are destroying other Socialists with Dzherzhinsky, a Polish nobleman, as our executioner, while the enemy is at the gates. The German imperialists are strong, and when they find themselves welcomed by the people they will be stronger."

"Comrade Yuritsky is right," said Kamenev, looking meaningfully towards Trotsky.

None of this by-play escaped Lenin, who sensed the unspoken thoughts of his comrades.

"Comrade Yuritsky does not seem to relish my confidence in Dzherzhinsky," he said. "Yet I would not like any misunderstanding to arise. I have entrusted him with a very delicate mission to safeguard all of you, the Hebrews. You have received warnings from the Jewish community, have you not?"

They were silent for a moment. Then they nodded agreement.

"Well, you will hear no more of it. Do you understand me? I trust Dzherzhinsky because he reminds me of an infernal machine charged with hatred."

"He is a madman!" shouted Zinoviev wildly. "Do you know, comrade, that he even spies on us?"

Lenin's spontaneous smile put them all on the defensive. They knew that smile well: it was the presage of some swift and merciless stroke. But no stroke came.

"That mad Pole," he observed. "Do you know, he asked recently that I should put spies on to him. He is that sort of a fanatic. He does not even trust himself."

"He enticed Malinovski to his place and had him executed," shouted Yuritsky.

"I imagine Malinovski was executed," Lenin drawled, "for he has not been seen since. Possibly Dzherzhinsky was a little hasty there. Malinovski was a secret agent of the Czarist police and he did us more good than harm. Still, he would have died soon anyhow, and we had very little more use for him." He dismissed the discussion of Malinovski with a wave of his hand.

"Comrades, for the next few days the Press must be flooded with appeals to the proletariat to take arms against the German imperialists. They must be kept away from the Red capital. Use every ounce of energy. Set the whole machine of propaganda in motion."

"The army has no more fight in it," said Antonov dubiously.

Muralov agreed. "They know we are short of food and supplies. Civil war they don't mind, but they will refuse to fight an outside enemy."

"Then we must raise the armed workers, the revolutionary proletariat," shouted Lenin. "The French

Revolution proved what can be done by even unarmed people."

"The French, yes, but not the Russian!" snarled Trotsky.

Suddenly Lenin laughed so boisterously that the tears came into his eyes.

"You people understand nothing," he said, rocking with mirth. "Of course our bands of workers will run away like mice as soon as they hear a German machine gun. Yet our appeal to them will have the best possible results. Listen!"

He passed around the group, from one man to another, pressing their hands and patting their shoulders, laughing all the while.

"The revolutionary army will suddenly appear. The whole world will know of it. We shall make the most of it too. What will follow? The lukewarm Socialists who oppose us will be silenced, the counter-revolutionaries, who are trying to raise a volunteer army themselves, will think twice about it. We shall get the officers on our side for good. The French and the English will gain courage and attack more fiercely on the west. The Germans will be compelled to withdraw a few divisions from Russia, and that will make them more anxious for peace with us. Our stand against Germany will disprove once and for all the charge that we are in German pay. If we were, the Germans would be compelled then to publish the documents which compromise us. They cannot, because there are none. . . ."

The Commissars were astounded by the cleverness of this scheme, which was worked out with such a far-seeing eye for every factor in the problem.

"A true Machiavelli," thought Trotsky, with unfeigned reverence, looking at Lenin.

"Long live Ilyitch!" shouted the excitable Georgian, Stalin.

The shout was taken up by the whole group—an elemental ovation for the little man who stood amongst them, a man of no more outward-seeming importance than a small-town grocer.

He laughed, cleverly concealing his enjoyment. He

felt that he had secured a great victory: that the colleagues upon whom he depended had become his slaves. Now he decided to complete his triumph quickly and decisively.

"Have you grasped my plan? Carry it out at once. There will be much more work for the Cheka to do, so let us appoint Volodarsky as chief of the Intelligence Service, Yuritsky as director of its armed forces and Dzhershinsky to do the dirtiest work—the prosecution at the trials. I call it the dirtiest work because it is a bloody game and he will be most cursed for it. The prosecutions will be directed by no man except the personal feelings of the man who will be prosecutor, judge and executioner at the same time. Do you agree? Well, then, let's get to work."

Within three days the papers and a body of speakers had filled the minds of workers, peasants and all the riff-raff that supported the proletarian Government with the new watchwords of the moment. Lenin made no mistakes. Everything that he had foreseen came to pass as if a clever stage manager were directing events from behind the scenes. He lied without hesitation, tricked everybody, and deceived the whole world: the allies of Czarist Russia, the Germans, the counter-revolutionaries, the Socialists, the proletariat and even his own comrades.

"They fear the Constitutional Assembly as the strongest expression of the national will," he reflected scornfully. "But the will of the nation is in my breast. I will disperse the Assembly, sign a treaty of peace, and hold all Russia in my hand. Now nobody can oppose me."

He decided to strike a new blow at the Socialists who objected to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and so he organised a meeting to be held in the Mikaelovsky Riding School. The newspapers gave it prominence and glaring posters in every street invited the people to the meeting, which was fixed for January 1st, 1918.

On the eve of that day Volodarsky came into Lenin's study with a stranger.

"This is Comrade Guzman, my assistant," he said. "I want you to know of an important discovery. We



have definite information that some organisation is preparing an attempt——”

“An attempt? Against what? Against me?”

“That we don't know precisely,” said Guzman. “We have been informed that it is against the People's Commissars.”

“What organisation is it?”

Volodarsky paused before he replied. “It is a mixed body—White officers and Social Revolutionaries, so far as we know.”

“You have no exact information at all?” exclaimed Lenin. “Czarist officers are not in it. They have had a thousand opportunities and done nothing. They have no spirit, no courage. Politically they are dead. The Social Revolutionaries or—but it doesn't matter. We can't prevent conspiracies. Do you know any of the persons involved?”

“We only know that the attempt has been prepared. We have come to stop you, comrade, from speaking to-morrow.”

Lenin walked up and down the room. “To prevent me!” he laughed. “But I have announced my appearance. I must speak, comrades! Do you think you can frighten me—a man who has forgotten the meaning of fear? You knew me when I was hunted by the police abroad, when I visited the barracks in St. Petersburg before the July rising, when I walked amongst the armed officers of the Guards, who hated me. It was always the same. After I had spoken I was safe. It will be the same to-morrow. When I begin to speak, nobody will dare to attack me.”

Next morning at eleven o'clock he entered the Riding School, which was crowded to the doors. When he entered the tribune and looked down at the dense mass of people he knew that nobody there could even move enough to take aim.

He spoke for an entire hour in his harsh and tuneless voice, waving his arms, hammering on the tribune with his fists, even emphasising his meaning by the movements of his bald skull. Time and again he repeated the same arguments to drive them into the minds of his hearers. They had to defend themselves against

German imperialism; but he promised a quick ending to the war, when the German bourgeoisie would surrender to the proletariat.

"You will not grant peace to the Government of Wilhelm!" he shouted, "for you know that to-morrow or next day the Socialist Government of Karl Liebknecht will arise. Its terms of peace will be terms of war against the capitalism of England and France for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. You alone, the workers and peasants of Russia, are the vanguard of World Revolution. The peasants have possession of all the land: they will supply the fighting proletariat with all that is necessary to establish liberty, equality and eternal peace.

"But be careful lest our enemies deceive us. Even now they demand obedience to the Constitutional Assembly, which will be composed of the avowed and secret enemies of the working class!"

A roar of shouts and cheers broke out from the crowd. It was evident that some of the people were in opposition to the Dictator, but he went on undisturbed.

He began to describe the paradise that Russia would be when all the people were working for the community alone, when the long years of servitude and oppression would be dim memories of the past. He spoke gravely, like a father admonishing his children.

"Don't you think, comrades, my brothers and sisters, that for the sake of your future happiness it will be worth while enduring a few months of discomfort and privation and hard work?"

The whole audience was caught up in a wave of enthusiasm.

"Long live Lenin!" they shouted. "Our father! Our ruler! Lead us to happiness. Tell us what we are to do!"

He seized the opportunity. "Remember, then, what we have just decided! The defence of the country—hard work and a supply of food for the sake of the army—opposition to the Constitutional Assembly, which will rouse new hatreds in the nation and put new shackles upon the peasants!"

"We do remember! We swear to follow you!"

The crowd surged around the tribune, pressing upon Lenin as he made his way from the Riding School. He entered his car at the door, and Trotsky made as if to accompany him.

"No," said the Dictator, "I have something to say to Comrade Platten."

The Swiss comrade got into the car and sat next to the smiling Lenin, who had no wish to be near Trotsky at this moment. He had in his mind the suggestion of death that had fallen from the lips of the Jewish Rabbis.

"Caution is the best comrade of courage," he said to himself.

The thought hardly entered his mind before two revolver shots rang out. The sharp reports were drowned by the cries of the people and the roar of the engine as they drove quickly from the Riding School, but Platten, beside him, groaned and gripped his arm. Blood flowed between Platten's fingers.

"I am wounded," he said.

The car moved on at full speed, and Lenin's smile was scornful.

"Well shot," he said, "but not well enough."

There was feverish activity in the corridors of the Smolny Institute, where the Commissars, the representatives of various committees, and the commanders of the faithful regiments were already coming to inquire after Lenin's safety.

He met them in a friendly fashion and laughed over the affair.

"I have no idea who shot at me," he said. "An inquiry has been ordered. Now Comrade Dzherzhinsky can prove what he is capable of."

But the Supreme Judge did not appear at all. The telephone at his office did not reply. A motor-cycle despatch-rider came back with the news that Dzherzhinsky had not been seen at the Cheka since morning. The Latvians reported that he had left the building at 7 a.m.

Antonov, who was in charge of the defences, reinforced the sentries of the Smolny Institute and filled the corridors with soldiers. As night fell the crowds of visitors left and silence reigned. In an upper room

Lenin was writing an article against the bourgeoisie for this new attempt to stab the Revolution in the back. His sentences were short and emphatic, bristling with quotations from Scripture and from current fables. Immersed in his work, he did not hear the opening of the door, and when he raised his eyes by chance, trying to recall the last words of Krylov's fable of the swine and the oak tree, he saw Dzherzhinsky standing before him.

"I have been looking for you all day," said Lenin.

"I know," said Dzherzhinsky. "I was in town—looking for the assassins. I told Volodarsky yesterday where he could find them. Either he did not want to or else he had not the courage." He looked into Lenin's sharp eyes meaningly.

"Well?" asked Lenin.

"They've gone underground. But I can rout them out. I have arrested Volodimirov . . ."

"What! My chauffeur?"

"Yes, your chauffeur. He was in league with the conspirators. Soon you will see for yourself, comrade. Leave the whole affair to me."

Lenin nodded. Without another word Dzherzhinsky left the room. The Dictator bent over his writing-table again.

"The Revolution of the Proletariat does not allow of delay," he wrote. "Fear is out of the question. Nobody may withdraw or be in doubt. It is everything or nothing. Now or never."

There was no sound but the sharp scratching of his pen and the heavy tread of the Latvians outside.

## CHAPTER XXV

FROM all parts of Russia the peasants, workers, townsfolk and nobles elected to the Constitutional Assembly were converging on Petrograd. There was feverish activity in the city which was the focus of so many opinions. The two most active Parties, the peasants and the Bolsheviks, used all their efforts to gain the support of the new arrivals. The Social Revolutionaries, fearing that Lenin would make an armed attack upon the Assembly, elected a Committee of Defence under Boris Savinkov. Soldiers and volunteers were recruited secretly from quarters where the Bolshevik soldiers had not won out—even from among the Black Hundreds of the Czarist period who were hiding in the provinces. They planned to make a sudden armed attack upon the Council of People's Commissars at the proper moment and to slaughter them all.

Lenin was aware of everything that went on and he acted secretly. Petrograd was divided into districts, carefully watched by faithful troops and gangs of workers. Almost every day some of the most active enemies of the proletariat disappeared, and nobody knew what had happened to them except the Cheka—that Red sewer filled with blood.

Although Bolshevik agents successfully corrupted the majority of the delegates to the Assembly, the Commissars were still not certain what the outcome of it would be. On January 5th, 1918, Lenin had a long consultation with Dzherzhinsky and Antonov. After that he worked on a proletarian manifesto in which he demanded a recognition of the Council of People's Commissars and of the Executive Committee, promising in return to allow the Assembly to exist as a consultative body.

"But, comrade," said the other Commissars, "we

represent only one-quarter of the Assembly. How can we make such an arrogant demand? Civil war is inevitable, and then we shall lose the provinces."

Lenin listened carefully to their objections. He cajoled and persuaded his doubtful colleagues, but when he saw that his efforts were being wasted, he suddenly exclaimed: "One-half of the Assembly is made up of Social Revolutionaries. They are only talkers. They have no power. We shall disperse them."

The comrades left him with uneasy minds, for the approaching debates in the Constitutional Assembly seemed only to foretell their downfall. But Lenin had his mind made up and saw what the course of events would be.

On January 6th the Red troops ruthlessly shot down the crowds of demonstrators who filled the streets. At the same time, Dybienko's soldiers surrounded the Crimean Palace, where the Constitutional Assembly was to meet. They abused and intimidated the delegates as they entered the building. And when the Assembly, having heard the demands of the Council of People's Commissars, refused to recognise it as the supreme power in Russia, a detachment of armed sailors under the boatswain Zhelezniakov entered and cleared the hall.

As Lenin studied the papers of all the camps after day he became more and more joyful.

"My attack upon the People's Will has been a success," he said to Nadezhda Konstantinovna. "The nation is tired of empty words. It has calmly accepted the news that the Assembly of its dreams is no more. Now we can have action! That is the way to victory!"

But his way was not clear while the Germans still remained a menace. They were already starting a new offensive, and Lenin was well aware that, should they seize the capital, all the people of the provinces would look upon the Germans as the saviours of Russia. At all costs he must prevent them from accomplishing their end, and his best policy was to make their march upon Petrograd a fruitless one.

At a meeting of the Executive Committee he proposed that the seat of government should be moved to Moscow.

"It would be flying from danger," was the answer.

"It would be a surrender to Imperialism. If we do that we perish."

Trotsky spoke long and ardently to prove that an evacuation of Petrograd would mean the end of the Party.

"The Smolny Institute has become a legend!" he declared. "It is a fetish! When the legend is dispelled, all the charm of our power will go with it. We may not leave."

"We must remain and die with honour at our posts," cried Zinoviev.

One by one the comrades expressed the same opinion and attacked their leader furiously for his proposal. It was in the balance whether he might not lose his hold over these men whom he had raised from obscurity and who, an hour before, had worshipped him. Lenin was very calm and listened to all objections. At last he rose and began to speak. His voice trembled at first and more than once his words were interrupted by a catching of his breath.

"I admire you, comrades," he said. "I marvel at your heroism, at your devotion to the cause of the proletariat. Indeed, your names will pass into history like the names of Danton, Marat and Robespierre. I do not fail to appreciate your proletarian courage in the eyes of all the classes of the nation. May the working masses also admire and love you! You are their true leaders. You have convinced me and shamed me. Of course you must let the Revolution fail! Of course you must let millions who trust you be put in chains again, so long as you save your own honour and your name as fighters! We remain, then, in Petrograd, quietly to await our fate!"

He hung his head, leaned heavily on the table, and went on in a muffled voice that rang with a faint irony.

"I am ashamed of my idea about leaving Petrograd. Yes, I am ashamed of it. Yet perhaps there was some sense in it after all, and I should tell my comrades how I reasoned out my proposal. Tell me where I was wrong. But if I was right, reconsider the whole affair dispassionately, without heat, without impulsive feelings which are very noble but perhaps inappropriate.

You see, I am reluctant to distrust your minds, the minds of heroes and defenders of the proletariat, with the reasonings of a practical man for whom only one aim exists. I am ashamed, indeed, of my cold heart and my ignoble mind. But why should I refer to my own reasonings? I am overcome by the splendour of your lofty ideals!"

"Long live Ilyitch," cried Stalin.

"Let him speak," shouted another, while the comrades stamped and cheered.

"Cattle!" whispered Trotsky to Kamenev. He bent his head and began to wipe his eyeglasses vigorously.

"Then, if you will allow me, I shall tell you what I was thinking." Lenin's glance swept the faces of the comrades.

"So long ago as last October you decided upon peace with Germany. Unless we have peace, the gains of the Revolution hang by a hair. Is that clear? If the enemy occupies the capital, there is an end to the Revolution and an end to its heroes—I mean, dear comrades, that all of you will die. Now it was for military reasons that I wanted to leave Petrograd. Wilhelm Hohenzollern does not want the city. What he does want is to capture us and to destroy in the germ a Revolution which is a menace to imperialism. If we leave here, the offensive will stop at once. The Germans won't follow us far into Russia. They will remember Napoleon. They know that space is our strongest fortress.

"But you tell me that the legend of the Smolny Palace will be destroyed. I did not know that the legend clung to the building. I thought that it grew up around you, the heroes, the leaders, the prophets of a new age. I thought that it would follow you everywhere, even to the very peaks of the Caucasus, or to the Siberian tundra. Comrades, I thought only of the Red flag and of the glory of your names!"

The comrades were plainly convinced by his reasoning, and they began to express their admiration.

"Let me finish, comrades," said Lenin, taking immediate advantage of the effect he had produced. "For a moment let us imagine ourselves in Moscow—not in



some 'Institute' or in some ramshackle palace, but in the Kremlin. In the Kremlin!" He paused. The name of the Kremlin passed from mouth to mouth. "Now, there is a nest of legends for you, legends that have grown up through centuries of our history. To them we shall add a new one, a Red legend. It will be woven around you, my comrades, the defenders of the rights of the proletariat! Who does not know the Kremlin? The eyes and the thoughts of all Russia will be centred on you. Your commands will sound from its walls over the whole country and the wide world."

By this time the comrades were on their feet cheering Lenin, and he knew that the battle had been won. But he held up his hand for silence and continued:

"But the legend must not abandon the Smolny Palace altogether, comrades. In that your argument is wise and just. The Red flag must float above it as before, over the palace from which the proletariat proclaimed its Dictatorship. My old friend, a proved fighter, Zinoviev, will defend this post with our faithful comrades of the Cheka, Volodarsky and Yuritsky."

The meeting broke up in enthusiasm, with the move to Moscow decided upon. Lenin escaped from the congratulations of the Committee and went to his study. He walked up and down, full of scorn and anger, and finally threw himself exhausted on a sofa.

"An hour of that sort of thing is worse than five years of living," he snarled. Again he jumped up and walked about the room, unable to calm himself.

"Death might be better," he reflected, stretching himself wearily. "Death is easy! An end to it all, and peace! But I cannot take that road. I must blaze a way through the wood. That is my work. I cannot build any new or lasting thing. It will be enough if I force mankind not to look back but forward. Then the idea of a new society will be conceived and will become a reality. I must do everything to prepare for it by love or hate, by enthusiasm or scorn, by deserving the blessing or the curses of mankind. I must become the new saint of the proletariat, so that a secret communion between me and living men may

last for ever. So long as I achieve that, what does it matter if I have to flatter the mob, wheedle those fools on the Committee, ravage the country, and break my promises? What does my life matter? What do a million lives matter? A cult will spring up around my brain, and the sheep will idolise and imitate me. Let them imitate me so long as they break with the past!"

He lay on the sofa again and stared at the ceiling, endeavouring to stop the excited working of his mind. He heard muffled shouts outside. Heavy cases were being moved through the corridors and motor lorries rattled along under his window. He guessed that already the archives of the Council were being packed and transported to the station. He did not know that in the process many documents were stolen by unknown men who were called in from the street outside to assist the work of speedy evacuation.

A few days later the Latvians and Finns were drilling the new battalions in the squares of the Kremlin, and their recruits were Chinese coolies from the Czarist labour corps, used now to protect the new rulers of Russia and to act as executioners for the Cheka.

In the Bolshaya Lubyanka, in a building which had formerly housed an insurance company, the Cheka had its secret headquarters, where Felix Dzherzhinsky meted out life or death to 150,000,000 human beings.

The legend of the Kremlin was alive once more. The spectres of Ivan the Terrible and his executioner, Maluta Skuratov, brooded over the mighty walls of Kitaj-Gorot and the labyrinthine passages of the citadel with its dark vaults and gloomy dungeons. From its gates rushed the shadow-pack of slayers, the dreaded Oprichniks, thirsting for blood. And there walked now in the courtyards of the Kremlin a short, dominant man, with the face of a Mongol; beside him was a tall, lean figure in a grey-green jacket and high boots, always stooping, always staring like a madman, always twisted by the convulsions and spasms of his disease. He could speak of nothing else but the thousands of his victims, who were seized day after day in their own houses or in the streets of Russian towns by Latvian and Chinese soldiers, to be tortured, mutilated and killed.

"No secrets will be hidden from us," he whispered, staring into Lenin's eyes. "We know how to make people talk. Yes, we know that!"

Lenin shuddered involuntarily.

"To-night I shall conduct a cross-examination in the case of that attempt upon your life. I have your chauffeur here with me in Moscow. If you care to come, comrade, you will hear some important secrets."

## CHAPTER XXVI

THE wind howled across the town, flinging dry frozen snow against the dark windows of the Bolshaya Lubyanka. Although it was only eleven o'clock at night, the ill-omened street was deserted when Lenin, a lonely figure in a worn-out overcoat, made a way along it. He walked on, examining one dilapidated house after another, until suddenly he found himself surrounded by soldiers who had been hidden in a courtyard.

"Where are you going?" asked one of them roughly. "Quick! Where are your papers?"

Then he looked into the face of the stranger. He fell back in astonishment and sprang to attention.

"Comrade Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin."

"Show me the Cheka building," ordered the smiling Dictator.

"You are standing in front of it, comrade," replied the soldier in awestruck tones.

Lenin looked critically at the enormous house, with its broken plaster and boarded-up windows, which gave it an air of desertion.

"What the devil!" he muttered angrily. "Are they all asleep there?"

As if in answer, the roar of a motor engine sounded within; and other noises of a different sort mingled with it. After a moment there was silence again, an evil silence.

"What does that mean?" asked Lenin.

"People being executed," replied one of the soldiers. "They start up the engine of a motor-lorry to drown the noise of the machine gun. The people generally shriek and groan as well."

Lenin asked no more questions, but stepped forward and rang the bell.

"Who's there?" asked a rough voice from within. "Quick, or I'll shoot!"

"The President of the Council of People's Commissars! To see Comrade Dzherzhinsky."

He heard a tramping of feet and a shrill whistle. A few minutes passed before the door opened with a grinding of bolts. Lenin stepped inside.

"We have to be careful," said the doorkeeper in explanation. "There have been men here before now to kill Dzherzhinsky or Peters. The Poles and the Latvians want to finish them off. We let them in but they never get out again. And there are other assassins about. Yesterday we found Comrade Bagis hanging on a tree in University Park."

He led Lenin across the courtyard, dimly lit by oil lamps. One side of it was a high, blind wall, pitted with bullet-holes and stained with blood. At the foot of the wall in the snow-drifts was a row of naked bodies, crumpled and twisted into horrible shapes. A thin cloud of steam hung over them. A black motor truck stood in one corner.

"Convicts have been executed here just now," explained the man. "The machine gun is inside the basement window at the other side. It can't miss," he laughed, and added: "We go in for mass-production here. It's the only way."

"What do you do with these?" asked Lenin, nodding his head towards the corpses.

"Some of them will be carried to the dumps outside the town where to-morrow's corpses are digging graves. Others go to the hospitals. The doctors learn a lot from them. One Professor often comes here nowadays. A good time for science he says it is." He laughed uproariously. "Somebody is pleased, whatever you do in this world!"

They went up to the second floor, past soldiers at every turning. The shouts and moans of desperate men sounded from all sides. The crack of a revolver stilled them for a moment. Lenin walked erect and controlled himself, but he shuddered internally and his breath came quickly. At last they came to a waiting-room at

the end of a corridor where every door was watched by Chinese soldiers.

"I shall announce you to the Comrade President of the Cheka," said a tired young man with bloodshot eyes who was sitting at the table.

With all his strength Lenin controlled the disgust and indignation that swept over him. Silence fell over the house, broken only by the harsh voices of the Chinamen and the impatient ringing of bells. The soldiers at the door eyed him ferociously. They knew that visitors who came to the Cheka on one business or another seldom left alive.

"We have set up a state within a state," Lenin reflected. "The Cheka may easily become stronger than the Commissars."

Suddenly Dzherzhinsky entered the room.

"Well, I have come, Felix Edmundovitch," said Lenin cordially. "I found it difficult to get in."

"I thought you would come by motor," said Dzherzhinsky in explanation. "They reported that somebody was in the street outside. You see, we must be cautious. We are always being watched."

"You have a good spy system yourself," remarked Lenin with a smile.

"We have our specialists," Dzherzhinsky admitted. "Will you come to my room?"

They passed along the corridor. There were indicators on the doors: "Committee of Inquiry, Comrade Roshokin"; "Committee of Inquiry, Comrade Ozolin." Other doors were marked with the names of individual Cheka agents—Rittner, Menjinsky, Artusov, Guzman and Blumkin.

"Accused persons are examined here," said Dzherzhinsky, seeing Lenin pause to read the names. "At the end of the corridor are the Cheka assembly room, the statistical office and the archives."

"And the rest of the building?"

"Cells! Some prisoners are put in solitary confinement and others are in batches. For the worst cases we have dark cells in the basement and in the walls."

"And all this in the middle of the town," Lenin marvelled.

"I thought of taking over the church of St. Basil," said Dzherzhinsky. "But the building was not quite suitable. We must have the best. So long as the Cheka is efficient, all is well."

They entered Dzherzhinsky's room and sat down. Dzherzhinsky lit a cigarette. Lenin looked round the room, which held a writing-table, a couple of arm-chairs, three ordinary chairs and a wide sofa, on which was some crumpled bedding. On the floor was a thick carpet of a reddish colour from which some darker spots stood out. On the table, among the official portfolios, was a Mauser pistol.

"Do you live here?" asked Lenin.

"No, not much," replied Dzherzhinsky suspiciously. "I have more than one secret flat in the town. I don't even trust my own people. There are traitors here too. I have enemies everywhere."

He bent over his papers and signed some of them. "One hundred and fifty people booked to-day," he muttered. "A lot of agitators from the country."

"Booked? What do you mean?"

"To be executed—turned into statistics—their examination is complete. Now can we start on Volodimirov?"

Lenin nodded. Dzherzhinsky turned to the telephone and gave an order.

"Tell Comrade Fedorenko to come at once. Tell him I want the prisoner from cell 31. Have No. 17 ready when I ring."

Soon there was a knock at the door. Dzherzhinsky snatched up a revolver and covered the door with it.

"Come in!"

A man who did not seem to match the dusty room stood at the threshold. He was tall, clean-shaven, well-dressed in a blue suit that exactly fitted his slim figure. He held himself well. There was no deference about him, but an air of cultured superiority.

"Ah, it's you, Comrade Fedorenko," said Dzherzhinsky, putting down the revolver. "Will you please cross-examine Volodimirov in the presence of the President of the Council?"

Fedorenko turned to Lenin and bowed with a polite smile.

"A good opportunity," he said in a metallic voice. "I must ask the President to take a seat at the window and to place his arm-chair where he will not be seen. Like this. Good!"

He clapped his hands. Two soldiers entered with the arrested man. For a long time there was silence, while the men in the room gauged each other with their eyes.

Then Fedorenko began with an extreme politeness.

"You understand, Comrade Volodimirov, we have no wish to harm you. Yet how can we help it when you keep back various facts which we must insist on knowing?"

Volodimirov said nothing.

"Now let us recall everything that you condescended to tell us. Before the proletarian revolution you were a Captain in the Guards. Later on you joined the Chauffeurs' Union and took a position in the service of the Council. I think that is correct, is it not?"

"Yes," said Volodimirov in a strained voice.

"Good! Now there are more delicate matters to bring up. You have admitted that when Comrade Lenin was leaving the Riding School you were ordered to drive on, but in fact you waited, while the assassins made their way through the crowd."

"Yes."

"Which means that you were in collusion with them?"

"Yes. They wanted to kill Trotsky, who was to be with Lenin."

"How many assassins were there?" asked Dzherzhinsky suddenly.

The man was silent.

"Who gave them their orders? Who sent them?"

Volodimirov raised his head and replied: "I am in your hands. You can kill me but you will discover nothing. I die martyred for my country by . . ."

Before he could say more a shot rang out. Volodimirov still stood with a bullet in his right shoulder. He groaned and looked down at his right arm, which hung useless.



"Will you speak, you dog?" hissed Dzherzhinsky. The President of the Cheka was livid with rage. He struck the table with his fist and swept a pile of papers to the floor.

"It is hard to cope with this heroic silence," said Fedorenko smoothly. "Of course we admire it—but we must know more."

He stepped across the room and rang a bell. Lenin, looking cautiously through the curtains, saw Volodimirov, pallid and trembling, gazing with horror at the doorway. There was a black pool of blood around his feet, slowly soaking into the carpet. Even at that moment Lenin could not help wondering why the carpet was a light shade of red. Dark colours, very dark colours, would be better.

He heard again the insinuating voice of Fedorenko.

"The accused will not deny that this woman is his wife, Sophia Pavlovna Volodimirova, or that this splendid little child is his son Peter?"

Volodimirov was silent. Lenin looked at him again. His face was set like stone. In his eyes there was a conflict of fear and doubt. A trembling woman, at the end of her endurance, stood looking at the ground and holding the hand of a ten-year-old boy. The child was not crying, but his face was white and his teeth chattered.

Fedorenko changed his tone. His voice suddenly became vindictive and excited.

"Come on now! We've played long enough. Tell us at once the names of the assassins and their organisation or we'll shoot this bitch and her pup in front of your eyes? Well?"

There was no reply. At a signal the soldiers rushed in.

"Crucify the woman and the boy against the wall! Keep your hands on this fellow so he won't interfere."

The woman made no resistance, but the boy struggled and cried out:

"Mother! Father! They want to kill me!"

"Good!" said Fedorenko. "Now we know that you are her husband and the father of the boy. We shall know the rest soon. Vlasov! Fire!"

A fat, red-faced sergeant took aim and fired. The

bullet struck the wall above the woman's head, covering her with plaster. The next was near her ear. The third almost touched her neck.

"Now the boy," snarled Fedorenko. "Two trial bullets. The third into his forehead."

A bullet just missed the boy's head. His face was distorted with fear. He fell to one side and fainted.

Volodimirov struggled with the soldiers who held him.

"Have mercy on them!" he cried. "I'll tell you everything!"

"Of course you will," said Fedorenko coldly. "Load your revolver again, sergeant!"

Volodimirov struggled with his own conscience, a terrible pain showing in his tired eyes.

"Well, we are listening, confound you!" Dzhershinsky could not control himself.

"The attempt was made by the Social Revolutionaries of the Right and the Jews. . . ."

"The names of the assassins?"

"I don't know them all. I heard the names of Leontev, Shur and Frumkin. . . ."

"Frumkin? A woman? A pretty young Jewess? Dora Frumkin?"

"Yes," admitted Volodimirov in a whisper.

"I don't know what all that heroic refusal was about," Fedorenko remarked mockingly. "But one more formality. I must confront you with somebody in whom you are deeply interested. Vlasov! Bring in No. 15. Be quick, comrade!"

Dzhershinsky and Fedorenko consulted together while they lit their cigarettes.

"Tell the soldiers not to torture my family any longer! I entreat you!" Volodimirov was in despair.

"It depends on you whether we set this charming lady free with her son," replied Fedorenko.

As he spoke the door opened and "No. 15" was brought into the room. Lenin saw a most beautiful Jewess standing with haughty defiance before the judges. She was tall and slim. Her fine head was thrown back, her oval face was as white as milk, in contrast with the full red of her passionate mouth. Her

proud eyes under their black, arched eyebrows showed no trace of fear, and a mass of jet-black hair falling in ringlets upon her neck set off the strength and beauty of her poise. She was perfect in form and feature.

"A Judith!" whispered Lenin.

Fedorenko appraised her openly. The girl stood before him undaunted. Only the rising and falling of her bosom betrayed the emotions that struggled within her.

Fedorenko, in a changed voice, asked her name. She made no reply or movement. She seemed not to hear.

"That is useless, my dear," he laughed. "I know that I am admiring the charms of Dora Frumkin."

Not even her eyelids trembled.

"Is this Dora Frumkin?" he asked, turning to Volodimirov.

"Yes!" muttered the ex-officer miserably, looking away. Still she did not stir.

"Vlasov!" the judge ordered in a choked voice, "accompany Dora Frumkin to my office and tell Maria Alexandrovna to look after her. I'll be with her soon myself."

The soldiers took the girl away.

"Vladimir Ilyitch!" said Dzherzhinsky suddenly, "come out now and declare that we grant Volodimirov his life because he has confessed, although he deserves death!"

Lenin came into the room and looked from his chauffeur to the Cheka judges. He was silent. Fedorenko came over to him and began to boast of his actions, and especially of the times when he was a police officer in secret sympathy with the revolutionaries. Lenin listened with open disgust.

Meanwhile Dzherzhinsky gave orders to release the woman and the boy, who ran up to Volodimirov and embraced him.

"You are free!" snarled Dzherzhinsky. "Please leave the room." He looked meaningly at Vlasov, "Volodimirov first! Then the woman! Then the boy!"

Volodimirov walked to the door. He had no sooner

reached it, however, and turned the handle than a shot rang out. He fell to the floor with a bullet in his skull, and as his wife ran to him, Vlasov fired again. She lay across her husband's body, dead. At once the door opened and a Chinese soldier ran into the room, strangled the boy as though he were a chicken, and carried his body away. More Chinese came in to remove the other bodies and to clean up the blood-stains on the floor. Under Vlasov's direction they dragged the corpses by the legs into the corridor and the door shut behind them.

Lenin shuddered. He remembered his own words, so often repeated: "The State is based on violence, on power, on force." He wondered whether any State could be built up on the kind of violence that he had seen here.

Fedorenko was exulting in the marksmanship of the fat sergeant, Vlasov. "Sometimes I hang a small coin on the breast of a convict, and Vlasov drives it straight into his heart!"

"What canaille!" thought Lenin. "What filthy murderers!"

But he remembered that Dzherzhinsky had called the Cheka the standard of the Revolution, around which the whole battle rallied. The Revolution must continue. Among thousands of the comrades he knew none more active than these men. So he was silent, and even affected a smile of friendship.

"The Volodimirov family died with gratitude in their hearts for you, comrade," Dzherzhinsky was saying. "It was an easy death for them and a good omen for you."

Lenin had no reply to make. He nodded to Dzherzhinsky and left the room. In the corridor he encountered a soldier of the Cheka, told off to escort him back to the Kremlin.

"What is your name, comrade?" he asked as they walked along.

"Apanasevitch," the man replied. "I am an adjutant."

Lenin went on to question him about what went on in the house of death, but the man had but one reply.

"You must ask our President, comrade. I know nothing."

But when he left the Dictator at the Kremlin he whispered suddenly: "If you ever want a daring man, ready for anything, remember my name—Apanasevitch."

"Apanasevitch," Lenin repeated. But already the agent had disappeared. He was making his way through the snow-storm towards the church of St. Basil, whistling an old folk-song.

## CHAPTER XXVII

DEPRESSION laid hold of Lenin and crushed the life out of him like coil after coil of some loathsome reptile thrown round the heart and brain. He felt as though he had just left prison; and he noticed the contrast between his present melancholy and the drunken, almost delirious joy with which, years before, he had heard the prison gates in St. Petersburg close behind him.

But here was no cause for joy. He walked up and down with his hands in the pockets of his coat. He gauged his own emotions accurately. Yes, first of them all was the feeling that in Dzherzhinsky's terrible citadel he had left someone who needed help and defence, someone whom he should defend with his own body. But whom? And why?

"It is difficult to kill people," he muttered. "Especially when love for the weak and oppressed is always on your lips."

He ground his teeth together. The torture-chambers of the Cheka were full of the weak and the oppressed, suffering unendurable agonies. What if he returned there and ordered the release of every prisoner? What if he forbade all the torturing and indiscriminate killing that were going on? Yes, he should do that.

He went over to the window and looked out. The soldiers of the guard were walking about the snow-swept courtyard, whipped by an icy wind. They were cold to the marrow in their shoddy uniforms. Occasionally they broke into a run or stood still, stamping their feet and swinging their arms to restore circulation. Lenin reflected that these were the men who had been ready to die at the front for their oppressors. Now they were ready to die for the Revolution; and if that failed they would die even more shamefully at the hands of reactionaries. But they did not think at all—they suffered every

privation without complaint because they believed in Lenin and the catchwords which he spread among them.

"They believe in me!" he said aloud, turning away from the window. "Have I the right to betray their confidence? Can I sow despair and doubt in their hearts? Can I even surrender to my own private feelings? No! Never! never!"

But the feeling of uneasiness did not leave him. He felt an instinct, an interior command, forcing him back to the terrible headquarters of the Cheka.

He sent for his secretary. "Ring up Comrade Dzherzhinsky. Tell him to hold over the cross-examination of Dora Frumkin until I come. Have a motor-car ready for me at once."

Half an hour later he arrived at the Cheka. The gates were open, and within the courtyard was a detachment of soldiers presenting arms to the Dictator, with Dzherzhinsky, Liaris and Blumkin standing ready to welcome him; and in one corner was herded a miserable crowd of arrested citizens, full of fear, despair and servility. Accompanied by the Commissars, Lenin walked quickly to the waiting-room on the second floor.

"I wish to be present at the cross-examination of Dora Frumkin," he said, looking into the furtive eyes of Dzherzhinsky.

The President of the Cheka did not reply. There was the cunning of a wolf on his twitching face. He pulled at his thin beard and rubbed his eyes, his thin hands moving restlessly here and there, but he said nothing. Lenin understood his objection and smiled.

"Comrade," he said, putting his hand on Dzherzhinsky's shoulder, "I am particularly interested in what she may confess, there are some very important facts we can learn from her. I suspect that the Jewish Socialists of the Bund have joined our enemies."

Dzherzhinsky nodded. Without a word he led Lenin down the stairs. As they passed the closed door of a room on the ground floor he said, as though the idea had suddenly occurred to him, "We should have Fedorenko with us."

He flung open the door and Lenin stood spellbound. In the room directly opposite the door was a large sofa

upholstered in red velvet. Against that warm, bright background was the naked body of a woman, standing out with the white purity of marble in the half-light. Her thick black hair flowed down to the floor. Her hands hung limp and powerless. Her whole defenceless attitude was one of beauty and shame and a horror that was near to death.

"Dora Frumkin!" whispered Lenin.

"That swine—whoremonger—no girl or woman escapes him," hissed Dzherzhinsky. Fedorenko was in a corner of the room hastily putting on his coat.

"Bring her for examination!" Dzherzhinsky laughed as he gave the order.

After a moment the ex-policeman crossed the room, smiling ingratiatingly as he adjusted his necktie.

"A fine girl that!" he said with a grin. "A fine mouthful! I could not lose the opportunity. Girls like her get scarcer and scarcer, and I am rather a connoisseur. I wager there is not a sculptor anywhere who could find a single flaw in her. She is a Juno, a Venus, a Diana, a Terpsichore. Nature gave all her gifts to this one woman! And Fedorenko is not the man to miss the chance." Noticing that Lenin and Dzherzhinsky did not reply, he cut short his eulogies. "Maria Alexandrovna!" he shouted.

A fat, red-faced woman in a black skirt and blue blouse entered the room.

"Maria Alexandrovna, look after the goddess! Bring her into the big room. Tell the Chinamen to be in readiness!" Then he bowed to Lenin. "Shall we proceed to the basement?"

They were soon in a long and twisting corridor, lit at both ends by oil lamps. A few Chinese soldiers, armed with rifles, walked up and down. Along the sides were low doors fastened with padlocks.

"Keep your distance from that door!" Fedorenko said suddenly to Lenin. "That is the cell of 'natural death.' It is infected with all sorts of disease—typhus, tuberculosis, cholera, even bubonic plague. It saves trouble and relieves the executioners. Convicts die there like flies—a hundred at a time. We change them once a week."



"But you may spread disease all over Moscow," said Lenin angrily.

"No fear of that," replied Fedorenko. "We know a thing or two about hygiene. Every morning we let a box down and the prisoners put the dead bodies into it. Then the Chinamen look after it and throw it into a pit full of lime. No danger threatens Moscow!"

They passed another cell where they heard a pandemonium of shouts and cries.

"That is despair," observed Dzherzhinsky with a smile. "They are starving. It is a good way to get a frank confession."

A man stormed at the door of another cell as they passed.

"Hangmen! Murderers! Give me water! Give me water!"

"Ah!" Fedorenko exclaimed. "There are the herring people. We give them only salty herrings without any water. Some become insane and we shoot them. Some keep their reason and we promise them water. That makes them talk! They become as mild as lambs!" Fedorenko took Lenin's silence for approval.

"We have cells here where the prisoners are not allowed to sleep. Then we have 'the moral scourge'—they hear their wives and children being tortured in the cell next door. There are not many who can put up with that. As a rule it is sufficient just to threaten immediate execution. Then they begin to talk."

At the end of the corridor they entered a large vaulted room, brightly lit. There were a few tables and chairs, and the plaster on the walls was deeply stained with blood. Dzherzhinsky placed a chair for Lenin and sat down.

Lenin could not draw his eyes from Dzherzhinsky's horrible face, with its heartless cruelty and its twitching, unsmiling mouth.

"A Torquemada," he thought. "A mediæval Inquisitor or a Fouquier-Tinville of the French Revolution."

Fedorenko shouted to the soldiers at the door! "Tell Maria Alexandrovna to hurry up!"

Lenin made a grimace of disgust. "Call that woman

by some other name than Maria Alexandrovna!" he found himself saying with an anger that he could not control.

"Why, comrade?" they asked in genuine astonishment. "Comrade Lopatina is a midwife. She is an immense help to us—especially when women are on trial."

Lenin clenched his fists. "Because . . ." He was in a fury against the loathsome creature who dared to have the same name as his own mother, that dignified and lonely woman who was dead. "Because . . ." He noticed a gleam of mockery in the eyes of Fedorenko. He regained his self-control with an effort, laughed easily and said in a changed voice: "Oh, it is a trifle. Her name recalls associations of another sort. Go on, comrades. She may as well continue to be Maria Alexandrovna."

He had no right to show his private feelings and his personal weakness to these men who were supporting the cause of the proletariat. But he knew that he had lost his self-possession entirely. A slight shiver seized him and grew until he felt gripped by an ague. His whole body shook.

Suddenly a band of Chinamen ran into the room, talking discordantly among themselves and baring their yellow teeth. They were followed by four soldiers who supported Dora Frumkin. She swayed unsteadily. She was still quite naked, but she made no effort to hide her shame. Her hands hung limp at her sides and her glazed eyes were veiled by their long lashes.

When she was brought to the table in front of the judges, the men were silent for a while, taking in the beauty of the face and figure. As Lenin sat there his mind flashed back to the old days when he used to stand enraptured before the statues in the Louvre, in Dresden and in Munich. But in that vaulted room, with its oppressive smell, his thoughts were animal. He was aware of the red blood flowing and the emotions raging beneath that white warm skin. There came into his mind the verses of the Song of Songs:

"How beautiful art thou, my love; how beautiful are thou! Thy eyes are dove's eyes, besides what is hid

within. Thy hair is as a flock of goats, which come up from mount Gilead.

"Thy teeth as flocks of sheep that are shorn, which come up from the washing, all with twins, and there is none barren among them. Thy lips are as a scarlet lace: and thy speech sweet. Thy cheeks are as a piece of pomegranate, besides that which lieth hid within.

"Thy neck is as the tower of David, which is built with bulwarks: a thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armour of valiant men. Thy two breasts like to young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies."

Fedorenko's voice broke through his thoughts. "Come now, you harlot! Tell us who sent you to shoot the leaders of the nation?"

Dora Frumkin stood before them unresponsive, unmoving. She gleamed like marble. She was silent as stone.

"Name your accomplices or you will die in agonies!" shouted Fedorenko. He sprang from his chair and attacked her. He pulled her hair, spat in her face, kicked her and hit her violently on the body. He cursed her for a Jewess and poured out upon her a flood of obscenities. She did not even open her eyes. It seemed almost as though her life had left her, although she still stood erect.

Fedorenko returned to his seat. He struck the table with his fist. "We'll manage her!" he roared. "Lads, fetch the woman in No. 7!"

He walked up and down until two Chinamen returned with an old Jewess. When she saw the naked girl in the room, she suddenly slipped from the clutches of her guards and dropped to the floor, with a piercing groan that echoed in the close room.

"Dora!"

"Mina Frumkin! You are the mother of this girl who is charged with attempting the lives of Comrades Lenin and Trotsky. Will you persuade her to tell us the truth? Unless she confesses she will die a terrible death!"

The old woman groaned again. "Dora! My child!" she sobbed.

The girl's eyelids flickered open, a shiver ran over her body. For one brief moment her eyes opened, brightened, and closed again. But in that one brief glance was an answer that decided all. The old woman crouched upon the floor, lamenting, with her gnarled hands tearing at her hair.

"Perhaps Mina Frumkin has something to tell us herself?" Dzerzhinsky suggested. "Pull the old witch up and make her look at us!"

The Chinaman pulled her to her feet while Maria Alexandrovna tore at her eyelids to force them open. Fedorenko nodded to the Chinamen.

Four soldiers pulled Dora to the wall, where they fastened her in spread-eagle fashion. Then two of them pulled out their long knives and stood waiting for an order.

"Go on!" Fedorenko barked.

They sprang at the girl. There was heard a hissing sob, and even the grinding of her teeth as she repressed a cry. The soldiers fell back. The body of Dora Frumkin lay against the wall with the blood streaming where her breasts had been.

The old woman, crying unrestrainedly, wrestled with the soldiers who held her.

"Who sent you to attempt the assassination?" asked Fedorenko.

There was no answer. The only sound in the room was the hissing intake of the girl's breath in her agony and the terrible lamentations of the old Jewess.

"Go on!" Dzerzhinsky shouted.

The Chinamen stepped up to the girl again and cut at her eyes. She wept tears and blood.

"Tell us who sent you——" began Fedorenko.

Suddenly Lenin sprang to his feet. His face was bloodless, his eyes flashed, his fingers worked spasmodically.

"Finish her off!" he cried in a choking voice.

Fedorenko turned towards him with ironical politeness and bowed.

"Finish her off!" he repeated.

One of the Chinamen stabbed her with a knife. The body sagged outwards and slipped heavily to the cement

floor. At the same moment Mina Frumkin tore herself from the clutches of her guards, pushed aside the midwife who tried to hold her, and threw herself upon the body of her daughter. At a word from Fedorenko the soldiers ran up to her. She turned as if to curse them, but only one word in Hebrew escaped her. A blow from the butt-end of a rifle drove her to the floor. She writhed again and another blow despatched her.

"A hardy tribe, eh?" Dzherzhinsky murmured, lighting a cigarette.

"We were a bit too quick," said Fedorenko with displeasure. "Had we tortured her a little more, Maria Alexandrovna could have brought her round, ready for another operation. And the old woman had something to tell us too."

Lenin came over to him and looked into his eyes. If he had had Khalainen with him, Fedorenko would be lying on that floor in his immaculate clothes, but with a bayonet through his stomach. Lenin had a desire to strike him on the face, to knock him down, to tread him underfoot like a snake. He was about to raise his fist when Fedorenko spoke in a tone of mocking banter.

"Has Comrade Vladimir Ilyitch now convinced himself that we serve the proletariat faithfully? We are parts of a machine that destroys human beings in hundreds. The proletariat must conquer. Force and terrorism are the only weapons against philosophers, savants and poets."

The terrible man was repeating his own words. He, Vladimir Lenin himself, had spread these ideas broadcast in newspapers, pamphlets, placards and telegrams. He had created the Cheka. He was the leader and the inspiration of these two madmen whose work he saw around him.

Lenin saw it all in a flash, and through his mind went all the events that had led up to this hour. There came back to him the attacks of his enemies who accused him of shaming and torturing Russia, as Fedorenko had shamed and tortured Dora Frumkin. So it was he who had done this, not Fedorenko or Dzherzhinsky. It was he who had gathered together a horde of savages, drunk with blood and brandy, lusting for an exercise of hatred.

These were his followers—criminals, lunatics, degenerates and prostitutes.

So he smiled in answer. "Of course you are serving the proletariat faithfully, comrades. I recognise that. But it is difficult to restrain one's feelings."

"We get used to it," Dzherzhinsky struck in. "More and more of the people are being found out as enemies of the Council of People's Commissars, so we have hard work to keep pace with you, comrade."

"Of course," Lenin replied, nodding his head. Then he left the room with them and drove back to the Kremlin.

His secretary was waiting for him with a sheaf of telegrams from the peace delegation. Sitting at his writing-table, Lenin bent over the wires from Trotsky and frowned in perplexity. It was bad news. The Germans were making new demands of a grave nature. A member of the Russian delegation, ex-General Skalon, had committed suicide, leaving behind him a letter containing some serious accusations.

"I shall deal with this to-morrow at the Council," he said. "Call it for eight o'clock in the morning."

The secretary left, but knocked at the door again a moment later. "Comrade Dzherzhinsky has just sent a despatch-rider with this letter. He wants an immediate reply."

Lenin ripped open the envelope and took out a red card. It stated that a death sentence had been passed upon Citizeness Remizova, with whom Dora Frumkin had lived before her attempt at assassination. On a sheet of paper the President of the Cheka wrote that the woman had appealed to Lenin personally for mercy, but he suggested that the plea should be refused, for there was obviously some political connection between Remizova and Frumkin.

"Remizova? Remizova?" Lenin repeated to himself. "I must have heard the name somewhere."

He shrugged his shoulders and wrote on the card: "I confirm the verdict."

The secretary left the room. Lenin walked up and down, shivering slightly, unable to concentrate upon affairs of the moment.

"I should like to have some hot tea," he thought.

He looked at his watch. It was four o'clock and the snow was still falling. He saw it strike the windows, he heard the wind howl in the chimney. He shuddered.

To turn his thoughts he began to think out what he would say to the Council in the morning, when he would have a difficult time with some of the more obstinate comrades. Suddenly his eye was attracted by the envelope in which Dzerzhinsky's note had come. He picked it up and read the inscription.

"The All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for the Struggle against Counter-Revolution, Sabotage and Speculation." "A Judicial Commission?" He laughed. "No! This is a new form of justice. It is a challenge to the morality of the world. Here we have the accuser, the judge and the executioner in one man. It would not satisfy the lawyers of Western Europe, but it will pass in Holy Russia."

As he twisted the envelope in his fingers he felt another paper within it. He unrolled it, took out the paper, and shouted hoarsely. It was the declaration in his own writing that Helena Alexandrovna Remizova was authorised to apply to him personally on any matter.

"Remizova! . . . Helena Remizova!" A golden head bent over an embroidery frame . . . blue eyes full of tears . . . a passionate mouth calling upon him to avenge his brother . . . and she had asked for his mercy.

He sprang to the telephone and rang up the Cheka. It was a long time before Dzerzhinsky replied. At last Lenin heard his voice.

"Postpone the sentence upon Remizova," he panted. "Speak to me about it to-morrow, please."

Dzerzhinsky made no reply. From the sharp rustle of papers which he heard, Lenin knew that the Chekist was looking through a dossier. Then he began to read, in an impersonal voice and very slowly:

"Citizeness Remizova, Helena Alexandrovna. Implicated in the attempt of January 1st. It was proved that Dora Frumkin, who was also arrested, stayed at her flat in Petrograd, 21 Preobrajenskaya. Citizeness Remizova was sentenced to death by shooting."

"Postpone the execution until to-morrow," Lenin shouted again.

Dzherzhinsky replied after a pause in the same official tone. "It has just been reported to me that the sentence was carried out a few minutes ago. Here is the report: 'Remizova, No. 1780. Sent from Petrograd in connection with . . .'"

Lenin banged down the receiver.

"Monster!" he raved. "Hangman! Oh, that madman!" He moaned aloud as the old Jewess had moaned over her daughter some hours before. He shouted incoherently.

The door opened and the frightened secretary looked into the room. Lenin pulled himself together. He stood erect with a set face and put his hands in his pockets.

"What's the matter, comrade?"

"I thought you called, Vladimir Ilyitch. Did you?"

"No!" was the curt reply. "But stay, now you are here I shall dictate."

He walked about the room and threw out broken sentences.

"However difficult peace may be to attain—for Russia—we must remember that—remember—that we must sacrifice everything—even life—even the lives of our nearest and dearest—for the sake of the proletariat, which will seize from its enemies in the end all that we have lost."

The secretary waited with pencil in hand. Lenin stood by the window, motionless. His whole body trembled. His broad shoulders rose and fell. His eyes felt unbearably hot, and he pressed his windpipe with his hand to suppress a sob.

"Nobody can recover my Helena! my Helena!"

He sighed deeply, and stealthily dried his eyes. Then he turned to the secretary and chuckled harshly.

"We can finish to-morrow, comrade, I'm tired. My mind does not work easily to-night. It is dark and stormy. Hear the wind! On a night like this it is best to die!"

Suddenly he sprang at the frightened secretary, shouting madly: "Go away! Go away, I tell you!"



The young man ran from the room. Lenin threw himself upon the sofa, trembling. The face of Dzherzhinsky appeared before his eyes, and he writhed in misery.

"Helena is dead!" he sobbed. "She is dead!"

Outside the door the soldiers changed the guard and repeated one to another the night's pass-word.

"Lenin!" "Lenin!" "Lenin!"

## CHAPTER XXVIII

Moscow was dying in the throes of starvation and bloodshed, which sapped her strength relentlessly by day and by night. But peace with Germany was an accomplished fact. Lenin shuddered whenever he remembered the days of negotiation, when he, a Russian, had to beg Jewish and Latvian commissions to accept the humiliating terms proposed by Russia's enemy; for he knew that without peace the power of the proletariat would dwindle to nothing. He sighed with relief when at long last he had persuaded them to endorse his policy, and again he proved that the Dictatorship of the Proletariat was essentially a dictatorship of journalists. He proved in a hundred articles that the treaty was a triumph for the new Government, which wanted to give Russia a chance of quiet reconstruction. He mesmerised the credulous workers and ignorant peasants by a promise that revolution would soon break out in Germany, and that Russia would then be built up again with all the resources of Western Europe.

But those days were over now. Moscow, depopulated and miserable, drained away her blood under the Red flag that waved over the Kremlin and the Cheka prison in the Bolshaya Lubyanka. The squares and markets were full of sullen, starving men, wandering aimlessly about: ex-civil servants, ex-officers and members of the intelligentsia, or noblemen unable to seek refuge in the Crimea or abroad. Some of them stood in the streets selling their private possessions. Some sold cigarettes and newspapers. The older women sold home-made sweets and pastries. The younger women sold their own bodies. But the militia and the military patrols depended upon these poor speculators, confiscated their paltry earnings, and threw them into the cellars of the Lubyanka, which they left only to face a machine gun. The Government of the city went by the board, justice

was a mockery, and no provisions were made to feed the people in time of famine. There was no law but the anarchy of terrorism. All night long the machine gun sputtered. Time after time the black van left the Bolshaya Lubianka to dump its load of corpses beyond the city. All day the limousines that once belonged to the Court dashed through the streets carrying Commissars in leather coats, whose leather portfolios symbolised now a power of life and death. Then night came down again, and the patrols, like wolves, broke into the rooms of private houses, ransacked them, and took away women and children to shame and death. After them came other destroyers—bandits who disguised themselves as Communist agents for the work of pillage. They plundered where they liked and fought with the militia in the streets.

Meanwhile the church bells were silent and military bands played the Internationale on the Kuznetsky Bridge. The churches and museums were closed, the university was deserted. At the theatre the best artists—and Theodore Chaliapin, the protégé of the Czar among them—sang and danced for a street mob, for soldiers sated with blood and for the worst criminals of the Moscow slums.

Lenin did not leave the walls of the Kremlin again after his memorable visit to the Cheka. He had evidence that Boris Savinkov, an astute and elusive terrorist, was at large in Moscow. Day after day the bodies of Commissars and of Government agents were found in the streets. Then a group of Poles made an attack upon Dzherzhinsky and Fedorenko as they were walking incognito along one of the most crowded thoroughfares; Fedorenko was killed and the President of the Cheka was wounded. A secret organisation of the Jews began to extirpate their co-religionists who worked for the Moscow Cheka under the cruel and deceitful Guzman. A young officer named Klepikov, the right-hand man of Savinkov, sniped off the leather-coated Commissars and ingeniously defied pursuit. As a result, Trotsky, Kamenev, Rykov and Bukharin dared not show themselves outside the walls of the Kremlin unless they were protected by a strong escort of Finns and Latvians.

Then rumours which disquieted the Council of People's Commissars began to pass from mouth to mouth. There was talk of an underground organisation for "Russia and Liberty." It was said that a rising was imminent, both in Moscow and in Petrograd. The Cheka redoubled its bloodthirsty efforts. Thousands of citizens, the guilty and the innocent together, were caught in its stream and pulped to death in its mill.

Then protests came to Moscow from abroad. The replies of the Council of People's Commissars were collections of cynical lies dictated by Lenin. And the work went on. Guzman executed an Englishman, Captain Cromie. Then he slaughtered a number of French families. Finally, he ordered his agent, Blumkin, to instigate an attack by the Social Revolutionaries upon Baron Mirbach, the German Minister in Moscow.

Lenin laughed when he read the vigorous protests of foreign newspapers.

"They are playing a game," he said. "Europe has drunk enough blood now. She will stand anything from us in the end. She is afraid of us, and in spite of this abuse she is flirting with us like an old prostitute. Do you remember how the French agent, Captain Sadoul, toadied to us—and Lockhart, the Englishman, and Robbins, who was sent by the United States? But they did not prevent us from negotiating a peace or from organising our revolutionary army. That is why they threaten us now. I tell you, comrades, we can snap our fingers at them! We can renounce all the Czars' treaties; and if we give them concessions in the Caucasus and the Urals they will fawn on us like dogs."

Hundreds of letters and appeals for mercy came to the Kremlin from people who were lingering in prison or lying under sentence of death, addressed either to Lenin or to his wife, Krúpskaya.

One day she came to him and began to speak timidly about the matter.

"Everybody knows that Dzherzhinsky, Yuritsky, Volodarsky and Guzman are committing unheard-of cruelties. I ask you to use your influence to stop them. It is terrible, unbearable! It is a disgrace to the proletariat!"

Lenin was taken aback for a moment. Then he turned upon her with a face full of anger and despair.

"I have to endure everything and to hide my feelings," he shouted shrilly. "And you ask mercy for the enemies of the nation! Look at me! I must hide my heart! Day and night I battle with my thoughts! But all you think is that I am Lenin, a hangman, a monster, a lunatic, while they are the poor, the innocent and the oppressed! Get out of my sight, and never mention mercy to me again!"

To Maxim Gorki, who had launched an attack upon the Cheka, he replied with such a scathing rebuke that the novelist gave up the struggle and set himself to explain away the atrocities going on in Russia. And then the Dictator published everywhere an announcement that had appeal to himself or to his wife on behalf of traitors would receive attention.

In March the first reports came in of armed risings against the Soviets. The second phase of the civil war, in which the ex-Allies took part, began in Jaroslav and dragged along until the rebels were exterminated; for, apart from those killed in the fighting, 3500 officers were court-martialed and executed. Then the Czech prisoners of war in Penza formed regiments under their own generals and marched towards the Urals. The Cossacks rose in revolt on the Don, in Kuban, in Orenburg, and in the Baikal area; and well-known White officers, Kornilov, Kaledin, Krassnov, Dutov, Denikin and Wrangel, inscribed their names in the history of the world.

The Red army became a demoralised swarm of soldiers and workers which gave way on every front and turned in panic back to Moscow. In the west, in the north, and in Siberia, Generals Yudenitch, Miller, Almazov, Koltchak, Semenov, and that terrible madman and mystic, Ungern-Sternberg, "the White Dzherzhinsky," began their operations. The oppressed nation raised its head at last and welcomed its rescuers.

At the same time the Commissars completely lost their heads. They crowded around their leader in despair, entreating him to save them.

"Our last hour has come!" they cried. "They will

kill us! What shall we do, Vladimir Ilyitch? What will happen now?"

"What will happen?" asked Lenin mockingly. "Why, you will be hanged for murder and for theft. I shall also be hanged—for having ideas. You don't like the prospect? Well, then, give up posing as so many Napoleons and get down to work, comrades, as you did at the time of the October Revolution. Trotsky, who is a good organiser, will get hold of Tukachevsky, Brussilov, Budenny, Blucher, Frunze and Eiche; with their help he can build up an efficient army at once. He will use every means of propaganda to get Austrian and Hungarian prisoners of war on to our side and to gain the services of ex-Czarist officers. Then he will start an offensive war. Our policy must be one of aggression of militant Communism. And our watchword will be, 'Nothing matters but war for the victory of the proletariat.'"

"But the counter-revolutionaries have larger resources," said Kamenev. "They have England, France and Japan on their side. I hear from our envoys, Yoffe, Vorovsky, Litvinov and Radek, that Paris and London have agreed upon concerted action. They are even discussing a blockade of Russia."

"Don't worry about that, comrades," Lenin laughed. "They can't intervene easily. Certainly they can't do much with troops in the vast interior of Russia. At most they can only attack our seaports. Let them! And our own 'patriots' will soon find their armies going to pieces."

"How can you say that?" Rykov interrupted. "They have capable soldiers amongst them—Kornilov, Denikin, Wrangel, Yudenitch."

"Of course they have," retorted Lenin very calmly. "We shall oppose them with our scissors-and-paste journalist, Trotsky, our recruit, Tukachevsky, and our sergeant Budenny. That will put just one idea into the heads of our people: that we give power to workers and peasants, that we fight for the future of the proletariat. You will find the White Generals starting off with the cry that they also will give the land to the peasants. After the first victory they will shout, 'Long live

Russia, one and indivisible! Long live our Father the Czar.' Now what about that? Do you think our peasants will follow them after having seized all the land and slaughtered the landlords? Nor for a moment! So we must do two things. First, spread the idea among the workers and peasants that the Whites are coming to hang them all. Secondly, prepare the army for serious military operations."

The comrades were completely reassured by his arguments as well as by his quiet manner and steady voice.

"There is another matter of the utmost importance," he added after a moment's silence. "We must move the Czar from Ekaterinburg to Moscow. Whatever happens, he must not fall into the hands of the Whites, for he can be used as a dangerous weapon against us. We must have a meeting about it to-night. I have already sent for the comrades from Ekaterinburg."

A secret meeting was held that evening in Lenin's study, attended by Commissars and members of the Executive Committee: Sverdlov, Trotsky, Kalinin, Bukharin, Dzherzhinsky, the Cheka agents, Avanesov and Peters, and the Chekists from Ekaterinburg, Peshkov, Yurofsky and Voykov. After a discussion of the rebellions that were breaking out everywhere between the Volga and the Urals, they decided to leave the Czar temporarily in Ekaterinburg, in the house of Epatyev, under the control of the local council. When this decision had been made the meeting broke up, but Lenin asked the men from Ekaterinburg to remain with him.

"The Moscow Commissars would oppose me," he remarked, "if I said that the Czar and his family should be destroyed. My colleagues are very sensitive to the opinions expressed by foreign newspapers. But I can speak freely to you, comrades. . . ." He bent towards them, whispering, "If there is the least danger of your town being captured by the Whites, you will kill Nicholas the Bloody and his whole family. Don't leave one of them alive. Of course there will be an outcry and all sorts of investigations into the affair. The relatives of the Romanovs in England and Germany, who have day nothing to help them so far, will immediately turn plain

and sympathetic. Incidentally they will put their Courts into mourning. Ha! ha! Then the Council of People's Commissars will be forced to lay the whole blame for the affair upon your council in Ekaterinburg. When that happens you must accuse somebody in Ekaterinburg, execute him, and so finish with the matter once and for all. . . ."

Voykov laughed. "We can easily accuse Yakhontov, the President of our Council. He is an ex-Menshevik, and we are not sure of him."

"I think we might find a few more of the same kidney," Yurovsky observed, looking round to his comrades for agreement.

"Undoubtedly," nodded Pyeshkov. "I suggest that we put the whole job into the hands of comrades Yurovsky and Byeloborodov."

"Good," said Lenin, seeing that they all approved of his suggestion. "Comrade Yurovsky, I put the whole responsibility for destroying the Romanovs on you. Warn me by telegraph when you intend to do it, but observe the closest secrecy otherwise. And remember, not another living soul must know the decision we have reached to-day. But hurry up! Hurry up, dear comrades!"

When they had left the room he rubbed his hands together and whispered to himself: "At last! The only personal ambition of my whole life will be fulfilled!"

From that day he could hardly eat or sleep as he waited impatiently for news from Ekaterinburg. He was so obsessed by the one idea that no other could have any place in his mind. He heard with complete indifference the report that Volodarsky had been torn to pieces by an infuriated mob. He heard that Khazan had fallen to the Whites, that the Czechs were sweeping everything before them, that the Red army had been seriously defeated in Siberia and at Archangel.

It meant nothing to him. He saw always before his eyes the face of that Romanov whose father had murdered his brother. All day long he seemed to hear the wailing and the moans of the Czar's children as they died. He was filled with expectation of the moment when the ants.



prearranged signal would come from Ekaterinburg: "We are ready."

In the middle of July his hopes were realised. Yakhontov, the President of the Ekaterinburg Council, communicated his plans for the defence of the town and described how they would prevent the Imperial prisoners from being rescued by the advancing Whites. Lenin plied him with questions of every detail, made further suggestions and thanked him for his devotion to the cause. Then the Dictator waited. After a few moments a second message came through.

"We are ready." It was from Yurovsky.

"This is the end," was Lenin's reply, the death-warrant of the Romanovs.

Three days later the terrible news spread across the world that the man who was once the most powerful monarch in Europe had been killed, with his whole family, in a cellar. There had been no tribunal set up, no trial held, no sentence delivered. But the heart of the world was hardened by a daily slaughter, and in the midst of wars the outcry against Lenin the barbarian soon died away, though the crime cried to Heaven for vengeance more loudly than all the crimes of the Revolution. The people of Europe, the followers of the Romanovs, even the peasants of Russia, were deluded into the belief that Yakhontov was responsible. The story came to be believed that the President of the Ekaterinburg Council, assisted by the Communists, Grusinov and Malutin, by two fanatical women, Aproskina and Mironova, and by nine Red soldiers, had administered their own rough justice which yet expressed the anger of an entire nation. They had killed Nicholas the Bloody, his wife the Hessian Princess, their children and the members of the Imperial suite, without the knowledge of the authorities in Moscow.

After that tragedy had been enacted, Lenin was calm once more. His mind was at ease though curses and prophecies of disaster from the whole world raged around him; and all the while the Red army went from disaster to disaster and the White armies advanced. He held numerous consultations with experts to direct day after day the electrification of the whole country. In the

hoped to revive Russia's dying industries and to prove to every peasant in a thatched cottage the benefits of proletarian government; for who could resist the compelling argument of electric light? Lenin was full of a new excitement. He seemed to discover in electricity a way out of all the difficulties that faced him.

But there were other and more profound emotions behind this new activity. An oppressive load had dropped from his shoulders. He felt that a duty had been accomplished. He was now finished with his own life. He was free of a promise that he had made at the highest moment of his life, a promise that explained all the policies and conceptions that had terrified his enemies and amazed his followers. It was a promise that he had made, almost as though the words escaped his lips, to a golden-haired girl who faced him with angry eyes and scornful lips.

Now there was nothing to bind him to the past. He lived only for a future wherein the whole nation and all mankind would be comprehended in one organism. He became in reality nothing but a machine which produced ideas, words and actions with an increasing efficiency, taking into itself all external phenomena and working upon them as upon the raw material of a new existence.

He began to look upon the people around him with different eyes. They were the parts of the vast machine which he, the motor, energised in a domain outside time and space. He did not take it into account that men like Trotsky and Dzherzhinsky were parts out of control; he did not see them producing friction and a breakdown of the whole. All he saw was himself as the motive force giving a general movement and a uniform speed to every part.

But at times he was aware of the chaos around him. Fear gripped his heart when he asked himself who would carry on his work and build up the future of his dreams. He knew well the makers of Russian Bolshevism, his own colleagues. They were all of them bold men, devoted to their ideals, ambitious and unscrupulous, but they were not like himself. He alone was woven in one piece of will and thought and power of action. He dealt with experience without egotism, absolute in his ambition to

destroy the liberty of the spirit, so that all men would be equal and uniform, so that there would be no personality but only the community. Trotsky and the others were proud, self-confident, anxious to appear as leaders, to shine in the personal glory of leadership. They were quick to see rivals and to treat those rivals as enemies. They had not even shaken off the old traditions and they thought with the logic of a past generation.

"I must live, or Communism will die," said Lenin to himself. "It will die of contradictions and a lack of faith. None of these men believes in God—nor do I. But I believe in deity . . . in one whose insistent call I have always obeyed. I do not know the name of deity, but I recognise it as daylight after darkness. So I am leading all the nations to a closer understanding of that deity which is human and all-pervading. The old God appeared to the nations as a pillar of fire, a burning bush, . . . I want the nations to have an earthly God, a God whose face they may see and whose voice they may hear. On the road by which I will lead the nations only the strong and the courageous may walk; but when they have struggled to the heights by suffering, and when they have thrown off their earthly desires, they will see God face to face."

He was exalted by the whirling fantasies of his mind and he wished to share them with someone whom he loved. But with whom?

"Mother?" he thought, and sighed deeply. "She has left this world in an agony of fear, not knowing whether the work of her son would be good or just."

Then the Dictator put out his hands and cried: "Helena!" He saw her sweet face before him; and suddenly it turned into a mask of horror. The features contracted, the blue eyes stared in an insane fear.

"Mercy! They are killing me!"

Lenin dropped his head in his hands. His teeth chattered. Then he jumped up, clawing the air.

"Begone!" he shrieked. "Begone, you phantom of the past, for ever!"

He pulled himself together, rubbed his eyes and looked at the calendar. It was the 29th of August. Next day he was announced to address a public meeting to explain

the murder of Nicholas the Bloody. He must prepare his speech. He would throw suspicion on the Peasants' Party, make fun of foreign statesmen and foreign journalists.

The machine was at work again. Coldly and logically he prepared his speech with full knowledge of the audience by whom it would be received. He saw their faces before him. He saw them as a scattered herd of sheep whom he would guide and control like a shepherd. Then he threw himself upon the sofa and fell into a dreamless sleep.

He was awakened suddenly by his secretary, who rushed into the room.

"Yuritsky has been killed in Petrograd by a Jew named Kanegisser!" the man cried excitedly. "An attempt upon Zinoviev by a Jew named Schneur was frustrated."

"The wheels are dropping off the machine," Lenin muttered. He saw astonishment on the other's face and pulled himself together. "The proletarian Dictatorship is a machine made to destroy the world," he said with a smile. "It needs only to be repaired a little. Send a telegram of condolence to Red Petrograd from me."

Next day he went to the meeting. He entered the hall surrounded by his Finnish guard under the command of Khalainen, and mounted the tribune, which was covered with a red cloth. But suddenly, as he began to speak, a high, metallic voice cried out from the audience beneath him. It was the hysterical voice of a woman caught up by anger and despair. A scuffle began in the crowd.

"This from a tortured nation, in revenge for crime!" cried the voice.

A shot rang out close at hand. Lenin stopped, staggered, and threw up his arms. He felt as though he were falling down, down, down into an abyss. The Finns supported him at first, then put him on their shoulders and carried him out of the hall in an uproar of horror and of triumph from the various elements present. Near the tribune the audience, turned now into a mob, were tearing a human body to pieces. In an hour it was

known all over Petrograd that the Dictator had been slightly wounded by Fania Kaplan and Moses Glanz.

The Finns succeeded in saving Fania Kaplan from the mob so that she might be dealt with by the Cheka, but Lenin knew nothing of the price being paid by the counter-revolutionaries for this attempt upon him. He lay unconscious, raging with fever. The bullet had pierced his shoulder and was lodged in his back. The doctors shook their heads. It was a serious wound which might easily prove mortal.

Lenin lay with wide-open eyes, his lips never for an instant still.

"Go away! Don't torture me, comrades! The freedom and the happiness of humanity are on your shoulders! Nicholas the Bloody, stop torturing me! Helena! Helena!"

There was a rattle in his throat, and a stream of blood, rushing into his mouth, foamed upon his pale and swollen lips.

## CHAPTER XXIX

THE news of the attempt to kill Lenin spread over the country like wildfire. To some of the people it was a disaster, to others it suggested hopes of a new future. But the first result was that the counter-revolutionaries grouped themselves around the White Generals and fresh intrigues were set on foot among the Socialists oppressed by the Dictator.

News came to Moscow from all parts of Russia to prove that the disorders of the Kerensky regime had begun again. There were riots here and there. Local governments were set up. The intelligentsia raised its head; the Socialists of the Constitutional Assembly were heard of once more; and within these new organisations conflicts began between classes and ideologies which served no other end than to weaken the power of the Soviets.

All this was fully realised at the Kremlin, where the Council of People's Commissars still ruled under the leadership of Trotsky, Bukharin, Rykov, Kamenev, Stalin and Chicherin. Trotsky, always a brilliant organiser and an able propagandist, now surpassed himself. He put pressure upon the veteran officers of the Great War to join the Red army, where they could train the new proletarian officers and discipline the undisciplined troops of the new Government. The councils of soldiers were done away with; and in their place a severe discipline was introduced, quite without precedent even in the days before the war. Special political Commissars were drafted into every regiment to inculcate the spirit of Communist patriotism and to exercise surveillance over officers as well as men.

A militant Communism became the guiding force in Russia wherever the Kremlin ruled; and it was the formula of Government that whatever the Soviets did

not explicitly permit was thereby forbidden and punishable. The Cheka worked with the relentless system of a machine. The population was divided into spies and those who were spied upon; and where the very walls had ears and eyes, death was the penalty for the least incautious word. All over Russia the remnants of the old gentry, the aristocracy and the capitalist classes were hunted out, provoked to the point of resistance, falsely accused of conspiracy, blamed for every crime, and given over at last to the machine guns that hummed away in the cellars where detachments of the Cheka had established themselves.

At the heart of it all was Trotsky, pulling at his short black beard, and calling hysterically for more blood to be shed. "We must make a clean sweep of bourgeoisie and gentry until not a trace of that stock remains. We have no right to spare those enemies who may later destroy us from within!"

The Chinese, Latvians, Finns and Magyars were busy night and day on their work of destruction. Officers of the old army were induced by a promise of food or by blackmail to serve the proletariat under the supervision of Government agents. They had to strain every muscle on behalf of those men who had murdered their fathers and brothers, violated their sisters and daughters, killed their Czar, shamed their country and betrayed its allies by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. In the end their devoted work produced the results desired by Trotsky. At one place or another the Red army began to offer serious resistance to its enemies. As time went on its commanders were able to report that they had gained even some local successes.

Equal efforts were made to set industry upon its feet. Specialised men were forced to work in the factories under the threat of being accused of sabotage if they refused. Their work was more difficult than the work of officers in the army, for many of the plants had been destroyed by soldiers and workers, and the means were not available for their restoration. With difficulty the engineers succeeded in getting a few of the factories into some sort of running order, but their output was irregular because the supplies of raw material were soon exhausted.

"It's war that feeds war," Trotsky repeated in all his speeches and articles, quoting Napoleon. "Rout the enemy in front of you! Behind his lines you will find everything you lack, for it has been supplied by foreign nations to the Whites."

Meanwhile the villages were being harried by military patrols and by a host of Commissars.

"Give your crops to the army," was their command. "Remember that the army's victory is yours also. If the army is defeated you will lose your lands and be sentenced to death by the old landowners and the White Generals."

The terrified peasants, either convinced by argument or else compelled by bayonets, sent their crops and cattle to the appointed depots, secretly cursing and groaning when they thought of the approaching winter with its threat of famine and disease.

It was in such a peasant community that the family of Valerian Baldyrev found itself. They lived in a simple hut owned by old Kostomarov, a man of sixty who had spent his life in travel and study until the influence of Leo Tolstoy decided him upon a "return to Nature." At the age of thirty he took up a small plot of land and lived like a peasant, doing all the work of the place himself without the help of hired labour. As a result he was universally loved and respected; and the proof of this came when, in the worst anarchy of the Revolution, he was elected President of the village council. Although he resigned the honour at once, he was yet able to dissuade his neighbours from attacking the houses of the gentry, to refrain from the murders and "bonfires" that were commonplace all over Russia. At the same time he induced the landowners to surrender the land, retaining only as much as they could cultivate for themselves. The district in which Kostomarov exerted his influence was one of the few where the Peasant Revolution did not degenerate into an orgy of barbarism and murder.

The old eccentric greeted the family warmly, though not without a trace of suspicion.

"Now tell me the truth, Valerian Petrovitch," he said



at once. "Have you come here only to seek refuge from the Revolution, or do you intend to work?"

"We want to work," Baldyrev replied. "My brother advised us to come here so that we could help you."

"I need no help. I have done all my own work for thirty years. But if you have set your heart upon real work, I have an idea that you engineers should be able to put into practice."

They sat down at once and engaged in a long consultation, which bore fruit a few weeks later when a communal enterprise, the first of its kind in Russia, was set on foot in the village of Tolkachevo. It began in an old shed as a workshop for the repair of agricultural implements, but it was not long before the scope of the plan had to be enlarged. At the request of the village council, a spare tractor was obtained from the local town, as well as a lathe and other machines which were taken from a factory left derelict by the Revolution. The engineers chose their mechanics from among the workers who had fled from the starving cities, and it was not long before they had a body of craftsmen hard at work. The syndicate began to produce ploughs of an American type, reaping machines, threshing machines and small tools, under the direction of Valerian and Peter Baldyrev. Gregory, meanwhile, persuaded the peasants to help him in the manufacture of bricks and artificial manure. Foreseeing considerable difficulties about fuel, the engineers then began to work an old surface shaft—the very existence of which had been long forgotten in the neighbourhood—for coal. They set up a coal depot in Tolkachevo; and what they did not use themselves they exchanged for other necessary products with the surrounding towns.

Madame Baldyрева had all she could do to feed the workers of this flourishing commune. A modest workshop for the repair of old ploughs and the shoeing of horses was rapidly being transformed into a flourishing factory with brick-making and coal-mining as subsidiary industries.

By a common vote, Madame Baldyрева was also

appointed chief book-keeper for the enterprise. She kept them so well that the Commissars who came from Novgorod and even from Moscow could only marvel. Her books witnessed eloquently to the communal nature of the enterprise and to the rejection of all capitalistic methods. It was not long before the Proletarian Government, seriously exercised over the destruction of all Russia's industries, was lending active assistance to the producing commune at Tolkachevo.

The young Baldyrevs saw a proof of this when an order went out for the conscription of all men under the age of forty. They presented themselves immediately at the military tribunal, but the President, when he heard their names, at once exempted them from service.

"What would be the use of sending you to the front?" he asked with a shrewd smile. "You would desert at once to the Whites. You are necessary here, so you must remain in your commune. Keep on with the good work you have been doing."

The peasants rejoiced when the young men came back with their certificates of exemption. They liked the hard-working and capable engineers. They also knew that the existence of the commune was a safeguard against the incursions of Commissars. They gave the Baldyrevs, therefore, a plot of land for their own use and combined to build them a house with their own labour.

Life was proceeding now on more tolerable and normal lines. Madame Baldyreva was already thanking God for the protection that had overshadowed them and for leading them out of their dangerous situation in Petrograd. She regarded her husband and her sons with a growing pride. Valerian Baldyrev had entirely thrown off his old slackness and carelessness. He grew younger ~~every day, more~~ ready to the struggles of life. His routine was that of an old and experienced administrator, his extensive knowledge of industry ~~was added to that of~~ his judgment and tact enabled him to escape most of the difficulties presented by a regime of stupidity, brutality and carelessness. He showed himself at every crisis as adroit in allaying the suspicions of the self-opinionated Commissars as he was in winning over the hesita-

tions of his colleagues in the commune. Moreover, he gradually established the best of relations with the peasants and exerted such an influence over them that they came to him for advice and welcomed him gladly when he called at their cottages.

Madame Baldyeva herself played her part by making friends with the women and children of the commune. She helped them with their sewing, composed their quarrels, taught the children to read, and cured them when they were ill. Her sons called her "the Foreign Office," the peasants accepted her as a final judge; and in this community of effort the Baldyrev family itself became a solid unit with the strength and the courage to face any possible calamity.

Gregory Baldyrev, who directed the mining operations, often left Tolkachevo for other villages which sent their men to the coal and clay industries. He was soon aware that the efforts of the Council of People's Commissars to spread unrest among the peasants and to break up the family were having strange and unexpected results.

He saw some of these results at first hand when the Commissars ordered the Baldyrev commune to organise the production of salt from the mineral springs of Staraya Rusa. On the day of his arrival he had no sooner entered the cottage of the local Commissar than he heard furious shouts and a rush of feet along the road.

"Help! Help! Neighbours! The rowdies have come again! They are attacking us! To arms!"

Gregory left the cottage. Peasants armed with carbines and revolvers, brought to the village by deserters from the front, were running with set faces to the end of the village, where a regular battle was going on. Shots rang out, bayonets and axes flashed in the sun, stout sticks rose and fell in the *mêlée*.

The battle was long and fierce. At last the attackers withdrew, leaving a few dead upon the ground. Then the Commissar, who replaced the old headman of the village, told the engineer what were the origins of the trouble.

"It's too bad, comrade," he said, nodding his head. "No good can come of this. The town Commissars sent those rowdies along. They are peasants who lost their

own land long ago and they have been wandering about for years. Now they come back demanding their share of the land, raiding the cattle, stealing ploughs and even crockery from our cottages. It is oppression, that's what it is! Think what these men are! Peter Frolov was imprisoned five times as a thief. Luke Borin was deported with hard labour for breaking into a post office and murdering the postmaster. Simon Agapov is a beggar and a tramp, good for nothing but drink and songs and lies. We have no use for such neighbours here. We have stuck to our land through good times and bad. We have watered it with our sweat. And now we are expected to share it with tramps and ne'er-do-wells. Why? Is there a law that says we must?"

He put his head near Gregory's and whispered in his ear: "To tell the truth, this kind of thing never happened when the Czar ruled. . . . Yet they say it is *our* Government now. It seemed all right when it was only an idea in the air, but when you see it from near to . . ."

He looked at Gregory as if he expected agreement, but the engineer had trained himself to be cautious about exposing his secret thoughts to strangers.

"It will be all right in time, comrade," he answered quietly. "It only seems wrong at the moment."

"Well, it had better improve," said the Commissar angrily. "If it doesn't, we shall take it in hand ourselves."

"Not as you did to-day!" retorted Baldyrev. "You will pay for that sort of thing, you know."

"That remains to be seen," growled the Commissar, with a furtive glance at the engineer.

Before two weeks had passed, Gregory's prophecy was fulfilled. Late one night a body of Cheka horsemen descended on the village. They were under the command of a Commissar who was accompanied by some of the defeated roughs. The villagers were dragged out of their beds to hear a speech from the Commissar which they could hardly understand, for he was a Latvian who spoke Russian imperfectly. But they knew that he was speaking about the proletariat and that he was accusing them of counter-revolutionary activities.

They were enlightened when the Commissar made

them stand in a row, then made every fifth man stand on one side.

A soldier volunteered an explanation. "Comrade peasants! These men will be hostages for you. They will be shot unless you point out which of you were guilty of the murder of those landless comrades who came for their share of the land."

"We gave them land," faltered the village Commissar. "But they tried to rob us of our cattle and our ploughs."

"What!" shouted the Chekist. "Don't you know that there is no such thing as private property? All things are owned in common. Now, I shall count one, two, three. Who took part in the fight?"

The peasants stood before him with lowered heads.

"One!" Nobody spoke.

"Two!" The Chekist Commissar produced his revolver.

"Three!" He went up to the village Commissar, put the revolver to his head, and fired. The peasant collapsed in a heap with his head blown open.

The villagers needed no more persuasion. After some nudging and whispering, eight of them left the crowd and stepped up to the Cheka agent.

"Comrade Commissar," stammered one of them, as they uncovered their heads, "we beg your pardon. We are poor, ignorant men. We protested against the violence of our comrades and there was a scuffle. We ask your forgiveness."

The Commissar beckoned to his troopers, who surrounded the group of peasants and led them away to the wall of a cottage. Women wept for mercy and children wept also in terror of they knew not what. The men stood stolidly with wooden faces, afraid of anything they might do.

After a moment a volley of shots rang out. The soldiers returned alone.

"Bury those bodies later on," ordered the Commissar harshly. "That will be a lesson for you to obey administrative decrees. Also you must elect a new council for your village. Here are the candidates nominated by the Government."

He took a sheet of paper from his pocket and read out

the list. All the names were those of landless proletarians, despised by the villagers—ex-convicts, tramps and professional beggars, every one of them.

“Who has any protest to make?” asked the Commissar, raising his revolver. Nobody said a word.

“Then they are elected unanimously.”

He mounted his horse and the whole troop clattered out of the village.

For the rest of Baldyrev's stay “the rule of the proletariat” held sway in the village. The authorities made a distinction between the rich peasants, or kulaks, the “middle peasants” and the “proletarian” peasants. They began by expropriating the property of the kulaks. When that was done they passed on to the middle peasants, requisitioning their cattle and their goods. This process went on for some time. The new despots had nothing to fear, and for their protection they could appeal to the Commissars of the neighbouring town, whither they sent the confiscated property of the peasants in exchange for vodka, new clothes and boots, or else they gambled away their plunder to one another.

A period of pauperisation set in. The peasants awaited the coming of spring with dread, for they had no seeds, no horses and no ploughs. With winter at its height, when the whole village was covered by a thick blanket of snow, the peasants hardly left their cottages, for they feared any encounter with the drunken and domineering “proletarians.” They looked with sorrow at the corner of the room where the holy ikons used to hang in all the glory of brass and tinsel, shining in the light of wax candles and oil lamps. Persecuted by the Bolsheviks for their belief in God, the peasants used to conceal their treasures in the cellars where they also stored potatoes and pickled cabbages. Then, in the dead of night, they would bring the ikons back to their old corner, light the stumps of candles, and kneel before them, asking God for pardon and for mercy.

Their prayers were short ejaculations repeated over and over again. “O Lord; have mercy on us! O Lord, have mercy on us!” The endless repetition went on and on, with no other sound but the moans of the suppliants, who beat their breasts and struck their heads

upon the floor, and made the sign of the Cross as they prayed.

The sacred pictures of St. Nicholas revived the memory of the Czar, who, abandoned by the whole world, had perished under this Government of workers and soldiers. For them he had been the anointed ruler, a divine being, hated and yet loved.

"This is the punishment of God upon him, upon our Czar, our father."

Whispering and fearful, they drew a soiled picture of Nicholas II from between the timbers of the walls and put it among the ikons.

"O Lord, have mercy on Thy slaves. God have mercy on us."

If a dog barked or if a step was heard in the road outside, they hastily took down the pictures and hid them wherever they could. They blew out the candles and waited, trembling in the darkness.

Sometimes a vagrant would creep into the village through the orchards, avoiding the Commissars and knocking softly at the cottage doors. He would talk in whispers to the peasants, ask sharp questions, make allusions to mysterious things, utter terrible prophecies of evil to come, and give them some crumbs of truth in a wild medley of mystical nonsense.

"Terrible signs appeared in the sky. . . . The cross was torn down by a snake . . . a kind of fire . . . a pale horseman upon the red horse . . . an angel with a smoking seven-branched candlestick. . . . Antichrist has come to found his kingdom upon earth . . . the blessed hermit, Arcadius of Athos, saw him in a dream . . . this Antichrist has two faces, one the face of Lenin, the other of Trotsky. . . ."

"God have mercy on us!" sighed the peasants.

"First, this Antichrist raised his hand against the anointed rulers . . . our unhappy Czar died the death of a martyr, abandoned by his faithless servants. See! the Austrian Emperor, the German Emperor, and others after them will crumble into dust. . . . They killed the Czar-Martyr and sent his head to Moscow, to the Kremlin . . . . Lenin spat at it, Trotsky spat at it, and then they burnt it in a stove. . . . When they did this a terrible

storm rose up which raged for nine days and filled everybody with wonder. . . . The Red soldiers at the Kremlin saw fearful ghosts in the night. . . . They saw the Patriarch Philaret, Michael Theodorovitch, the first Czar, Ivan the Terrible, Demetrius the Infant, killed by the Tartar, Godunov. . . . Then the punishment of God came down upon Lenin. He is dying of a bullet wound. . . . He has terrible visions. He rises up from his bed and cries out through the night, 'Help! I am choking with blood! It floods the whole Kremlin!' . . . Faithful soldiers in Ekaterinburg saved the young Czarevitch and Tatiana, the Czar's daughter, who was an angel of mercy to the wounded soldiers. . . . Alexis, the heir apparent, is in Siberia with the famous warrior, Koltchak, who will soon drive the Bolsheviki beyond the Urals and capture Moscow. . . . The French and the English have seized the Murmansk coast and they are helping our deliverers in Archangel and Odessa."

So the vagrants talked, spreading the wildest rumours among the peasants. Then some dreadful old woman would come, half-witted, her face eaten away with leprosy, waving her thin arms above her head and croaking of new catastrophes.

"The Bolsheviki broke into the Lavra at Kiev and scattered the bones of Saints and hermits which have oozed aromatic oils for centuries past. They smashed the miraculous ikons to pieces. Latvians, Finns, Magyars and Chinamen are butchering the priests and bishops. They are hanging monks on trees and raping nuns. On Easter day they shot at the Patriarch Tikhon as he stood at the altar, but wounded though he was he cried out in a great voice, "Christ is risen! Alleluia!" He offered his blood with tears to God the Father and to the Son. Antichrist is ruling in Russia, the lord of every iniquity and of devilish malice. All signs and voices cry to us, 'Arise, you people of God! Overthrow the slaves of Antichrist and serve your God faithfully, for in Him alone is power and salvation.'"

They ran about everywhere like little grey mice in stubble, spreading rumour and fear among the people, weakening the spirit of them all. Panic flowed across



Russia from the sunny groves of the Crimea to the waste tundra of the White Sea.

"Antichrist has appeared!" the peasants whispered. "Death and the Judgment are at hand! Who can resist? Who can defeat the enemy of Christ? Woe, woe upon us!"

They fell into despair and inertia which deprived them of their last vestige of effort. They waited now only for the Archangel with a fiery sword, and the sound of the golden trumpet on the last day.

In the village where Gregory Baldyrev was stationed, matters went from bad to worse. The Commissars of the proletarian peasants were quick to see the signs of fear and servility among the villagers, whom they bullied heartlessly. They pulled the beards of the old men and mocked the old women as they went about their work. They lured the girls away to make them drunk with brandy and presented them with lengths of coloured cotton, with handkerchiefs and ribbons. Their orgies became a feature of the village life, and the young women, tired of their monotonous poverty, soon recognised their position: there was a demand for them and they would profit by it. They had long ago given up moral principles. Now they passed, body and soul, to the conquerors. The family traditions and the old courtesies of the villagers soon disappeared.

Next door to Gregory Baldyrev lived Philip Kuklin, formerly a well-to-do peasant, whose only possession left him by the Commissars was his wife, Darya, a young and high-spirited woman. But it was not long before one of the new authorities took a fancy to the girl. He called her to his cottage on some official pretext and kept her there for a feast—a feast that was the highest dream of luxury to her, with brandy, music and dancing. Darya came home at last, drunk and happy. When her husband reproached her, she turned on him with a new contempt.

"I don't care a kopek about you and your miseries. Life is short and I want to enjoy it—my own life to do what I want with."

In desperation the unhappy peasant beat her, and that

same night Darya left the cottage. The poor man sought her everywhere for three days until she suddenly appeared again with an official slip of paper which authorised her divorce.

When Kuklin complained to the village council, the Commissars laughed at him. "Why, it's the law, man. Anybody can get divorced and married again, for one day only, if they want to. You have no power over your wife now. If you do her any harm you will go to prison. The slavery of women is past. They are free, and equal with men."

The peasant entreated Darya to return to him. "I am free now," she answered. "I like the new secretary of the council and I'm going to marry him."

"You had better marry me," said Kuklin.

"What, for the second time? I'm not such a fool."

For a long time Kuklin went about gloomy and silent, brooding over his troubles, until at last his melancholy turned into madness. He came upon his wife by surprise, tied her to a tree and beat her, slowly and methodically, remembering an old proverb for husbands: "Beat her, and listen to her breath. If her breath stops, pour water over her and beat her again until she understands her duties."

For two whole days he tortured her. Then he untied her ropes and let her go.

"Now my heart is light," he growled. "You can go! And remember, if you complain, I'll beat you to death, and no Commissar, not Lenin himself, will save you."

The woman dared not complain, but she squared accounts for herself. She came back to Kuklin in a day or two, professing to love him, and gave him as a present a bottle of brandy which she had mixed with corrosive sublimate. The poor peasant, once her husband, drank the stuff and died in agonies.

Darya was tried for the crime of murder, and in court she concealed nothing of what she had done. She described it all in detail and gloried in her crime; with the result that she was acquitted on the principle laid down by Lenin, that "proletarian justice" is changeable and dependent upon circumstances: the same crime

may be punished with death or recognised as meritorious by the working class.

Gregory Baldyrev was glad to leave the place and to return to the commune at Tolkachevo, where he found already some ominous changes. A decree had been issued from Moscow making education compulsory. The old and illiterate peasants, in whose eyes the alphabet was an invention of the devil, were forced to attend school with their children and grandchildren. There they were jeered at by a Communist teacher sent from the town so that they lost all respect in the eyes of the young. The experiment was not a success in any direction and the project of universal education was soon dropped. The teacher then devoted himself to the proper training of the young in the ideals of Communism, to which end he made them learn a Communist "catechism" by heart, as the simple foundation of all learning. In consequence, his pupils gained next to no knowledge of reading, writing or simple arithmetic. Their school was a disused barn where the children sat round the floor in their sheepskins and torn felt boots, feeling cold and miserable. When they could they pleaded sickness and stayed at home. It was soon obvious that the teacher would not introduce any other subjects into the curriculum, first, because they represented the bourgeois ideology, and secondly, because he knew nothing about them; the poor man had a profound contempt for such capitalistic superstitions. He was badly paid and hated by the peasants, but he cherished the consolation that somebody far superior to himself was of his mind.

This model on which he shaped himself was Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin, the President of the Council of People's Commissars. The Dictator had come to the conclusion that all branches of learning should be subjected to proletarian control and revision in the light of the materialist philosophy. Not even Science was excepted. His staff, which included the accomplished Commissar of Education, Lunacharsky, the historian Pokrovsky, and a General's daughter, Alexandra Kollontay, was engaged upon a revised history and attempting to excise

from literature all bourgeois works or influences. They even regarded branches of knowledge like chemistry and physics as anti-proletarian because they were based on unchanging laws. This in itself made them almost mediaeval superstitions, because Lenin did not encourage belief in anything permanent or founded on unchanging principles.

The teacher at Tolkachevo had other tasks to perform as well. He had especially to instil the idea that doctrines of God and the Church are opium for the people. He founded among his pupils a new organisation of the Communistic Village Youth, called, shortly, Komsomol. The children of the Komsomol were to have equal rights with adults, to be independent of parental control, and even to exercise supervision over their teacher. They had the right to hold their own courts and they were under the obligation of spying upon their parents and the other villagers, whom they denounced to the authorities at their own discretion.

This method of education was at once productive of result: three men and two old women were carried off to gaol for grumbling at the Proletarian Government. When Madame Baldyreva heard of this she asked the zealous though stupid teacher to explain his system, and so she learnt about this fundamental doctrine.

“Revolutionised children critical of their elders are the best means of revolutionising, and even of disintegrating, the family and the community.”

These were the words of Lenin himself, which had fired the enthusiasm of the teacher. Madame Baldyreva realised with a sinking heart how bold and how simple the conception was. Lenin's axiom, probably thrown out to serve some propagandist need of the moment, would bring destruction very quickly to the ignorant and undisciplined peasant masses.

The organisation of Communist youth was soon well established. Its object was to rear up a generation of orthodox Communists to understand and to appreciate Lenin's ideas, and to enjoy a privileged position in the State.

The teacher himself set the example when he persuaded one of the growing girls, Katya Keliminova, to be his

mistress. She answered the reproaches of her parents with the new doctrines she had learnt at school, and so she continued to visit him every night until she found herself with child. When that happened the teacher dismissed her and gave his attentions to another girl. In time Katya bore a son; but the authorities put the child into an institution in the town—his mother with him at first to nurse him—where he became the property of the State. Their doctrine was that a home atmosphere and education, and the care of his mother through childhood, would make him incapable of living as a true proletarian should.

The quiet of Tolkachevo was soon broken by events which more and more disturbed the Baldyrev family. Because the industrial commune was a useful institution, the village was for a long time spared by the Commissars, who robbed the people of other villages at every whim. The peasants of Tolkachevo were peaceful. They avoided all conflict with the authorities. But after a time new agitators came from Moscow. They blasphemed against God, removed the cross from the church tower, ill-treated the priest of the parish, encouraged debauchery and organised days of free love, when young women, greedy for presents and excitements, were their victims.

In the end, Tolkachevo shared the common fate. Disputes arose, families fell to pieces, the roads were filled with vagrant children who drifted finally to the towns. Nobody looked after them because the parents were absorbed with domestic quarrels, divorces, and complaints to the authorities.

One day Madame Baldyreva met a young girl whom she knew to be Marya Shulgin, the daughter of a village Commissar.

"How are you?" Madame Baldyreva asked. "I hear you are about to marry. Who is the young man?"

"Stephen Lutov," she replied with a blush. "I am going to see him now to fix a date for the wedding."

The girl went on to the Lutov cottage, where Stephen, a lad of eighteen, was waiting for her. He put his arm round her and led her towards the barn.

"Where are you going?" she asked, holding back.

"There is something I want in there," he answered evasively, opening the door and dragging her inside. "Listen, Mainka," he went on, closing the door. "You are in the Komsomol, so you must obey the commands of your comrades. I want you now. A wedding is a silly superstition of the bourgeoisie."

The simple girl was silent before the blazing eyes of her young lover.

"Why don't you say something?" he asked, embracing her and covering her with kisses.

"Let me alone!" she shrieked, dragging herself away.

"So that's what you are!" he shouted. "Hi, there, comrades! Come along!"

A couple of louts appeared from the darkness, gagged the girl and tore her clothes off. She was strong and active and for a long time she resisted them, but in the end her strength was exhausted and the young Stephen had his way with her. Then, like a good Communist, he gave her over to his comrades. They remained until nightfall in the dark barn, which smelt of rye and fungus and mice, until they could leave it unnoticed.

It was a week before Marya was found, naked, bruised and covered with blood, lying dead of exposure where they had left her. The authorities had no difficulty in detecting the culprits, who were sent for trial in the town. But within two days they were back again, arrogant and boastful of their exploit. They had been found not guilty; more than that, they had been publicly praised for punishing a girl who refused to fulfil the duties of a free proletarian woman. She had no right to refuse the Communists who desired her.

The complaints of her father were of no avail. He came to the Baldyrevs to pour out his sorrows, but he soon saw that even they could not express their sympathy when the very walls had ears.

The poor man solemnly raised his hand. "I swear before you as before God," he said, "that I shall have revenge."

A day later, Stephen Lutov disappeared. Nobody knew where he had gone, but an old woman confided to the Baldyrevs that she had seen Shulgin, on a moonlight

night, carry a burden to the frozen river and drop it through a hole in the ice.

So the anarchy increased. A wife of the village suddenly found that her daughter was with child by her own husband. She consulted with the Baldyrevs, who told her to bring her trouble to court. But the Commissars said that this was no crime—it was what all Christians read of in the Old Testament. They sent her home with their compliments to her husband.

That night the court-house was burnt down, and a number of ex-civil servants were shot for the crime, on the principle that where punishment exists there must always be somebody to receive it. Then the old woman returned to the village and at dead of night set fire to her own cottage, having barred the doors and windows so that both her husband and her daughter perished in the flames. And next morning, when she was found wandering the roads, raving of the destruction she had caused, she was sent away to the neighbouring town to be executed.

As Madame Baldyreva was telling her husband of these events he was glancing at a newspaper, from which he began to read one passage aloud.

“The proletariat is sweeping away the old morality of the enemy classes. It desires no morality of its own because it lives by common-sense, which is much higher and purer than the artificial false morality of the bourgeois classes. We shall heal and ennoble the world. If I did not abominate bourgeois words, I would say that the proletariat is holy, pure and sinless.”

“So writes Comrade Leon Trotsky,” he said. They looked into each other’s eyes and sighed and dropped their heads.

## CHAPTER XXX

60

THE civil war continued on many fronts. More and more armies, large and small, took the field against the Dictators at the Kremlin. Cut off though they were from the whole world by the blockade of the Allies and the White forces, the Commissars were not gagged or dumb. They issued a manifesto to the nations that the proletariat was awaiting the moment for hoisting the Red flag over the Eiffel Tower, over Westminster, over the Capitol at Washington, over Vienna, Rome and Berlin.

Their Red soldiers mercilessly tortured the White officers whom they captured. They cut epaulets in the skin of their shoulders, tore strips of flesh from their backs, roasted them over slow fires, gouged out their eyes, butchered them with axes, poured water over them and let them turn into pillars of ice in the arctic cold; they tied hundreds of the "enemies of the proletariat" in batches together and sank them under the ice of the rivers.

The Whites repaid cruelty for cruelty. They cut the five-pointed star of Bolshevism on the chests of the Commissars. They cut off their noses, ears and hands. They suffocated them in the smoke of bivouac fires. They used them as living targets for shooting practice. Along every road and every by-path through the fields the rotting bodies of Red soldiers dangled from the trees.

When Communist peasants in the Volga basin found a White officer, they ripped up his stomach, tore out his bowels, and nailed them to a telegraph post. Then they beat him until he ran round and round the post and finally dropped in the agony of death amidst the fiendish laughter of the peasants. In the Urals the White peasants who seized a Commissar would force a stick of dynamite into his anus, and with a fuse explode that



living bomb. In other places men had their mouths loaded with gunpowder and their heads wrapped with rags and wire to increase the force and fun of the explosion.

Daily the civil war became more ruthless and more cruel. Russians learned not to spare things or persons. Whole towns and villages were given to the flames without mercy. The panic-stricken population, robbed both by Reds and Whites, found new oppressors at every turn. They sang the Internationale or "God save the Czar" as they were ordered; they lost in a year all notions of law, morals or humanity.

The foreign troops had no reason to spare the Russians, for some of them remembered their betrayal of the Allies, and others were already scared by the oppression of an older Russia. Frenchmen, Englishmen, Japanese, Austrians, Hungarians, Poles, Czechs and Latvians threw themselves in a storm of bullets and shells upon the barbarians, the Tartars, who threatened the world.

Russia bled at every pore. And at the same time the man who had intended to give her happiness lay in what seemed his last agony. For a whole month Vladimir Lenin lay in a darkened room in the Kremlin, struggling with death. Fania Kaplan had aimed well if she intended to submit the Dictator himself to the torture with which he had racked the nation. The bullet had lodged near his backbone after piercing some important nerve-centres, and the attendant doctors could place their hopes for recovery only on the strength of the sturdy, broad-shouldered man. At long intervals he recovered consciousness and then relapsed again. Long days passed in agony, in high fever, when Lenin shrieked and raved with delirium. There were times when he lay rigid with cold hands and feet, unable to move.

"Paralysis!" the doctors whispered.

But the wounded man would raise his hand and trace letters in the air as though on invisible paper, muttering to himself: "Life . . . happiness . . . Helena . . . everything for the Revolution, comrades."

Then he would struggle with his attendants and try to open his swollen, blackened eyes.

"Dzherzhinsky! Torquemada!" he shouted.

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"Dzherzhinsky! Torquemada!" he shouted.

"Fedorenko! The curs! Put them against the wall. Tell me, Felix Edmundovitch, did the Chinese strangle that boy, Peter? . . . Dora! Dora! Where is Dora Frumkin? Comrades, tell Plekhanov that killing is not an easy game."

He groaned bitterly. "Socialism! Equality of man! Nonsense! It is a dream! But first, away with Liberty! It does harm to the proletariat. Then, terrorism such as would make Ivan the Terrible shudder in his grave—terrorism over a space of fifty years, over a century if need be, until self-sacrifice remains the only virtue, the true guarantee of Socialism. By fear we can liberate mankind, and change mankind, body and soul. . . . Don't be angry! Helena! do not frown at me! It is not I who say this, but I obey an order from above!"

Again he would sink into inertia. He felt himself tumbling down, down, into bottomless space, whirling around with the debris of a broken world, amid the bloody fragments of torn human bodies. If he spoke, it was in disconnected words. Then he sank into motionless silence; and the doctors bent over him to feel his pulse and to hear whether the heart of Lenin still beat.

Doctor Kramer, the devoted friend and admirer of the Dictator, straightened himself with a nod of his head. The heart of Lenin, the secret heart of Russia, beat slowly, almost imperceptibly.

Three weeks went by before the black eyes opened wonderingly to the darkened room and the troubled faces of those who stood by his bed. Lenin spoke in a weak voice, asked questions about recent events, and then relapsed again. But after that the periods of consciousness were more and more frequent. Sometimes he found that he could not move his right arm and leg. Sometimes, when he wished to speak, he found that he could not control his tongue. He mumbled incoherently, his mouth dribbled saliva.

"A symptom of paralysis," whispered the doctors.

However, Lenin overcame even these attacks. He began to speak and to move freely after a time. Nadezhda Konstantinovna noticed one day that the sick man

was motioning to her that he wished to speak. She bent over him.

"My brain has begun to function," he whispered. "Leave me by myself for a while. There are certain things I want to think over."

Krupskaya was comforted. It was a sign that Lenin was recovering when he wanted to be alone in the solitude where his mind worked so well. After a consultation with the doctors, the Dictator was left by himself in the dark sick-room.

He lay motionless, with eyes wide open, looking at the ceiling. Then he frowned and began to whisper.

"Yes, it was Eschenbach, Maria Ebner Eschenbach, who said: 'Suffering is our guide and master. Suffering uplifts the soul.' And Alfred de Vigny said something similar: 'Suffering may, in the end, mean nothing else than living the fullest life.' . . ."

He was silent for a moment, rubbing his forehead with his hand.

". . . Who was it said that, for the improvement of man, it is good to have every sort of cruelty, violence, misery, danger, injustice, and, following them, a search into one's own 'ego'—that evil, tyranny, and beastliness are as necessary as their opposites? Ah, it was Nietzsche! So far, then, all is well. Suffering has brought forth cruelty, cruelty has brought forth suffering. And so we move towards our goal, a better sort of man. No sacrifice can be too great if that goal is to be attained. None at all . . . And Helena? Helena in her mourning veil? Helena's face distorted in the last agonies of a cruel death? . . ."

He shuddered and closed his eyes.

". . . But what if in the end all this suffering leads us back to the old life over again? What will be the good of all these tears, all this blood? What good the death of Helena, of Dora Frumkin, the Shulamitess fit for Solomon, of Sophia Volodimirova and her little son, of Selaninov who sought me in the Tatras? . . ."

His thoughts ran on.

". . . I am not sure. Is it only a mad experiment after all? And yet, nobody else dared to attempt it—not the French revolutionaries of the Commune, or

Blanquis or Bakhunin or Marx or Liebknecht. They only dreamed. *I* took action. *I* changed the world. *I*! But in the villages they call me Antichrist! . . .”-

He raised himself up a little and spoke angrily in the darkness.

“O God, I disbelieve in your existence as the ruler of the world. If you do exist, give me a sign! Reveal your will! Destroy me with your anger! Behold, I am Antichrist, blaspheming your name, hurling the filth of every abomination into your face! Punish me, then! Give me a proof of your existence! I conjure *you* to speak!” He waited, listening, turning his feverish eyes to every corner of the room. “Write! Write in fire, *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*, upon the walls! I entreat you! I command you!”

An untroubled silence reigned. Lenin heard only the throbbing of the blood in his own temples and his own hissing breath.

“Are you silent?” he cried. “Then I am not Antichrist! Nor do you exist! You are but an outworn legend, a spirit haunting some ruined shrine. I despise you, God!”

The doctors rushed in to find Lenin hanging from the bed, mumbling incoherently, foaming at the mouth. Again a long struggle with death began. In brief moments of consciousness the Dictator looked with terror-stricken eyes into the corner of the room where the ikons used to hang. The brass hooks still remained in place and a patch of soot on the ceiling was a silent reminder of the old oil lamps. He whispered something. The doctors bent down to catch his words, but they were without meaning in the mouth of Lenin.

“A vision!” he repeated over and over again. “A vision! A vision!”

Undoubtedly his brain was turned by the fever. There was no way to relieve him. Through long nights, while Krupskaya or a nurse dozed by his bed, he lay in a cold sweat watching a procession of phantoms. He saw Helena Remizova with the red slip upon which was written: Death. She cursed him with uplifted arms. He saw the naked Dora, who bent over him in tears. He saw the old Jewess, Mina Frumkin, glaring at him as

she crawled upon the floor. He saw the Czar dead, the Czarina clutching at a bayonet which protruded from her stomach; he saw the Czarevitch with his face a mass of blood. Chattering with fear and moaning to himself, he struggled to leave his bed, struggled in the arms of Nadezhda Konstantinovna and the doctor, until at last with a long sigh he fell back again unconscious.

In the morning he was awake and ordering that Apanasevitch, the Cheka agent, should come to him. The Chekist stood by his bedside, while Lenin whispered feebly:

"I am haunted by ghosts! They threaten me. They curse me. But it was not I who killed these people. It was Dzhherzhinsky. I hate him. He is a hangman, a lunatic. Kill him, then! Kill him! Kill him!"

He tried to put out his hands towards Apanasevitch, but they were cold and heavy. He could not move them. His face turned grey with the effort, foam appeared on his lips. . . . the doctors sent the Chekist away, and he went, muttering: "He is dying. The leader of the nation is dying and he cannot be replaced. This is a blow from which we cannot recover."

Lenin still raved in madness. He did not know that the revolution so often predicted by him had broken out in Kiel and swept across Germany, compelling the Hohenzollerns to abdicate and the German army to retreat behind the Rhine. He did not know that the Hapsburg Empire had broken to pieces and that the Communism of the Kremlin had spread like wildfire through Europe. In Berlin the Kremlin spoke through the mouth of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. In Munich the doctrine of proletarian dictatorship was practised by Leon Jogiches, in Budapest by Bela Kuhn, in Prague by Meytch and Miller.

But the prophet and creator of militant Bolshevism did not hear their voices. He lay in bed, trembling with fear, whispering to his wife or to his nurse: "Don't go to sleep. Stay near me, awake. I am afraid!"

Even then his brother Alexander appeared to him, black in the face and with his swollen tongue protruding from his mouth as though he still struggled in the hangman's noose.

"We perished on the gallows," his brother seemed to say, "or in the dungeons of Schluesselburg, or in the mines of Siberia. All of us died—Pestel, Kakowski, Releyev, Bestujev . . . Zhelyabo, Khalturin, Perovskaya, Kibalchitch . . . I, your brother, and an army of martyrs died joyfully for the future of our nation. But you have turned our sacrifice into dust and ashes. You are a traitor, a hangman, a tyrant. Be cursed for ever!"

With all his strength Lenin swept his arm across the table at his side. The bottles and glasses crashed upon the floor.

"Don't sleep!" he cried. "They want to murder me!"

But slowly the fever and the madness abated until the Dictator was able to sit up in bed and read the papers. Then at last he learned that the European war was over, and in its place Revolution swept over the world. The brain of Communism outside Russia was Rosa Luxemburg, its heart of fire, Karl Liebknecht, and its iron hand, Leon Jogiches. There they were, at the forefront of the battle, breaking the ranks of the compromising Socialists and driving the panic-stricken Imperialists from the field. What mattered, in comparison, the efforts of France and England to increase the strength of the counter-revolutionaries by the supply of munitions no longer needed in the West? The proletariat of Europe would rise up and overthrow them. Then . . . Lenin swept out of his mind the dreams and visions of the fever that had gripped him.

He was enthralled by the events taking place in the West. He lived among them and for them. He called the Commissars to him, listened to their reports and suggested new activities. He wrote speeches for them, projected meetings and congresses, and directed all their work. He was convinced that the success of the White armies would be only transient, for already reports came in of treachery and revolt in their ranks; and more than once the counter-revolutionary leaders foolishly referred to a restoration of the monarchy, the very suggestion which would make all peasants, soldiers and workers their enemies.

Lenin laughed with his old cheerfulness. Soon after-



wards he began to walk, feebly at first, but soon the strength flowed back into his body. Delegations from distant provinces came to visit him, to assure themselves that the Dictator was alive and ready to defend the glorious gains of the Revolution. Groups of workers who had made their perilous way among White patrols from the Crimea, from the coal areas, from the foundries, from the factories of the Urals and the cotton mills near Moscow came to see him. To all of them Lenin talked in a friendly way as an equal among equals, and with a complete understanding of their characters.

He asked unexpected questions to draw from them what they dared not say, and in every case it was the same. The workers complained of compulsory labour, bad food, lack of equipment, and ruthless discipline.

"It was different in the old days," a veteran worker complained. "We worked ten hours a day. We could buy for ourselves whatever we wanted. We had plenty of food. We could strike if we suffered an injustice. And now? Why, we get only mouldy bread made of chaff, and some bad fish. There is nothing in the shops. We and our wives look like regular beggars. Our children are naked. They have no shoes—they can't even go to school. We have to work for twelve hours, not to speak of overtime, for the good of the State. If you reckon it up, it comes to fourteen hours all told. If you don't come to work in time, the Commissars leave you without bread to eat, and if it happens twice, they shoot you."

As Lenin listened he said to himself: "We can rule like this so long as there is a war. But what will happen when that is over? How shall we manage then?"

But he replied quietly and with a friendly smile:

"It can't be helped, comrades. The whole land and the Government belong to you. Once we have destroyed the counter-revolution all will be well. Soon you will find your comrades of Western Europe on your side, and then there will be food and clothing in abundance. All we want now is to put our hands into the pockets of the European bourgeoisie. They have piled up tremendous wealth for you, so be patient. Meanwhile all your efforts must be for the victory of the proletariat. Grumble about nothing, never be disappointed. Go on

working with all your strength. The end is near, I promise you !”

They went away full of hope, enraptured by the simplicity and frankness of their Ilyitch, who understood all their difficulties. And when they had gone, Lenin noted the names of the delegates. He dictated to his secretary confidential notes for the chairmen of their councils and for the Cheka agents, warning them to keep their eyes on the dissatisfied workers and to cut short their rising protests.

Next, a group of peasants came in, and Lenin soon found that their complaints were no fewer.

“ We cannot tolerate the upstart poor, vagabonds who are ruining the land and oppressing the real husbandmen. You would not recognise the country-side any more, comrade. Every sort of iniquity and abomination pours out upon it from the town. It is anarchy. And there we are, sweating away, bending our backs all day, working with hands and feet—and suddenly a lot of leather-coated ruffians come along to take everything away from us. Do we work for them? The whole thing is illegal. No, if we have to give, we will only give what is just and necessary. See, Vladimir Ilyitch, what is going on. The peasants in the Tambov region began to produce only as much as was necessary for their families. What use was that? The Commissars came along, took hostages from them, and threatened to shoot them unless the peasants tilled the whole of their land. The peasants thought it was only a threat—so the Commissars shot fifty of them, right there, against a wall. You must not allow such tricks as that, or it will go badly with you. Remember, we could have taken up our rifles and our axes long ago, only that we supported the war and we have had enough blood already. We are patient so far, but everything must come to an end sooner or later, Ilyitch. Yes, everything. Tell your Commissars to govern us justly and to control their riff-raff, or else we'll cut them down like weeds in a field.”

Lenin was all ears. He nodded wisely, expressed his agreement, and promised to warn the Commissars against doing any harm to the land.

His brain was working swiftly. “ Aha !” he said to

himself he graded monster, friendly at the moment, but a millimeter in the Apocalypse for all that."

"I did not dare to threaten them or even to report a unanimous declaration to the local authorities. He succeeded them to believe in him and to trust him as a man of simple speech and of simple dress, who looked as if he had left the plough only yesterday.

With a peasant delegation from the Volga district there came a grey-haired, simple-looking old man who at once attracted Lenin's attention.

"A religious fanatic of some sort, I'll wager," was his secret opinion.

When the peasants had put forward their usual complaints of oppression and robbery at the hands of the Commissars, the old man suddenly spoke:

"All this is nothing, brothers. Everything that is happening now is for the good, and soon good times will come. Do not trouble our Vladimir Ilyitch, who is a sick man. We must help his recovery. He has a great work to do, and much of it is still undone."

The peasants were mollified by these arguments and by Lenin's kindly reception. But as they were leaving, the old man turned to the Dictator and said that he would like to talk with him alone.

When the door was shut, the old man drew himself up and said almost pontifically: "You do not know me, though we met years ago when I was a priest at Koku-shkino and you were a small boy. Now I have taken up agricultural work, for you do not appreciate the up-ashood."

The priest laughed quietly to himself. They were silent for some time, watching each other closely—two men accustomed to observing their fellows.

"I have come to express my gratitude to you, Vladimir Ilyitch," the priest went on. "It is the heartfelt gratitude of a man who knows what love and understanding mean."

He knelt suddenly and touched the floor with his forehead.

"Gratitude to me?" shouted Lenin with a loud laugh. "Why, I have scattered your bishops and



but he gradually overcame it. He remained for weeks buried in thought, ignoring everybody, refusing even to answer questions. Only one idea was in his mind.

"Has all my work come to this? Have I only succeeded in leading the nation back to faith in God and to the rule of peasants? No, it can't be! That priest was mad!"

## CHAPTER XXXI

SOON afterwards Lenin regained his full strength, to the amazement of the doctors. The man whom they had begun to regard as hopelessly sick and henceforth always to be on the verge of paralysis or madness suddenly threw off his ill-health and assumed once more the control of the Council of People's Commissars.

It was only just in time. All the Commissars except Trotsky, who directed the Soviet armies with unflagging energy, and Stalin, who was noted for his obstinacy, had completely lost their heads. The White armies of Denikin and Koltchak were everywhere on the advance. The promises and prophecies made by Lenin in the early days of the Revolution had long proved to be empty. He had promised a speedy end to the war and a lasting peace to follow it. More than that, he had promised the full establishment of Socialism within two months of the Revolution.

His prophecy, upon which so many hopes were based, of a victorious revolt of the proletariat in Germany was quite as empty. The revolt broke out in Berlin and Munich, but it was strangled at birth. All the Germans who loved their country and their civilisation, whether they were Imperialists devoted to the Hohenzollerns or Liberals and Socialists led by Scheidemann, Hitler and Noske, combined to strangle Communism. The "Spartacists" were smashed to pieces. Raging mobs of workers and soldiers, with their officers, all but lynched Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and Jogiches in the street; and they were finally murdered in prison. The German Republic passed into the hands of men who were the most dangerous enemies of proletarian dictatorship.

Not long after, Hungary, Czecho-Slovakia and the Balkan states also threw off the yoke of Bolshevism. In Italy the revolutionaries did not dare to attempt a rising,

though mobs blinded by the success of the Russians paraded the towns shouting, *Viva Lenin! Viva il Bolshevismo!*

All these events were recapitulated to Lenin by the Commissars when he came amongst them. Already they regarded their cause as lost, and they looked hopelessly for his verdict.

"Well, our policy is clear," he said, after a moment's thought. "We must spread Communism in Germany ourselves. We must establish diplomatic relations with capitalist states and express a sincere desire to live on friendly terms with them."

"But that is a betrayal of our ideal," shouted Zinoviev. "It is compromise—the death of Communism! It is criminal opportunism!"

Lenin continued as though he did not notice the interruption.

"We must live on terms of formal friendship with them. We need their money and their goods. We need their specialists to rebuild our industries. If we admit foreign capitalists into Russia, our commerce will begin to grow. The foreign capitalists will then help us to establish abroad a number of diplomatic and commercial envoys who will act as agents for propaganda. At the same time the Zimmerwald and Kienthal Socialists must carry on their work of disintegration within those states. The Russian proletariat must make every effort to win the civil war at once, so as to gain a breathing-space. Meanwhile we shall reinforce our outposts in Poland, Czecho-Slovakia and Germany."

"We have no forces in Germany now," said Chicherin. "They have been destroyed."

"Don't interrupt me!" shouted Lenin. "We have a large force, some thousands of Russian prisoners of war, in Germany. They must be organised and posted along the line of the Elbe. Comrades Busch and Kork wrote to me about it. Then we can advance against Poland, which is weak and already devastated. Poland cannot resist."

The Pole, Dzherzhinsky, shuddered involuntarily and stared fixedly at Lenin. Trotsky became spokesman for the Commissars, who were unconvinced.

"For your plan we need a lot of money," he said sarcastically. "Do you realise that hardly a factory in Russia is working? We may inform you, Comrade President, that famine, disease and revolt are on the increase all over the country. At the moment we are no more than a gang of mutinous beggars."

"We have the jewels of the Romanovs," retorted Lenin with scorn. "We have the treasures of the Hermitage and other museums. They can all be sold. Do you know our other resources?" He laughed softly. "The State Printing House can print any number of foreign bank-notes. After two months' preparation we can put half a million armed men on the soil of our enemies. Remember that all our neighbours are worn out and dissatisfied after the war. They will do anything for the sake of peace. We shall begin with the Poles and the Czechs. Roumania and Jugo-Slavia can be dealt with after that. When we gain a few victories the Italians will join us. To-day I was reliably informed that the German proletariat will be with us soon, despite the first failure. You don't think France can resist us, do you? She will fall, and England with her. Well, there is a plan for you. It needs concentration upon the smallest detail if it is to be a success; but no one of our enemies can withstand a simultaneous attack from within and from without. Now, comrades, there is no time for despair or for doubt. We must take breath, summon up all our strength, and set to work again."

Lenin's energy inspired the Commissars no less than his courage. The work began at once of raising a colossal army which was made into an efficient fighting machine. The State Press forged pounds and dollars by the thousand. Valuables which had belonged to the Czar and to the Church—diamonds, pearls and gold vessels—were sold almost in the streets of every capital in the world. A roaring trade was carried on in old Masters and sacred ikons, museum exhibits and rare books, while the shrines of Russia were robbed of every ornament. And all the time the Commissars used herculean efforts to overthrow the Siberian Government, which controlled a vast part of the country's wealth.

But Lenin outdid them all, even in personal effort.



He poured out through secret channels a flood of propaganda for Communism and preparation for the World Revolution. He called together conferences of experts to plan electrification schemes. He gave support to even the most fantastic proposals for new factories. He had new power plants installed in industrial centres and established aviation works. He founded universities and schools to produce a generation of specialists with the proletarian mentality. Yet he received personally the peasant delegations which came to Moscow. With his own hand he wrote authorisations for peasants and workers to transport their goods by train, and took pains to verify whether his orders had been swiftly carried out. He wrote articles for the papers, published books and pamphlets, and made political speeches which were intended to lull the suspicions of the nation, to numb its sufferings and to raise its hopes.

Lenin was consuming himself in his own fire. He worked with such vigour and demoniac speed that the departments of the Government could not keep pace with him. The Commissars were so hard driven by Lenin's telephone calls and an endless succession of notes that they all but dropped in their tracks. As a result, however, the work went on quickly, with a definite system. The Dictator was punctual himself and he insisted on punctuality, most of all in the execution of his orders. He was absorbed by the idea of organising all work scientifically and of establishing a bureau of investigation into the rational use of time. But the committees which he set up with this end in view toiled in vain to solve the problem; and in their daily reports to Lenin they had to confess that their experiments were severely hampered by widespread demoralisation among the workers.

Alone of them all, Lenin knew that he himself had to work against time. There were periods when his brain was numb and a terrible lassitude laid hold of him, so that his quick mind could hardly think at all. He knew that there was something organically wrong with him; these were dangerous symptoms.

On one occasion he remarked to Doctor Kramer and Maxim Gorki, who visited him, in the presence of

Nadezhda Konstantinovna : " Mark my words ! Paralysis will finish me off in the end ! "

" You need a long rest," said the doctor.

" No ! I have not a moment to lose," replied Lenin emphatically.

That was true enough. The new and complicated scheme of political strategy which he was preparing was now complete in all its details, and he wanted to put it into execution.

But a difficulty occurred when one of the opportunist policies which he had declared in October, 1917, began to show its full results. He had proclaimed that all the separate nations which made up the pre-war Russian Empire could establish their own political relationship with the proletarian Government, or even detach themselves from it. Russia was soon dotted with independent republics, a fact which weakened the whole country and hampered the Commissars when they tried to raise troops or to requisition food from the various provinces. Lenin now set himself to destroy these Governments. He profited by every quarrel amongst them and finally absorbed them into the Union of Federated Republics. He waged successful wars against the Cossacks, the Caucasus and the Ukraine until they could rebel no more. Then he revoked his earlier promise, so that the nation first conquered by the Czars and then freed by the proletariat was held powerless in the grip of the Kremlin. The age-old political greed of Russia and her contempt for smaller nations showed themselves at their worst in the spirit of Lenin, half-Slav and half-Mongol. But in this Lenin faithfully reflected the Russian people. He tyrannised over the conquered until whole tribes and nations became the slaves of the Moscow Government, which used the agents of the Cheka and ruthless punitive expeditions to intimidate them. Lenin's policy was a success. All the old subjects of the Czar were forced to share the policies and the ambitions of their conquerors.

The occupation of the Caucasus and of the fertile Ukraine assisted the Commissars in their struggle against tremendous odds. Next, the Red army overcame its most formidable antagonist, the Government of Siberia, whose leaders, having taken Perm and threatened to

take Moscow, talked openly of a new Czar and a new National Assembly. The Commissars took advantage of this to stir up a revolt of Russians and Mongols against them; and when Siberia succumbed it gave the Bolsheviks new resources of gold and men, besides food and raw materials.

One day Lenin called an extraordinary meeting of the Council.

"Comrades!" he shouted rhetorically when they had assembled, "we are threatened by no enemies except along the Southern front, where the armies ranged against us will soon scatter. They are rotten to the core. Now the time has come to take the offensive against the 'Capitalist International' in the West. Our first blow will fall upon Poland. Across the bodies of the Poles we shall advance into Germany to proclaim the proletarian revolution. The end of the European system will come when we establish our government in Berlin. Prepare, then, comrades, for the Polish war. I appoint Comrade Voroshilov to be President of the Council in the new Communist Government of Poland. He may choose his comrades at his own discretion. Comrade Kamenev will take command as the political leader of the army. He will consult with Comrade Trotsky, who is now absent, and he will have professional assistance from the army commanders, Tukhachevsky, Sergeev, Budenny and Gay Khan. The War Revolutionary Committee will make use of the plans drawn up by Comrades Shaposhinkov, Gittis, Kork and Kuk. Our heroic infantry and our invincible cavalry will drown the criminal associates of Pilsudski in the blood of the Polish army. The order is: 'March! Advance upon Vilna, Minsk and Warsaw!'"

The Commissars were astonished, for Lenin usually left rhetoric to others, and he had never addressed them in such resounding phrases before. But he was consciously using a new policy. The desire for a great and undivided Russia was alive in the mind of every peasant, even of every intelligent Jew. Poland had been attached to the old Empire by force and had become one of its provinces, so that another violation of the rights of a free Poland would never arouse opposition in Russia. Lenin

knew that. He wanted to make an example of Poland, to forge new fetters for her, and to incorporate the country in the Union of Soviet Republics.

When the meeting was over, Lenin summoned the ex-Czarist General Brussilov to appear before him.

"Comrade General," he began, "I order you to draw up a proclamation for the people on the approaching war with Poland, and to work with the General Staff in the final preparations. If I notice any hesitation on your part, or the least sign of treachery, you will be put to death by the Cheka immediately. You may go."

The servile General, who, not long before, was a favourite with the Czar, saluted him humbly and left the room. The Dictator was alone. He sat in an arm-chair with his eyes closed, giving way for a moment to a feeling of heaviness in his head and a droning in his ears that seemed to go on and on for ever. He breathed heavily and pressed his fingers into the leather arm of the chair. Suddenly he had a feeling that other eyes were upon him.

He opened his eyes and trembled at what he saw. Dzherzhinsky stood by the table, his face twitching, his lips working dumbly behind his claw-like hand.

"Felix Edmundovitch!" whispered the Dictator.

Dzherzhinsky stepped forward and bent his head down suddenly with the swift stoop of a bird of prey.

"I have come," he said at last, "to remind you of our first conversation on the first day of the Revolution. Comrade, you promised to put me at the head of the Polish Government."

"I have appointed Voroshilov," Lenin replied. "I must have a Russian there, for Russia will be at war with Poland."

Dzherzhinsky raised his voice threateningly. "Comrade, you gave me your word! You may betray your illiterate peasants, your maddened workers, your street-corner rebels, but you cannot betray me. I know what I want. You do not even understand the task you are attempting. You do not know the Polish peasantry. They are not like the Russians. The Poles love passionately every clod of their soil, every tree, every brick in their church walls. They may quarrel among themselves, but woe to any man who rashly attacks Poland.

I alone am the man who can lull their suspicions and quiet their fears. It is my right to rule them, and I demand it as a reward for my faithful service, for the seas of blood I have spilt and for the universal hatred that I have endured!"

Lenin looked at the man, who stood rigid before him, a bundle of nerves, beyond control, with insane, desperate eyes. Disjointed thoughts passed through the Dictator's mind: "He shot Helena. . . . He murdered Dora. . . . Apanasevitch."

Dzherzhinsky struck the table with his fist.

"I demand it!" he whispered. "Do you hear? You Tartar savage! I shall depart from here with my appointment signed by you or else with an announcement of your death. You know that my people are everywhere. If I wanted to, I could order a massacre of all the inhabitants of the Kremlin! Do you understand? I demand it!"

Lenin put out his hand towards the bell.

"You needn't trouble. The bell is out of order." Dzherzhinsky was openly ironical. "Also, my people are on guard all over the Kremlin."

Lenin laughed with complete self-possession. "I was going to send for some paper," he said. "Only paper. I have none here."

"I have the decree ready for you," replied Dzherzhinsky. "Sign it, comrade."

He placed a type-written sheet before Lenin, who glanced through it for a moment and then signed it.

"You thought it out very well, Felix Edmundovitch," he remarked. "You are a pleasant sort of customer to deal with."

"You are not the only man in Moscow who can think things out," replied Dzherzhinsky, pocketing the paper. He put his face close to Lenin's and stared into his eyes. "But mind, Vladimir Ilyitch! If you cancel this decree or make an attempt upon my life, you will die!"

Lenin sank deep into his arm-chair and watched the maniac's contortions with a detached interest.

"A traitor!" he thought to himself. "An ordinary lunatic and a sadist!"

"Will you have some tea, Felix Edmundovitch!" he

asked aloud. "Gorki is coming—a very interesting man."

Dzherzhinsky waved the invitation aside. "I have no use for that pet genius of yours," he snarled, and without any further conversation left the room.

When the door closed Lenin at last gave way to the anger seething within him. He walked about in a fury muttering to himself:

"A piece of blackmail! The first attempt to curtail my power. Nobody ever dared such a thing before. But now this madman has succeeded, what else may not happen?"

He saw no way out of this sudden crisis, for if one thing was certain it was that Dzherzhinsky had it in his power to fulfil all his threats.

"I cannot afford to risk my life and the lives of my comrades. Dzherzhinsky is an abscess which must be left to fester until the time comes for drastic treatment. When he is in Poland I shall find some means of dealing with him. I'll make certain, anyhow, that he does not return to the Cheka. It is a danger. It is a state within the state."

All the resources of Russia were soon being used in the struggle with Poland, a country exhausted and laid waste by the Great War. The Red army was intoxicated at first by success, so that Kamenev, Voroshilov and Trotsky fixed an exact date for the capture of Warsaw and reported it to Moscow. They drove straight for their objective, excited by their triumph, overwhelming the Poles, whom they derided as "gentlemen," with sudden death and cold-blooded torture. But the Polish leaders, Pilsudski, Haller, Zeligowski, Szeptycki, Sosnkowski and Sikorski, knew how to choose their men. A body of young officers grew up who were brave, capable and enduring. The Polish legions, which had taken the field before against the Czar's forces, now opposed the Red armies with an equal spirit. A new volunteer army was quickly organised and thrown into the fighting line, with free-lance detachments commanded by men of reckless courage. The proclamations of Pilsudski and Haller inflamed the hearts of Polish youth and of the women, so that students, schoolboys,

girls, and women of all ages stood side by side with the men in defence of their country. Aristocrats marched with peasants, priests with Socialist workmen, small boys with the veterans of the revolt of 1863. The love of Poland gave them a strength which no power could overcome.

The Polish staff withdrew to the line of the Vistula, and there, when the first Red patrols were already in the suburbs of Warsaw, the savage army of the Russian proletariat was broken by a swift attack. It fell back in panic, losing thousands of men and guns, till it reached the frontiers, where it laid down its arms. Only scattered units managed to retreat into Russia, where they found, as they had found during the German offensive some years before, that their pursuers were regarded as saviours by the people.

Another one of Lenin's trump cards had lost. At a meeting of the Commissars, called to discuss the situation, he found himself the object of unconcealed hostility while Kamenev and Trotsky were explaining their conduct of the unsuccessful war.

When they had finished, Lenin began to speak before any other opinions could be expressed.

"Well, we have lost," he said in a muffled voice. "It is not easy, comrades, unless you have love in your heart, to deal with people who love their land, their nation and their traditions. Let this be a lesson for us in the future. We must inculcate among our soldiers and peasants a love for the Communist state and an ideology directly opposite to that of the Poles. They think it their mission to defend the West against an invasion from the East. We must make it our responsibility to spread Communism from one ocean to the other."

"Complicated sophistry!" sneered Zinoviev, looking around at the Commissars. Lenin paid no heed.

"Our work now is to exterminate our enemies within Russia," he went on. "We shall move all our troops against Denikin and Wrangel so as to crush the counter-revolution completely. When we govern an undivided Russia we shall start a new policy. I did not think it would be necessary. I expected that the Red army

would be able to fight any opponent on equal terms, but it seems that our soldiers must have a superiority of seven to one before they can gain a victory. That means that you have not developed in them a spirit of hardihood and self-control. When you have done that, the time will be ripe for the new policy."

He stopped for a moment. And in that moment the swift mind of Lenin encircled the whole world. He saw India ablaze. He heard the roar of battle among the peaks of the Himalayas. He saw wave after wave of yellow soldiers flooding upon Europe from the East, and dark-skinned hordes pressing upon her from the South with fire and sword.

"Here is our new policy, our new game!" shouted Lenin. "Vladimir Solovyev, a dreamer and a philosopher, foretold it. We shall proclaim a revolution of the coloured races against the white. We shall bring the Indians, the negroes and the Arabs in arms against England, France and Spain. We shall smash the Old World to pieces under the hammer of the Yellow peoples, of the Black, of the Brown. We must draw our enemies from the East, and our first move will be to call a Congress of the Asiatic Peoples. Then we must proclaim a Holy War against England, the seat of Capitalism and of the old order. A milliard of the oppressed will march under our banners. We must open up broad horizons. We must inspire the people with faith and with hope!"

Lenin had once more hypnotised the rebellious Commissars into obedience.

The Red army soon descended like a whirlwind upon the tired armies of General Wrangel, who was driven from the soil of Russia. At the same time the foreign troops left the Crimea in a panic; Odessa and the Caucasus were regained. Europe was flooded with a tide of Russian *émigrés* who were to endure a long and difficult exile, while Russia began to see envoys from the South and from the East arriving for congresses in various centres. There the Commissars fostered a dream of war against England and France, drawing for them the boundaries of a gigantic state united under one aspiration: Asia for the Asiatics. They were made to look to the Russians for leadership in the conquest of the



world, and no mention was made to them of Communism, of the abolition of private property, or of war against the idea of God. And the Commissars saw in them only cannon-fodder, beasts for their own terrific slaughter.

At last the preparatory work was over and a meeting of the Third International was summoned at Moscow to declare for the World Revolution. In the Throne Room at the Kremlin, where the meeting was held, there were to be seen among the delegates from Russia and Europe the turbans of Indians and Afghans, the white dress of Arabs and Berbers, the fez of Turks and Persians, the silk skull-caps of Chinese and Annamites, the inscrutable faces of Japanese, the shining ebony skin of negroes from America, the Sudan and Zululand. On the Imperial throne, the back of which was decorated with the two-headed eagle of the old Russia, sat a gigantic negro where the descendants of Rurik had long held sway. His assistants were Comrade Karakhan and "a Hindu Professor," Mayavlevi Mohammed Barantulla.

The delegates passed unanimously a motion for a Holy War against England. The envoys of Amanullah, the Emir of Afghanistan, were among the voters; and this was particularly important from the Mohammedan point of view, because it was intended to proclaim the Emir as a Mahdi, and to give him the green banner of the Prophet preserved at Mecca.

Everything went as Lenin and his subordinates, the Commissars of the Politbureau, had planned. The delegates from the East were lavishly entertained and, like all other foreigners visiting Moscow, they were shown whatever seemed to prove the prosperity of Russia: power-looms and printing-presses, a model worker's cottage, the house of the new-style peasant, a school, a crèche, a reading-room, all carefully arranged to impose upon a visitor who could not even suspect that other factories were closed down; that three families and more were living in single rooms all over Moscow, that there were no changes wrought in the Russian country-side, and that there was no oil, no candles, no soap and no clothes to be had.

Lenin invited the delegates to talk with him so that he might pick their brains. The talkative negroes from

America and the Sudan swore noisily that their people would rise like one man when the time came. The Asiatics watched the scene impassively with their black eyes, concealing their thoughts behind the veil of mystery that is the East. The Japanese delegate, Komura, when he had listened to Lenin's impassioned address, shrugged his shoulders and muttered:

"You cannot lead us. Your peasants are ignorant, weak and cruel. We found them out in 1905. It is we, the people of Nippon, who will lead Asia."

Lenin sensed the same feeling when he spoke to Wan-Hu-Koo in his study. The Chinaman sat deferentially before him, softly rubbing his hands and smiling with Oriental courtesy.

"Allow me, most wise of men, who permits this unworthy person to call you comrade, to express the astonishment of an ignorant and miserable creature. Russia is a century behind Europe in human endeavour and you wish to restore the balance between them. But you are using the wrong means. We Chinese are five hundred years behind, but we shall lead Europe yet, for we will adopt the capitalist system, and democracy, and the rule of Parliament. We wish to be ruled by the wisest citizens, whether they are descendants of an Emperor, or Mandarins, or bankers, peasants or coolies. But they will work not for themselves and their friends, but for the commonwealth."

The Dictator was made uneasy again by a conversation with the envoy from Mahatma Gandhi, Aurobindo Chandarvaka. The Kremlin laid particular importance upon the Indian question, for England was the greatest obstacle in the way of the advance of Communism. From India the first blow against England would be struck, and Lenin wished to discuss with this Hindu the prospects of an immediate rising in the North-West Provinces. But the Indian, when he heard the Communist programme fully explained, declared himself an opponent of it all.

"Now all is clear to me," he said. "Communism is the product of a materialist civilisation. Its followers, in their admiration for dead things, have lost contact with real life. They have become machines, and we are

afraid of the machine. We may be drawn into it and destroyed. The end of the machine is decay. You must change it all and seek God in spirit; for God is love. Out of love springs goodness in action, while you are spreading hatred, out of which come death and ruin. We sympathise with you because you war against England like ourselves. But you will not be our leaders. Why should you be? Who has appointed you?"

Lenin could not reply, for at that moment a crowd of delegates was ushered in by Radek and Yoffe: the Bulgarian, Kolarov, the Italian, Terracini, the Englishman, Stewart, the American, Amter, the South African, Stirner, and the Finn, Kuusinen. But in the evening the Dictator consulted with Chicherin, Karakhan, Litvinov and Radek. They decided to bribe the delegates with large sums of money and to send their cleverest agitators to India and China to influence the races infected by the rottenness of Western civilisation.

"It is not easy to change Asia," sighed Karakhan.

Just then a telegram was given to Lenin which seemed to confirm the Commissar's words.

"Comrades!" said Lenin when he had read it. "The Afghan Emir has risen against England and he has been defeated on the road to Kabul. Mahatma Gandhi has denounced the tactics of militant Communism and gone over to the policy of passive resistance. The madman!"

The Commissars were silent. Lenin felt that their trust in him was ebbing again, and he knew that he must capture their imaginations with some new stroke of genius if they were not to desert him. But what was there left for him to do? Numbness gripped his brain. He wanted rest, solitude, silence. He dismissed the comrades coldly and lay down upon a sofa, terribly tired, his mind a blank.

The officer on duty entered the room with a telegram. It was from the Chairman of the Council of Ukrainian Commissars, who reported that in several districts the well-to-do peasants had slaughtered the proletarians, killed the Commissars and Communist teachers, and robbed the food depôts.

"I have sent out punitive detachments," ran the message, "to reimpose discipline and to confiscate all

supplies of wheat. Three villages have been wiped out."

This was disastrous. The Commissars had openly turned on the peasants. It meant that the charm of the Kremlin and the personal charm of Lenin would lose their hold for ever.

"What can I do?" whispered Lenin. "The peasants have no use for comrades, either Western or Eastern. They don't care about electrification or the progress of Communism. All they want is peace, hard work, bread and goods. Just what I cannot give them! Well, then, I must give them tractors, set the factories at work. I must remember what that American, King, said years ago in Zurich." He looked up. The officer was standing stiffly in the doorway, waiting for orders.

"Get out of here!" shouted Lenin in a rage.

The Dictator walked rapidly up and down. "I want 100,000 tractors, machines for the factories, willing assistants, capable engineers. If I have these I can move the world."

The man who attended to his stove entered the room. "You will be cold to-night, comrade," he growled. "They have sent no coal to Moscow. People say that the railwaymen near Kharkov have no food and are on strike. It's the belly that matters. So you will be cold, comrade. It is a frosty night."

Outside in the street the crowd was singing the hymn of the International Proletariat, full of hate and threatenings:

"The tyrants who rule the world,  
Despots of the mines, the factories, the foundries,  
Are strong because they steal  
The riches of the land.  
The wealth that is now in their coffers,  
The bloody sweat cast into gold,  
Will come back again to us  
Because it is our own."

Lenin listened for a long time. Suddenly he put his fingers into his ears, cursing the singers like a man possessed.

## CHAPTER XXXII

THE months passed like so many nightmares. Apocalyptic figures appeared and vanished again in the miasma that overhung Russia, leaving no trace but blood. But the recluse in the Kremlin was himself blinded and oppressed by the prevailing gloom, perhaps even more than the masses of the population. As time passed, those many million human beings fell into a state of complete and terrible indifference. Nothing could rouse them or save them.

The punishment of death itself was no longer the knout of the proletarian Government. Those upon whom the sentence fell died unnoticed. Those who still lived calmly awaited death, adopting an attitude of passive resistance towards the ruling clique which oppressed them with increasing ruthlessness. Russia no longer had the strength to rise. She was completely exhausted. Neither the peasants nor the workers nor the professional classes had any policy for taking over the rule of the Commissars if the day came when they were torn to pieces by mobs of desperate people. They could make no other effort than to nerve themselves to endure and await a miracle. And if the sentence of death cut short that effort, they went to the place of execution unmoved, for they had seen their loved ones die. They were incapable of fear or sorrow.

But all their sufferings were summed up and realised in Lenin, nor did they cease for a moment. He saw all around him the ruin of his daring plans. He made desperate efforts to save them from disaster, even at the risk of betraying his revolutionary conscience or of damaging the prestige of his name. He was forced to admit foreign capital into Russia. He had to use terrorist measures upon the workers to drive them to their factories. He saw himself reduced to helpless-

ness by the well-to-do peasants, who were establishing themselves as a new bourgeoisie after having broken the power of the proletarians on the land. More, they were producing men of cunning, prudence and decision, who were already exerting pressure upon Bolshevik institutions so as in some cases even to transform them. Risings broke out suddenly in the Caucasus, in Turkestan and among the Kirghis. They were repressed at once with every cruelty, but they made an unfavourable impression upon foreign countries.

Meanwhile the towns, the industrial areas and the Commissars themselves were at the mercy of the peasants, who supplied food grudgingly under a system of compulsion. The protests of the whole civilised world against the bloody work of the Cheka came to a head when Mgr. Butkiewicz was murdered, so that Lenin was forced to undertake measures of reform by changing the name and the ostensible character of the organisation. He was aware that doubts of his infallibility were increasing in the Party and that there was a powerful group led by Stalin and Mdivanin which criticised drastically the weak policy of the Council of People's Commissars. He indulged in dreams of another war which would supply an easy justification of the means employed to tyrannise over Russia; but, despite all the threats and provocations of the Kremlin, no other nation would undertake a war. Europe, thoroughly convinced by now that Bolshevism was caught in its own trap, was waiting quietly for its death agonies.

One day, when Lenin was sitting despondently in his study, his personal secretary, Fotiyeva, approached him with a request.

"Vladimir Ilyitch," she said, "the children from the Lenin Institute have visited the Kremlin and they are waiting for you to see them. Will you go to the window?"

Lenin rose with difficulty and opened the balcony door. In the courtyard stood a crowd of children, all of them dressed in rags like the worst of beggars, the girls with their heads wrapped in worn-out scarves, the boys in caps which showed the padding of cotton-wool along their torn seams. They were barefooted.

Their little faces were ashen in hue and degraded, with furtive eyes which were marked already by dark shadows. They held in their hands Red flags decorated with Communist slogans or portraits of Lenin, which they waved when he appeared.

"Ilyitch!" they cried. "Ilyitch for ever!"

While they sang the Internationale with spiritless voices, Lenin observed them carefully. He noticed how heavy and listless they were in all their movements, how dull and sickly they looked. Then he addressed the gathering.

"Young comrades, boys and girls!" he said. "It will be your duty to carry on the work that we have begun for the happiness of mankind. Remember that—the happiness of mankind. Do not waste yourselves on an empty love for parents, brothers and friends. Throw on one side the love of God, who was invented and imposed on you by Greek Orthodox priests. They are all liars. Then, with all your heart and soul, take up the struggle for the happiness of mankind."

"Lenin!" shouted the officials of the institution at the top of their lungs. "Lenin! Our father and our leader for ever!"

The children shouted indistinctly, some of them grinning and nudging one another.

Lenin thought he heard a girl's high-pitched voice saying, "A nice sort of father who gives us nothing to eat but potatoes and potatoes and potatoes! It's all filth!"

The crowd of children left the courtyard without even looking back at Lenin, who still stood on the balcony. On their way through the town they stole apples, cucumbers and loaves of bread from the open stalls, yelled obscene remarks and behaved exactly as they wished.

One of the boys threw a stone at a shop-window. One of the girls, aged about thirteen, caught the sleeve of a passing officer and whispered, "I'll go home with you for a rouble."

So they reached their home, a small palace abandoned by its proprietor and appropriated by the Bolshevik authorities. Across the four columns of the

entrance was a cloth banner inscribed "The Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin Children's Institute." The sun was setting behind the tall trees as the children entered the building and tramped noisily to the dining-hall, which had once been imposing. Now it gave no impression but of dirt and disorder. A putrid smell pervaded it. The walls were pocked with bullet-holes and scribbled over with Communist slogans or filthy remarks. Two rows of bunks, one above the other, ran around the walls. They contained no bed-clothes; only mattresses soiled and marked with mud.

The Superintendent lit an oil lamp and one of the boys brought in a large bowl of boiled potatoes, which the children ate with curses and grumbling. Then they climbed into their beds, using bundles of old rags as pillows.

A girl of fourteen, better dressed than the others, entered the room.

"Where have you been, Lubka?" shouted a half-naked lad sprawling shamelessly on his bed. "Have you been on the streets? If you are unfaithful to me, I'll knock your teeth out."

Lubka did not say a word. She undressed and lay down in her bunk between the lad and another girl. She was pitifully thin.

Soon there was silence as the children fell asleep, silence broken only by their heavy breathing or the creak of boards as they moved in bed.

Then there was a sharp whisper: "Lubka!"

"Let me alone!" said the girl.

"Lubka, I want you! Don't oppose me! It won't be the first time, you know! Oh, Lubka, you are a darling! Come now, let me . . ."

"Please let me alone!" she whispered imploringly. "Some other day, Kolka! I went to a church to-day. There was a bishop in his robes and a fine ceremony and singing. Kolka, I wept!"

"Rubbish!" laughed Kolka. "Religion is the opium of the people. It is poison. Come!"

"I don't want to. I can't to-day. Do you understand?"



The children were waking up and cursing at the disturbance. Kolka was becoming angry.

"That's the sort you are!" he shouted. "I spit at you, you scum! Fancy *you* showing such pride! Well, I don't need you, you bitch. And I'll make you remember me! Mainka! Come here!"

A girl clutching her rags about her ran across the room and fell into Kolka's bed with a laugh.

"Let her see how true Communists make love," shouted Kolka, embracing her.

Not until midnight was there quiet in the Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin Institute. But when the children were asleep there was one who crouched in her bed shaking with sobs. Lubka had felt an awakening of finer feelings in the church and now she had been insulted. She could not forget the fine light of candles and the harmonious singing. She could not forget the words of the grey-haired and kindly bishop: "These days of death and plague will pass away. Christ, our Saviour, will come and say: 'Blessed are the meek, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.'" And so, still sobbing, she fell asleep.

A noise awakened her. It was morning. The children were getting out of their beds. Kolka was pinching Mainka, who still lay in his bed. Another boy, naked and dirty, was cleaning his feet in the bowl which had held the potatoes. A big teapot, tin mugs and slabs of bread were brought in for breakfast.

When the Superintendent entered, Kolka called out to him: "Comrade, Lubka Shanina went to church yesterday. She has betrayed the principles of Communist Youth, and I demand a trial."

The trial was held immediately at the table on which stood the big teapot and the tin mugs. As a result, Lubka was deprived of the right to live in the Lenin Institute, and a few minutes later she found herself homeless and helpless in the street.

She did not know what to do. She did not dare go to her mother. She wandered aimlessly to the market, where peasant women came every morning to exchange their cabbages, potatoes and bread for clothes and boots.

Here she succeeded in stealing a cucumber without being perceived. She went quickly through the streets with her prize until she came to Dmitrovka, where she met a band of children and louts who plied her with questions about Moscow. They were all homeless and hungry, drifting in from the villages and small towns to the capital, where they hoped to find food.

"I'll take care of you," said a dark-skinned youngster, pinching her thigh.

"All right," she replied. "And I'll show you the ways of Moscow."

Life had taught her by this time that it was impossible to exist for a day without somebody's protection, and for that protection she must pay the price.

"We'll live together," he went on. "My name is Simon. You must call me Shenka. But remember, if you are unfaithful, that will be the end of you."

He asked her all about her life and then described his own.

"I left my parents," he said. "May leprosy take them! I didn't go any too soon either. We were all starving. Grandmother died first, then my sister. One night I saw my father take an axe and, crash! he split my brother's head open. After that we felt no hunger for a week, but I didn't wait my turn. Let them eat one another. I have myself to think of!"

The children wandered through the streets in a body, gaping at the Kremlin and at the Iverska Gate, where, under the miraculous picture of the Virgin, there was written in red: "Faith and God are opium for the people." The band begged alms from passers-by, stood for hours before restaurant windows, and fought for the bones and crusts of bread that were thrown to them. They made raids to snatch what they could from the market stalls and picked the pockets of people boarding the trams. The girls spoke to young men and disappeared with them into gateways to earn a few coins.

"Listen, Lubka!" Shenka would whisper. "You see that old spark? He looked back at you twice. There he is again! See! He is winking. Go after him! You may get some money."

The girl walked quickly after the red-faced old man, overtook him, looked at him meaningly, and went into a gateway. He followed her. A moment later they came out together and walked on.

"Shenka! Where shall I meet you?" Lubka cried.

"In the Red Square!" he shouted, waving his hand.

So the summer and the autumn passed. The children slept under bridges, in parks, or outside the town in the old rubbish dump. Then the winter cold came down upon them, with thick snow upon the broken roofs and on the roads, which had not been repaired for years. Every evening the children ran about the Red Square, Tverska, the Kushnietsky Bridge and Arbut, the only places which were kept in order as a show place for foreigners. They fought furiously with one another for places near the warm asphalt stoves and the big fires built to keep the people warm. The sturdy Shenka, nicknamed the Chieftain on account of the bandit's tactics he employed to gain his ends, generally succeeded in obtaining the best places for Lubka and himself. But they were often forced to spend whole nights in public lavatories, in ash-bins, in manholes, or in the cellars of deserted houses, chattering with cold and huddling close together for the sake of warmth.

The starving children, led by Shenka, waylaid passers-by and robbed them. They broke into shops. They fought rival gangs, using as weapons even knives and knuckle-dusters. More than one of them was killed or wounded by the police patrols sent into the streets to deal with such disorders.

Just before Christmas the frosts were terrible and food became more scarce. The streets were deserted. The children, huddling in their rags, did not dare to leave their hiding-place. Shenka had found a part of the refuse dump where the horse-dung was piled, and here they dug themselves into cosy shelters, warmed by no more than their own bodies.

One evening Shenka went out on a foraging expedition and returned in great glee.

"Hullo, you lazybones!" he cried. "Here's a feast for you at last! A dead horse has been left here to-day. What more do you want?"

The children ran out of their filthy dug-outs and surrounded the frozen carcase of the horse, cutting it up with knives or tearing at the dark-coloured meat with their teeth. But not long afterwards they began to fall sick, one after another. Abscesses broke out all over their bodies; they came to a head and burst with a flow of blood. Their limbs and necks began to swell and the skin became irritated. Boils appeared on their lips and tongues. They were prostrate with fever.

Shenka knew that these symptoms were serious. With difficulty he dragged himself through the streets, whimpering with pain and falling with weakness, until he found a militiaman on patrol.

"Help!" he cried. "We are plague-stricken! There are two girls dead back there and we cannot bury them!"

The militiaman led him to his station, where Shenka mumbled the whole story through swollen lips. The doctors examined him and looked at one another in alarm.

At once a military cordon was thrown around the refuse heaps and machine guns were posted near them. Then a squad of political prisoners were ordered to drag the children out of their holes and hiding-places. When that had been done, a hail of bullets swept systematically across the heaps, until all the children and the prisoners lay dead in the trampled snow and filth. Their bodies were dragged off with grappling-hooks and thrown in to quicklime.

The attention of the authorities was attracted by this case of a dangerous epidemic being spread by a band of vagrant children. As a result, drives were organised in Moscow of police and military to round up the thousands of destitute, starving and sick children who roamed the streets.

When Lenin read of this in *Pravda*, which was edited by Nadezhda Konstantinovna, he summoned Comrade Lilina, who directed the Commissariat of Child Welfare. She had been an unsuccessful actress before the Revolution, but her later career was fantastic; she became the

wife of the Petrograd Dictator, Zinoviev, and Commissar for the education of young Communists.

"What has your Commissariat been doing?" asked Lenin harshly.

She lifted her hands and began to declaim theatrically. "Our children belong to society and therefore to the Communist Party. We have protected them from their parents' love, which is harmful; for we know that children brought up in families are apt to form into anti-social groups. So we are educating them as proletarian children who are the declared enemies of bourgeois——"

"Stop that nonsense!" shouted Lenin. "Look here at the *Communist* and *Pravda*. Look here at the report from Comrade Kalinin: there are seven million homeless children and only 80,000 of them under State protection. They are dying, physically and morally! They are suffering from leprosy, glanders, syphilis! There is prostitution rampant among the adolescent! It is a shame! An abomination! Now, comrade, all that must be remedied. Remember, too, the foreigners must know nothing about it. Our comrades of the English Labour Party are shortly arriving on a visit to Russia."

Lilina took the Dictator's angry words to heart. Day after day the drives became more systematic. Homeless girls, hardly past childhood, were found everywhere living by prostituting themselves. They were found in the streets, in militia stations—the militia carried on a traffic in them—in barracks, in workers' hovels, even in the prisons. Boys were collected from refuse heaps, from cellars of abandoned houses, from the cemeteries where they had sought shelter and sanctuary. The authorities often caught them by leaving dead horses and dogs or bags of rotten potatoes as bait, and they laid traps as if to attract wild animals. If the children were found to be diseased they were led outside the town, made to dig graves for themselves, and then shot down. The proletarian State had neither food nor medicine nor hospitals, but they had quicklime enough and the labour of the condemned to dig their own

graves. Others were packed into closed railway trucks and sent off to be fed in more prosperous districts. And so the hordes of homeless children were cleared out of Moscow, where, like hungry dogs, they had whimpered and howled at the windows of offices and cafés, or in front of the restaurants where the Commissars were feasting with foreign Socialists and business men. Comrades from England and France looked with astonishment at the three clean streets of the capital, with their newly-decorated houses, at the stately Kremlin, at the shops hastily filled with foreign goods, and at the model factories over which they were shown by voluble Commissars.

Their admiration increased when they visited the Grand Theatre, where the marvellous Chaliapin maintained the highest traditions of the Opera, or when they regaled themselves on caviare, rare meats, fish and game, and drank the best champagne in magnificent restaurants.

"My God!" an Englishman exclaimed at one of the banquets arranged by Lenin. "The people in England hear nothing but lies about the Russian Communists! Nothing but propaganda against them! Why, they have raised the standard of living and built up a new social order in only a few years. This caviare, this ptarmigan! They are excellent!"

And as the glasses of these travellers from the Thames or the Seine were being filled again with the best champagne from the palace cellars, a train of waggons carrying the homeless children to Karkhov was pulling into the station at Kursk. It was a frosty moonlit night, with a low-lying mist upon the country-side. The wheels rattled over the points. The couplings clanked as the train came to a halt. Within the waggons the pale rays of light from the station slid across the motionless bodies of children heaped together upon the floor. They lay in a tangle of legs and arms, their heads buried in rags, their chins against their knees. They did not curse or speak or moan or weep or sigh. In five days of travel in those unheated waggons their last words had been said, their last sighs had escaped their freezing

lips, their last cries and groans had been drowned in the noise made by the wheels.

A shrill whistle came from the engine. Men with lanterns walked to one of the waggons and opened the door.

"Get out of there," shouted an official, whose moustache was hung with icicles. "The waggon is out of order. We'll give you another one."

There was no sound or movement from within. The men approached nearer and held up their lanterns. They bent down and pulled roughly at heads or feet, but the bodies of the children were stiff and motionless.

"Frozen?" asked the official.

"Yes, frozen!" replied the men, suddenly crossing themselves. "God have mercy upon their souls!"

In the White Hall of the Kremlin the banquet was at its height. A French Socialist arose with a glass of champagne in his hand, and said, in a ringing voice:

"Long live the Dictatorship of the Proletariat! Long live Comrade Lenin and his splendid colleagues! They are the apostles of a new faith, the messengers who bring a radiant happiness for mankind! Long live the Council of People's Commissars!"

Lenin, the soul of wit and hospitality, bowed on all sides to the cheering guests. Comrade Lilina looked archly at the speaker. The whole gathering was full of enthusiasm and good cheer, for they saw the dawn of a new social order, and a new saviour who knew all things and loved all men.

At Kursk station the frozen bodies of the children were being tumbled out upon the platform, their lifeless heads and limbs falling heavily upon the stones.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

THE Baldyrevs were leading very busy lives, for which there was compensation in the fact that they enjoyed the confidence of the peasants and of the Commissars. But there was still danger in their position, for although they took no part in village politics, revolt was quickly spreading against the orders and decrees of the authorities, which were inimical to the interests of the peasants.

Following upon the heels of the wandering prophets who spread their mystical frenzy across the countryside, there came now established farmer and peasant youths, ostensibly to drive bargains over cattle or to halt on their way to Moscow for some congress or official business. They engaged the peasants in long conversations, organised secret gatherings, and inflamed the peasants with a new enthusiasm for determined resistance. There was a new message running through the villages: "We have had enough. The time has come to take the government into our own hands, quietly, without disturbance or bloodshed."

These visitants, when they departed, left behind them leaflets written in plain terms which fell upon good soil; for, if Lenin had not succeeded in abolishing illiteracy for ever, he had yet transformed the old prevailing ignorance. No one again could oppress the peasants with the tyranny of the Czars or even with the terrorism of the Latvians and Finns in the Cheka. By teaching several millions of the peasants to read, Lenin had irrigated the whole peasant mind, which was now prepared not only for Communist propaganda, but also for any doctrines that might arise from the obscure depths of the people's consciousness. Men of practical ability and of commanding ideas sprang up among the peasants. Their counsels were heeded, their declarations to "the land" were eagerly read. So the peasants



became less and less willing to form their village councils, even though rifles threatened them : they gave hostages, declaring that they offered them to be shot. They made their own assessments for rates and taxes. They cunningly persecuted the ruling proletarians of the villages until these upstarts were forced to flee. They drove away the Communist teachers, and the agitators sent from the towns found themselves in dangerous situations.

Women of loose lives and girls seduced by the Commissars began mysteriously to disappear. Perhaps they slunk away to the towns, perhaps they lay in unknown graves in the woods and fields or at the bottom of near-by rivers. The members of the Communist Youth organisations either returned to their families or else scattered and were lost, like so many stray dogs. There was no more talk of Antichrist and the visible signs which foretold his coming; instead, a new type of wandering preachers began to appear, with bright and shining faces, who gathered around them the peasant families, spoke to them of the Bible story, consoled them in affliction, composed their quarrels, and bade them look to Heaven for hope and strength. The secret prayers of the peasant were no longer slavish appeals for mercy, but simple pleas for guidance and resignation to the will of immortal Truth.

The central authorities, feeling the resistance of the peasantry, set themselves against the awakening religious spirit. Commissions of inquiry and punitive expeditions descended upon the villages. Religious teachers were dragged from their hiding-places and shot with the village hostages, but an expression of sullen determination on the peasants' faces struck fear to the hearts of the Commissars and prevented them from carrying their repressive measures too far.

The courts tried to make the Baldyrevs personally responsible for the conduct of their villages, because they were of the bourgeois class, but there was no law to support this ruling, and the industrial commissariat quickly intervened to save the useful creators of the steadily developing commune. Then the Government, feeling uneasy about the decay of industry, convened

a congress of specialists at Moscow to which the young Baldyrevs were personally summoned.

First they had to listen to long speeches from Lenin, Trotsky and other leading lights in the proletarian Dictatorship, speeches full of resounding inanities, of stale phrases endlessly repeated, so unconvincing that even the delegates of the privileged worker class listened to them in boredom. They had been accustomed in other days to more stirring oratory. But now it was clear that the promise to establish Socialism within two months of the 1917 Revolution was still far from being fulfilled. Moreover, they were hungry. They were forced to work with worn-out machinery and broken tools. They worked at terrible pressure, for any man who disobeyed or protested or struck was shot down at once by the Chinese mercenaries or by the Red Guards. They had no clothes or warm lodgings or efficient medical attention. Lenin and Trotsky now had other arguments to lay before the congress of specialists: they pointed out that Russia's machinery was worn out, that the workers were unskilled, and that the full realisation of Socialism could only be attained in 1927.

The older workers smiled sceptically. "Our saws and hammers will be worn out by that time," they muttered, "not to speak of Socialism."

The peasants listened in stolid silence to lectures upon the collectivisation of the land, which would be effected by means of powerful nationalised tractors and electrical harvesting machines. What had all that to do with realities? The pressing question to answer was, When would there be at last a stable Government to restore peace and order?—but this question was not touched upon by Lenin or Trotsky. They were completely out of touch with their hearers.

The mental processes of the two Commissars were quite clear to Peter and Gregory Baldyrev. "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat is drowned in a sea of nonsense," said Gregory on the way home. "It is always struggling to get on dry land, and then it goes down again in a new flood of promises."

"It is madness," Peter agreed. "The factories are utterly ruined. Industry was weak enough before the war; now it is non-existent. The productivity of the people is at its lowest possible point, and technical skill is dying out, while they go on raving about the immediate socialisation of Russia. Great God! we are like madmen rushing along in a train, not knowing or caring that it is driven by another madman who is blind and deaf. It is a catastrophe!"

"Now they are going to socialise the peasants as well—turn them into agricultural factory-hands. But did you notice how the peasants looked at Lenin when he talked of national machines to plough the fields and gather in the crops?"

"Yes," replied Peter. "Our peasants are tremendously patient, but an end will come to their patience at last, a terrible end. Only let the peasants boldly proclaim their principles, and what can the Red army do? The Kremlin Guards, all those bandits from Latvia, Finland, Hungary and China, will be wiped out in a moment. And then, when our dear peasants sweep across Russia, it will be a different affair from the extermination of the nobility and the bonfires of those days. It is terrible to think about, yet that day will come."

"Yes, that day will come. But not yet awhile. The patience of the peasant is amazing."

For two weeks the engineers, working on the congress and its committees, had to listen to interminable speeches, rhetorical aspirations, detailed plans and fantastic projects. It was certainly not constructive work in any sense of the word, but an attempt to cheat the peasant and worker delegates by every sort of lie. They had been summoned from all over Russia simply to show how anxious the Commissars were to consider the needs of the village populations, and not to waste the fruits of the Workers' Revolution.

At last Peter Baldyrev came to the end of his endurance and set himself to estimate how many machines would be needed for the district of Moscow alone if the plans of the Commissars were to be carried out. For

several days he worked at his estimates for a factory to produce the requisite amount of agricultural machinery, until he found that the capital needed would be more than the Soviet Government could possibly lay hands on. Nevertheless he laid his estimates before the Commissars at the congress with an indirectness which bitter experience had taught him. He praised extravagantly the policy of collective farming, and emphasised the necessity of gradualness, before he went on to explain the results of his calculations from a technical point of view. And the congress, having listened attentively to all his arguments, accepted estimates without a dissentient voice.

"Fools!" he exploded to Gregory afterwards, striding up and down their room. "The senseless dolts! No wonder the delegates are easily cheated! They listened to me with bated breath, then they roared with enthusiasm and applauded me. And all the time what I was trying to tell them was that the collective policy was the dream of an idiot. In the first place, we are quite unable to build the factory that I talked about. Even if we could, it would take twenty years to provide the Moscow area alone with sufficient machinery. As for a hundred other areas, it would take a century—or a millennium. But to-morrow all the papers will be shouting that the Government must at once inaugurate the policy of collective farming around Moscow. It is another propagandist trick to deceive a gang of fools!"

"You are right," nodded Gregory. "Your scheme will cause a great deal of noise, but nothing will come of it. On the other hand, the Treasury will not suffer by it, as it generally does by projects of the kind. Do you remember my old colleague, the chemist Stukov? The other day I read in a paper that the Commissars are demanding his extradition from Sweden, where he is in hiding."

"What is he afraid of?" asked Peter, laughing.

"Well, he's a brainy fellow enough, and he tricked the 'Siberian Lenin.' You know Smirnov, who rules Siberia, is a highly ambitious man, though a complete fool, and he wants to overshadow Lenin. He is in a

strong position there because Siberia has always been separatist and has always looked down on Russia. Well, Stukov approached him with a fantastic scheme for a chemical factory which he founded on the perfectly true argument that industries should be built up where there is coal and wood on the spot. Smirnov was so taken with the idea that he gave him five million roubles to buy the necessary machinery, whereupon Stukov went abroad and stayed there. Result, no Stukov, no factory, no five million roubles.

The two brothers laughed. "I call him a swine for that," said Peter. "But he is a clever swine. He saw the way a fool's brain works and he profited by it. I don't see any money coming to me for my proposals. The Commissars will have to study them for a long time before they discover either that I am a raving lunatic or else that the congress which accepted them was a congress of fools."

They went into the town to see the sights. There was exemplary order in the Red Square and Tverska, but when they attempted to explore further down a side-street they were stopped by a militiaman.

"Are you visitors from abroad, comrades?" he asked.

They produced their identity papers.

"You may go on," said the militiaman after inspecting them. "Foreigners are not allowed to go down side-streets." He laughed heartily. "Yes, we are destitute. You won't see much to boast about."

He was right. The wood-blocks had been torn out of the streets to be used as fuel during the winter. The paving-stones were broken and crumbling away. The houses were falling to pieces: holes in the roofs were clumsily patched with iron plates, broken windows were stuffed with rags and paper. Everywhere one could see the marks of bullets. The miserable inhabitants of the district passed by, carrying baskets: they were dirty, ill-kempt, barefooted and scabby. Here and there were groups of unhealthy children with evil faces. Heaps of refuse lay about, and an intolerable stench arose from the sewers, which were hopelessly out of

order. A menacing, hopeless silence reigned over the streets. No one ever spoke aloud, no one laughed. Men moved about like automatons with an expression of mortal weariness on their faces. It seemed as though their bluish, tight-set lips had not the strength to open even for words of hatred and despair. They walked along with their supplies of food, small bags of potatoes, or with buckets of water drawn from some well near by.

The Baldyrevs went to the Mala Dmitrovka, to visit their acquaintances, the Sergeyevs, who were at their midday meal.

"As an orthodox Communist," said Peter, when the greetings were over, "I ask you to go on eating. We have had our food."

"At least we shall have some tea together," said Madame Sergeyeva. "Now tell us about your people. We have not seen them for years."

The Baldyrevs described their experiences and talked of the industrial commune they had founded. Then they began to ask questions in their turn. Old Sergejev had been a barrister with a high reputation in St. Petersburg.

"Well, almost all our friends left the city," he said sadly. "It was impossible to live there under the rule of Zinoviev and the Cheka. When the Council of People's Commissars changed the seat of Government the place became forlorn and destitute. I hear that even the finest buildings are now in ruins, the streets are unswept, and all the drainage and water systems quite out of order. In the end we came to Moscow ourselves. Those of our friends who could, fled to the south and from there got abroad. Many of them were put to death by the Cheka, especially during the civil war. The ones with the best character and conviction stooped to every kind of meanness. I could name a few who are now helping the Commissars to lay Russia waste, or else acting as their agents abroad, where they sell the Crown jewels and spy on the *émigrés*. The rest try to accommodate themselves to circumstances as best they can."

"That is what we have done," said Gregory.

"No, you have done much more. You put a great experiment on foot. When I read about your commune in the papers I wrote to your father to congratulate him. But the people I mentioned have done nothing positive. They have simply lain low during the storm. Of course, even that is no small achievement—but we owe our security to the help of God."

"The help of God is all very well," Peter began, "but——"

Madame Sergeyeva interrupted him. "My husband's phrase did not quite express what he meant," she said. "God has helped us to understand some things that we did not understand before. We believed in God, we called ourselves Christians, but we did not live according to Christ's teachings. Often we lived quite contrary to them, as Tolstoy said in his time. But now we learn our moral lessons from the Gospel and suit our actions to the commands of Christ. We observe good morals, we respect the love and the ties of the family, we act with honesty which even our enemies respect, and as a result we have peace of mind without scruples and compromises day after day. We know what our behaviour ought to be under any circumstances. That is what my husband wanted to say."

Gregory was deep in thought, going over the similar changes that had taken place in his own life. In what Madame Sergeyeva had said he saw the reason for the success that had come to his family and the commune.

Peter was more practical. "Yes," he said. "But you have to work harder than you ever had to in the old days."

"Without a doubt," Sergeyev replied. "Every one of us works as hard as he can. We have succeeded in finding occupations that we can follow without betraying our principles. My wife and my daughter are making dresses and hats for the new proletarian aristocracy. I am working in the Commissariat of Foreign Trade, where my knowledge of International Law and foreign languages has given me a sure position. My sons work in the theatre. One is a scene-painter. The other translates foreign plays into Russian. So we live,

very quietly, and all those who have survived at all arrange their lives in a similar fashion. Nobody wants to succeed or to grow rich. All they want is to continue a decent existence."

After lunch the men went off to work again and the women went into the next room to attend to their clients, who were noisy and vulgar by nature, but almost quiet in the presence of their dressmakers.

When Peter mentioned this fact to Madame Sergeyeva she replied: "Do you know, some of our clients, the wives of very important Commissars, have become our friends. They even tell us about their fears and worries. More than anything else they are afraid of the constant spying by the Government even into the private lives of their husbands, to make sure of their proletarian orthodoxy. Many divorces, murders and suicides have resulted from it. The wife of the man who captured St. Petersburg, Antonova-Ovshenko, killed her two children and burned herself to death when she was divorced on account of her political convictions. The Communists are human beings like ourselves, and sometimes they suffer terrible persecution at the hands of their masters. And they are very unfortunate, really, for they have no other means of livelihood."

On their way home, in a narrow street which ran like a gutter between high overhanging houses, the engineers met a pitiful funeral procession. A white horse, grotesquely thin and breathing heavily, dragged slowly along with a cart on which was a roughly-made coffin. Between its nailed boards of rough wood could be seen the straw and cloth in which the body lay. An old bearded man walked beside the horse with a whip, while the sobbing mourners followed behind. Suddenly the horse staggered and fell down. It lay for a while in the roadway, trying vainly to raise its head. The old man whipped it furiously and kicked its swollen stomach with all his strength. But the poor animal was dying; after a few struggles it shuddered and grew stiff.

The old man threw down his whip, cursing in despair. The mourners, after a short consultation, took the coffin



from the cart and set off with it on their shoulders slowly along the street. The poor procession, ragged and stumbling on the uneven ground, disappeared around the corner, while the old man stood over the carcass of the horse, scratching his head in perplexity. Then he took up his whip and walked away.

The young engineers, who were going in the same direction towards the city, began to hear a noise behind them, and looking round, they stood amazed. Men and women were rushing out to the dead horse from the dark and tumble-down houses on either side. They surrounded it in a moment like a pack of hungry curs, hacking it to pieces with axes and knives, fighting one another for the warm and bloody meat, and then rushing back into the houses with their spoils. A small girl was whining and gnawing at a smoking lump of flesh at the edge of the crowd.

Gregory shuddered. "And God made man in His image and likeness," he said. "God breathed His spirit into man."

Peter did not reply. Both of them made their way as quickly as possible back to the hotel where they were lodged as delegates to the congress.

That evening, while they were looking through the papers and reports, there was a knock at the door and a militiaman entered. The Baldyrevs looked at him suspiciously, for such a visit could mean no good to them, but the militiaman laughed.

"Don't you recognise me?" he asked. "I am Burov, the engineer."

"Burov! Stephen Burov?" they shouted, shaking hands. "How did you get here? What are you doing in the militia?"

"What else could I do, dear friends? The factories were smashed up, and as I had no intention of smashing up myself, I took refuge in the militia. My job is to inspect Moscow's buildings and institute myself I am not overworked. I make out two or three a day to the effect that certain houses are the door, certain sewers are choked up with dead and helping

very quietly, and all those who have survived at all arrange their lives in a similar fashion. Nobody wants to succeed or to grow rich. All they want is to continue a decent existence."

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took refuge in them from the cold and died there by themselves."

After they had chatted together for some time Burov rose to go. "I must visit some suspected houses," he said. "The authorities are afraid that the roofs may fall in. Would you like to come? You will find it worth while."

Gregory refused, so Burov left with Peter Baldyrev. They went first of all to the militia station.

"My subordinates," whispered Burov, indicating some ruffians who were playing cards on a bench. "I tell you, my friend, that they are great men in their way. Life has kneaded them just as a baker kneads dough. Most of them were serving sentences before the war—yes, they were criminals. Now they are agents for public security."

Meanwhile the men were putting on their uniforms and taking down revolvers and sabres from the wall. They left the militia station together and went to the Kushnietsky Bridge, where they stopped in front of a dark, two-storied house.

Burov knocked, but there was no answer. After the third loud knocking was heard a patter of bare feet. The door partly opened on a chain, and a frightened face peered out.

"Open the door, or I shoot," growled one of the militiamen, putting his foot in the door.

They went up to the second floor and rang again. A grille opened in the door and somebody looked out.

"Ah, it's you, Comrade Burov."

They entered a large, brightly-lit hall, in which the windows were heavily draped, while thick and luxurious carpets deadened any noise. There were about a dozen persons in the room, playing cards, dominoes and manette. Heaps of gold coins, handfuls of diamonds and stomachs of jewels, rings, bracelets, brooches, bundles of dollars and English pounds were scattered about the tables and changed hands with the betting.

The old man, naked and loaded with jewels lay on the floor. The mourners, arm-chairs in shameless and provoking

attitudes. Girls, quite naked, were serving liqueurs, champagne and coffee. Every now and then one of the men went off with a woman, or with one of the girls, to another room along the corridors. Some couples were dancing with libidinous movements, while drunken spectators cheered them on.

"What on earth does this mean?" asked Peter, putting his hand on Burov's shoulder.

"For you it means whatever you like to think of it," replied Burov with a laugh. "For me it is a golden calf. But I warn you, as my friend, not to join in the fun here or you will be sorry for it. Do you see that beautiful, haughty brunette over there? She is a real Princess of a very old family. She was a noted beauty at the Czar's Court, but when she did not get abroad in time she fell a victim to the Cheka with all that that implies. She was on the streets for a time. Then she took refuge here, for the place is run by a foreigner who is very useful to the Soviets. She suffers from a disease—I need not tell you what. She makes no attempt to cure herself, but waits here to tempt Commissars and to infect them. She confided to me once when she was drunk that she wanted to avenge Russia. She is a patriot, you observe. Ha, ha!"

"Do these women live here?" asked Peter.

"No, they are invited to entertain the guests of Avanesa Kustandji, an Armenian millionaire from Turkey. You see that table over there? They are card-sharpers playing with that red-faced hog of a German industrialist. He got a lot of money from selling saccharine and cocaine in Russia and he is winning more now, but he does not know, poor fellow, that he will lose it all soon. It is a brilliant new idea—NEP, the New Economic Policy. We admit foreign capital into Russia, but the dividends, if they escape requisition, are confiscated privately by card-sharpers and odalisques. And at the last the distinguished Armenian Kustandji will have no more tribute himself to pay."

Peter Baldyrev looked around him. At the door, Burov's militiamen were drinking brandy and helping

themselves to sandwiches. At the tables the wine-glasses were circling freely. Naked girls, almost children, sat on the knees of the guests, and embraced them shamelessly, singing indecent songs or telling obscene stories with childish voices. The elephantine Kustandji, smiling serenely, walked from one group to another. His face was blotched and pimply, with a thick nose projecting almost to his upper lip. Nothing escaped his small, close-set, black eyes.

"A bad day to-day, Comrade," he whined when he met Burov. "I have gained hardly anything."

"So I see," Burov replied in a friendly manner. "I shall spare you to-day. You need pay me only three hundred dollars. That is a trifle. The German, Brandt, will leave twenty-five thousand dollars behind him as sure as fate. And that American, Savey, who is dancing so brilliantly over there, is good for at least fifty thousand. How much do you expect to get out of the side rooms or from the boudoir of the beautiful Madam Kustandji? No, three hundred dollars is only a trifle."

"But this is terrible!" groaned the Armenian. "Comrade, you will soon be as rich as Rothschild!"

"When I am I won't come to your little entertainments," replied Burov.

"Ah, well, perhaps you would like some wine or cognac?"

"No, thank you. We are both fanatical teetotallers."

Kustandji was called away to greet new guests, and Burov whistled when he saw them enter. They were rough in appearance, with ferocious features and bold eyes.

"There will be some fun now," Burov laughed. "These are genuine bandits, and their chief, Chelkan, is with them. But have no fear, they are not robbing people here. They pulled off a successful robbery yesterday, and to-day they only want recreation, a game of cards and some drink. What use is money to them? To-morrow the Cheka will have them. They will be shot. And if any money is found on them, it will go into the pockets of Comrade Guzman."

"You have been bribed yourself?" asked Peter.

"A filthy bourgeois word!" said Burov with a laugh. "That was his ransom. Do you think I'm going to live all my life in this swamp of Communism? Not a bit of it! When I have some thousands of dollars put by I shall be abroad like a shot. I'm sick to death of all these scoundrels!"

Peter looked wonderingly at his friend. "Burov has been kneaded by life into a new form," he thought, "unlike Gregory or the Sergeyevs." Then he asked quietly: "How can bandits come to a place where the police are present?"

"Easy enough! They know very well that Kustandji will make it safe for them. Come, I'll show you a place like nothing else in the whole world—unless in Buenos Ayres. Kustandji tells me that he has followed the best Argentinian models, but I think he's a liar."

They went down a long corridor with rooms opening on either side, sumptuously furnished with thick carpets, Oriental tapestries, embroidered cushions and long mirrors. The doorways, hung with transparent curtains, made it possible to see everything that went on within. Guests from the gambling room were wandering up and down excitedly, making disgusting jokes.

"A country must perish where vice is practised so openly," said Burov with a sudden seriousness. Peter looked at him with a new understanding. The militiaman went on in the same gloomy tone: "They have torn faith out by the roots, desecrated the churches, and sold the sacred ikons to foreign museums. They have made violence and vice their religion. Revenge will come in its own form, and all the more terribly because Lenin, like the fanatical ascetic that he is, believes in simple morals and modesty. He lives in the light of his principles, quite convinced that he is working for the happiness of mankind. There is some diabolical evil in this whole place, some intoxicating poison that invades the brain and paralyses the will. If Lenin ever came here as Kustandji's guest, there is no doubt he would shoot the swine on the spot himself."

They entered "the black boudoir." It was a large room with the whole ceiling one great mirror. The

walls, the tapestries and the carpets were all in black; and against this background were hung horrible, pornographic etchings in white frames. Some of the guests were lying on the divans, holding in their arms naked girls, whose slender white limbs stood out against the black like Japanese embroideries. Some of the girls moved among the tables with languorous movements, one dropping a pastille of cocaine into her liqueur glass, another with a snuff-box which gave forth a heavy, poisonous odour. Some were slowly sinking into a state of blissful unconsciousness. With the women pressed in their arms, men lay dreaming with wide-open eyes, like so many pictures of death. Others were in a state of frenzy. They laughed madly or uttered wild shrieks. They snatched at the naked girls, scratched their white bodies, bit into their flesh, and embraced them more passionately when they were excited by the cries of pain that came from their victims.

"Let's get out of here!" Peter ran back along the corridor as though pursued by malevolent spirits. In the large room many couples were dancing and the American was struggling with his partner. Another foreigner, seeking a woman for a dance, put his arm around the Princess's waist. She pushed his sweaty hands away and looked at him coldly.

"May I ask the lady comrade to dance?" he mumbled in broken Russian.

She rose slowly.

"Hi! Tamara!" cried Chelkan from the table where the bandits played. "Spit at that bourgeois rip and dance with me."

He was stalwart, agile, conscious of his strength. He looked at her possessively and whistled for her to come to him, as though he were whistling to a dog.

"Hurry up, woman! Hurry up!" he shouted yet more loudly, and whistled so that Kustandji ran towards him uneasily.

The woman stood up, straight and proud, with scornfully drooping eyelids.

"Kneel down, you cur!" she cried in ringing tones. "Strike the floor thrice with your dirty forehead and ask me again. Then perhaps . . ."



Chelkan burst out laughing. "Have you gone mad, Tamara? Have you forgotten how long you lived with me? That princely blood of yours is crying out for its own again. But I'll knock the nonsense out of you. Come over here, noble Princess! Come to Chelkan at once!" He whistled again.

"So you don't mean to ask me humbly, on your knees?" she asked threateningly.

He cursed her in reply.

Suddenly Tamara threw back her head. Her face was terribly distorted and her words rasped in her throat.

"You beasts! You slaves! There was a time when my father used to whip you! Do you think that I will degrade myself with you all my life, as though I were a homeless and a hungry dog? I remember you, Chelkan, when you were a house-porter and asked me from the street to your filthy bed. I was starving then. You trafficked in me, beat me, persecuted me, until I was sick and clad in rags and unable to earn any more. Now I have had enough! I have done my work! Hundreds of you are rotting already! You will remember Princess Tamara all your lives!"

Her voice rang with laughter and she stamped her foot.

"You're drunk!" shouted Chelkan, jumping from his seat and running towards her.

Tamara reached for her bag as he approached. Suddenly three shots rang out in quick succession. The bandit reeled and fell with bullets in his head and stomach, while the Princess collapsed upon the floor, dead, a stream of blood gushing from her mouth.

Peter Baldyrev left the apartments of Avanesa Kustandji at once, without even waiting for Burov. He returned to his hotel, awakened his brother, and in a trembling voice told him the happenings of that night until the light of dawn appeared in the sky.

Next morning he read in the papers the account of a feat performed by the militia Commissar, Burov, who had cornered the bandit Chelkan with his mistress, Tamara, in the private flat of a foreigner, a rich Turkish merchant, which the criminal had entered in hopes of

gathering rich spoils; after a desperate battle, Burov had succeeded in shooting down the bandit.

"This Burov will be a successful man," said Peter with a smile. "He profits by every accident. But he is following a slippery path."

"Who takes the sword shall perish by the sword," said Gregory with a shrug of his shoulders.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

SEARCHLIGHTS were playing on the Red Square, and the white walls of the Kremlin stood up like the waves of a frozen sea. Against the starry sky the cupolas of St. Basil's church, immobile in the hard light, looked down in cold splendour upon a surging crowd below. Music and sounds of revelry came from theatres, cinemas and restaurants; discordant blasphemies broke upon the quiet of a starry night in spring, the night of Holy Saturday.

It was nearly midnight, the hour at which Russians, by immemorial tradition, offer their prayers to the Saviour of the World, for at this hour He rose again and entered the kingdom of His Heavenly Father. It was a still and quiet night, brooding on its memories, a night steeped in the atmosphere of divine grace.

But the tranquillity was disturbed by riot and Christ insulted by the foulest blasphemies. To the rhythm of stirring music, in a rush of wild laughter and mad curses, the procession of the Godless moved towards the Kremlin. It was headed by people carrying a large portrait of Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin with red banners on either side. Then followed a motley crowd of humanity, singing the Internationale and sacrilegious songs. In the crowd was a man dressed up as God the Father in white robes, with a grey wig and a long beard. He jumped about madly, grimacing at a representation of Christ, who sat on an ass with His face to its tail. Others masqueraded as the Apostles, and these carried large bottles, marked "The Sacred Opium," or "The Blessed Vodka," or "The Miraculous Poison." Behind them followed a horde of men and women in gaudy dresses, shamelessly dancing and singing together. They carried large inscriptions on their breasts, "St. Nicholas," "Alexis, the Man of God," "St. Gregory Rasputin," "St. Mary,"

"St. Katherine." Young men rode along on crosses covered with revolting inscriptions, as though they were hobby-horses. Prostitutes bared their bodies amidst the jeers and laughter of the crowd. And all those faces were brazen but unhappy. Russia had taken another step forward on the road to Golgotha.

The procession passed the cathedral and headed for the Tverska Gate. They surged along, not taking off their caps, and under the archway their cries were deadened to an eerie howl.

An old woman stood before the miraculous picture of the Virgin and raised her hands. She cried out, in a voice cracked with fury and terror: "If you exist, if you can work miracles—punish us! Please punish us! I implore you to punish us!"

In the suburbs deserted by the Godless there were different scenes. The Baldyrevs were walking quickly in the direction of an old church standing by itself in a graveyard, a church that had survived the storms of the Revolution, and as they went along they were joined by more and more dark figures hurrying furtively in the same direction. The faithful pushed their way up the central aisle of the spacious church, while others, who could not find a place, went down the stone steps to the crypt. Workers with their wives and children, peasants who had stayed in the capital for the holidays, homeless proletarians, old beggar-women, men and women of the educated classes in worn-out clothes, often barefoot, were all packed together like herrings. But their faces were filled with a light of happiness. Their eyes were fixed upon the ikons with their brightly-shining haloes, and lingered upon the altar, shining with gilt and bronze. With trembling lips they whispered the old prayers of their childhood. Their hands traced the sign of the Cross without shame; and the light of the candles which they held struck upwards to the blue clouds of incense that hid from the impenetrable darkness of the dome.

The poor faithful ones gathered there forgot in that hour all their daily trials. Their wounds did not smart. Despair no longer gripped their hearts. Their minds lingered no longer on complaints or regrets, their thoughts

were not now taken up with death and destitution; they followed the path of everlasting Truth which led to a light unspeakable, transcending all the wisdom of earthly men. The hope blossomed again in their hearts that the miseries of life make only a temporary trial, necessary that the Word may be fulfilled. All created things took on a divine meaning and the worshippers felt themselves, every one, soldiers fighting for a great cause.

The deacon before the altar sang the Gospel in a loud voice: "And on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene cometh early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre: and she saw the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

"She ran therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith to them: They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him.

"Peter therefore went out, and that other disciple, and they came to the sepulchre.

"And they both ran together, and that other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.

"And when he stooped down, he saw the linen clothes lying: but yet he went not in.

"Then cometh Simon Peter, following him, and went into the sepulchre, and saw the linen clothes lying.

"And the napkin, that had been about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but apart, wrapped up in one place.

"Then that other disciple also went in, who came first to the sepulchre: and he saw, and believed.

"For as yet they knew not the scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.

"The disciples therefore departed again to their home.

"But Mary stood at the sepulchre without, weeping. Now as she was weeping, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre:

"And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid.

"They say to her: Woman, why weepest thou?

She saith to them : Because they have taken away my Lord : and I know not where they have laid Him.

"When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing; and she knew not that it was Jesus.

"Jesus saith to her : Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, thinking that it was the gardener, saith to Him : Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him : and I will take Him away.

"Jesus saith to her : Mary. She, turning, saith to him : Rabboni (which is to say, Master).

"Jesus saith to her : Do not touch me, for I am not yet ascended to My Father : but go to My brethren and say to them : I ascend to My Father and to your Father, to My God and your God."

The deacon's voice sounded in a high note of triumph. The celebrant, with a cross and a lighted candle in his hands, turned to the people and cried, in a voice trembling with emotion :

"Brethren, Christ is risen ! Alleluia ! Hosanna to God most high !"

The crowd swayed forward, and those who could fell upon their knees.

"The Lord is risen ! Alleluia !"

Then the choir and the faithful began to sing a triumphant hymn.

" Christ rose from the dead :  
He conquered death by His own death ;  
And to people of good-will  
He gave eternal life in Heaven."

The singing ceased. The young priest, after blessing the congregation with the sign of the Cross and holy water, spoke to them from the altar.

"My brethren, I exhort you with the words of the blessed Apostle St. James, the Apostle of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ :

"Let every man be swift to hear, but slow to speak, and slow to anger.

"For the anger of man worketh not the justice of God.

"Wherefore, casting away all uncleanness, and abundance of naughtiness, with meekness receive the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

"For if a man be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he shall be compared to a man beholding his natural countenance in the glass.

"Feeling beheld himself, and went his way, and presently forgot what manner of man he was.

"He, therefore, that hath looked into the perfect law of liberty, and hath continued therein, not becoming a hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

He stopped for a moment. Then he went on, wiping the tears from his eyes:

"We have been heavily punished by the Lord, my brethren, but let us bless our punishment, for now we have become doers of the Word, and the Word is incarnate. Nothing, no, not the gates of hell, can prevail against you, nor will iniquity prevail over the gateways of our souls. Lift up your hearts on high! A teacher will come amongst you to bless his children."

At that moment a whisper ran through the crowd. Their eyes were fixed upon the altar, where a new figure had appeared. A tall, emaciated man stood there, raising his hand in blessing. His soft fair hair fell upon his shoulders, and his long beard lay upon his cassock; on his breast was a simple cross of iron. His eyes were fiery and prophetic as his thin hand traced above the heads of the people the sign of sacrifice and of victory.

A joyful whisper ran through the crowd: "Our bishop, Nekodym, is restored to us from the dungeons of Solovyetsky Island!"

The powerful voice of the bishop rang through the church: "Peace be with you!"

Suddenly, from the square outside, came a woman's shriek: "Soldiers! Help! Help!"

There was panic for a moment in the crowded nave, but it was calmed by the bishop, whose voice again rose above the tumult: "Peace be with you!"

He descended the steps of the altar with a cross in

his hand and passed through the crowd of worshippers, who followed him with the priest and the deacon. The human swarm, singing the Hymn of the Resurrection, passed slowly out into the square. At the bishop's side were Peter and Gregory Baldyrev, devout, concentrated, forgetful of the world. They had no thought for themselves. A spirit had seized their whole being which made them oblivious to human fears. Death? Danger? They knew them not. They were flooded with the consciousness of the necessity for common action, nameless heroism that demanded no reward.

Two platoons of soldiers were advancing from different directions. At a word of command not halted, and then their rifles were levelled at the brethren.

A Latvian officer shouted in broken Russian: "Your perse at once, or you will be shot down!"

The crowd was filled with an intensity of reph. fervour. It advanced, singing, upon the soldiers.

"One!" shouted the officer. "Two!"

He raised his sword. The soldiers levelled their heads against the butts of their rifles.

Then a cry arose from the ranks of one of the platoons: "Comrades, let us defend our brethren from the Latvians! We are not outcasts here! We are Russians! We are in our own land!"

The rifles of the Russian platoon were at once turned upon the Red Guards. But before a shot was fired the Latvian officer had accepted the situation. He commanded his men to shoulder their rifles, and marched them away whence they had come.

The Russian soldiers took off their caps and marched before the procession along the street. Their voices joined in the chorus of the hymn:

"Christ rose from the dead:  
He conquered death by His own death;  
And to people of good-will  
He gave eternal life in Heaven."

They marched through the streets of Moscow to the gateway where the dark face of Our Lady of Iver looked down upon the crowds. They fell on their knees before the picture, while the tall bishop blessed them.



Then the crowd began to melt away into the side streets, and soon the Red Square was empty.

Only the measured footsteps of the sentries broke the stillness. Two of them met in their patrol.

"Truly, our people are bold in their religion," muttered one. "They might have been shot down by those Latvians at the command of the Commissar."

"But the Latvians were afraid," said the other with a meaning smile.

The first took off his cap. "Christ rose from the dead, brother," he said.

"Verily, Christ rose from the dead," replied the other.

They shook hands at the dawn of Easter and embraced each other three times, as their mothers had taught them long ago.

## CHAPTER XXXV

LENIN was buried in thought after examining a report sent to him by a specialist in the Veterinary Institute.

"This is terrible!" he reflected. "It is a challenge to the whole civilised world! Nature has brought forth a monster!"

He ran over the report in his mind again. The specialist had discovered a new bacillus and cultivated it. Then he had inoculated with it eighty political prisoners supplied by the Cheka as live experimental material; with the result that every one of them died of paralysis in a few minutes, and he now suggested that the bacillus should be used as a charge for aeroplane bombs.

"Eighty men dead in a few minutes!" said Lenin with a shudder. "The man is a scientific monster! A henchman of Dzherzhinsky."

"Or he is a henchman of yours," said a voice in his mind.

He threw himself into a chair. Pain convulsed his features and his eyes started from their sockets. A violent pain grew within his head until his brain seemed to be seared with fire.

"Stalin," he thought in his agony, "dreams of keeping Russia in a state of revolutionary chaos, but already annihilation stares us in the face. That drunkard Rykov is criticising the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The peasants are joining forces in revolt. There are riots in the prisons of Solovyetsky Island, and a wholesale slaughter of suspected persons. Now this fellow comes along with a new germ which has already killed eighty men. The factories are idle, hunger and disease are everywhere."

His thoughts came to their full tension and snapped.

"Socialism in two months!" he shrieked suddenly, and fell to the floor.

Those who rushed in found him lying motionless. He was put to bed while the doctors examined him, and after a consultation they gave their verdict.

"Paralysis of the right side!" they said.

There followed long months of illness, of boredom, of hopeless indifference and monotony, with recurrent headaches that disabled him completely.

Then he recovered for a time. He began to walk. He called the Commissars for discussion and advice, he dictated decrees and articles, he looked through the foreign correspondence and read newspapers. The strength of his spirit overcame the weakness of his body. Lenin was consuming himself to the last ember, like a bonfire lashed by the wind. A flood of ideas came from him. He regained control of every department, so that even those of his opponents who quailed before his hollow, ringing voice, full of an indomitable conviction, had to admit that "Lenin steered Russia with a paralysed hand."

But he saw clearly the road he had travelled and in a mist the goal that he approached. He had exterminated every creative element in the State, degraded hearts and souls, reduced morals and reason to full submission, awakened lust and every savage instinct, and so destroyed whatever constructive work had been accomplished before in Russia. Now he remained alone, unconquered, but with a disabled arm and leg, with a terrible pain in his head, and with a dark anticipation of approaching death.

He had handed power over to the worker class, from which he had chosen as leaders the boldest and most ferocious natures. He had relied upon men of foreign extraction who could be trusted to show no mercy to the people; and now Stalin, the incalculable Georgian, would take over his rule. He, Lenin, had devastated Russia, murdered the members of the reigning House, slaughtered millions of human beings in hopeless agony—all this with the help of a few thousand faithful Communists; but he had not seen, as Stalin saw, the abyss towards which Russia was heading. Stalin had created a Party within the Party, he had become the leader of the proletarian bureaucrats, he had assaulted the

Communitic edifice erected by Lenin, which was now at last, after fruitless efforts to find other foundation, based upon the peasants, who had survived all the Dictator's attacks.

As Lenin now saw it, it was necessary to get rid of Stalin. It was necessary to continue the revolutionary war so as to spread the infection of Communism throughout Europe, where it had done no more as yet than strengthen the power of Capitalism. But what of Russia, a country in the throes of dissolution? And what of Asia? Asia would burst into activity like a volcano at any moment, and then its lava could be directed at will upon the West, the rotten West, impregnably secure with its bourgeois strongholds and the unhampered creative intellect.

In this mood, although his head was agonising, he sat down to write. He composed an indictment against Stalin and a memorandum of the methods by which he could be attacked and removed from power. Trotsky should be the chosen leader, for though Trotsky had none of Stalin's uncompromising steadiness, his abilities were marvellous. Also, he was controlled by fate. Trotsky was a non-Russian, cursed by his own people, and the best-hated man in the whole world; there was no other thing for him to do but to continue the Revolution and to spare the peasants still.

Lenin wrote with difficulty, guiding his right hand with his left. He wrote a last testament. To whom could he dedicate it? Had he loved anybody all his life? He had loved only the cause of the proletariat, of the oppressed Russian people. That would be his dedication. The Party would hear his last words, his last contribution to that body of work in which during his lifetime he had proved of such cosmic strength.

So at last he laid down his pen, completely exhausted; but his work was done. Then new anxieties overcame him. He saw his work endangered. Trotsky, Rykov, Chicherin, Stalin—there was no security in them all. . . . Kamenev, Zinoviev, Stieklov, and the rest of the revolutionary Jews . . . Ha, ha! it was a brilliant idea of his to employ for the devastation of Russia these men without a country, but with a tradition of misery and

## CHAPTER XXXVI

A NEW building was erected on the Red Square, facing the cathedral of St. Basil the Blessed with its multi-coloured walls, its Byzantine refinement joined to the barbarian crudity of Oriental taste.

It was a modern structure, of geometric simplicity, dark, almost black. No flight of imagination was reflected in this architectural association of planes and figures.

So it was that, thousands of years ago, the wailing slaves had toiled in Nineveh and Babylon, nor had Solomon's temple and the palaces of the Pharaohs been built otherwise. They had risen, heavy and menacing, for within the walls were the abodes of the dreaded gods and the kings of the land.

On the front of this building was the single word: Lenin. Here the body of the Dictator of the Proletariat lay embalmed. Here he lay, encased in a glass coffin and clad in a military uniform, with the star of the order of the "Red Flag" on his breast.

The yellowed tint of the skin only served to emphasise the Mongolian character of his features. His right hand, always unflinching and ready to strike, even in death remained clenched as if about to deliver a decisive blow. One might think that here was the sarcophagus of Tamerlane, brought to Moscow from the heart of Asia; to Moscow, where for centuries had ruled the descendants of the Mongol Ghengiz Khan, half Tartar by blood, always cherishing in their imagination a return to the limitless Asiatic steppes and wild mountain ravines, where sheltered the hordes whose chief delight was havoc and destruction.

Formed in a long queue that stretched to the bank of the river, the people came to do homage to the tomb of Lenin. As each one entered the dark aperture of

the square doorway he faced the guards who watched by the body in statuesque immobility. In the strange twilight they came on one after another, parading by the coffin, urged on by a harsh command: "Don't stop! Pass on!" They were soldiers, street loafers, peasants from the country-side, delegates coming from distant provinces.

Thousands of eyes scrutinised the parchment face, the clenched fist, tried to imagine what lay under the firmly closed eyelids and left invisible traces of its thoughts in the shadows beneath, on the bald, domed forehead, in the wrinkles about his mouth. The stream of people moved on unending, like a procession of ants on the march searching for a new home. They were silent, awed, inarticulate.

Another square doorway guarded by two soldiers brought the pilgrims from the temple of the prophet back into the square dominated by the splendid building of Ivan the Terrible, its many brightly-coloured Byzantine cupolas intent and watchful like a sentinel over the scene. The human stream branched off into creeks and rivulets, and was absorbed by the gaping streets, while still the brooding silence of the atmosphere was not broken.

But once back in the evil-smelling lanes, surrounded once more by destitution and want, the sound of the executioners' machine guns in their ears from the court-yards of the Cheka, the people slowly recovered from the spell that had been cast over them. A peasant woman, tugging at her husband's sleeve, said to him: "They say Lenin rots. The doctors are making him all right again and painting him over."

The peasant looked long and thoughtfully at his wife, and then replied through clenched teeth:

"Let him rot. All Russia is now rotting through him."

"It is true," sighed the woman.

"None of the Czars could boast such a sepulchre," proudly exclaimed a worker in a black shirt, who was just passing. "We have given to Ilyitch an honourable burial. He is dead, and yet he is not gone; for any-

body can have a look at him. He lies as if he were alive; as though he were tired and asleep."

A workman who listened to him added in a low voice :

"It isn't well that the mausoleum is of wood. It might easily take fire."

Close to the Cathedral stood another group of visitors to Lenin's sarcophagus. They looked long at the dark, uncompromising building and at the inscription "Lenin," pallid against its background.

"The Antichrist is dead," breathed a woman, with a timid look at a tall, thin man with bold, flaming eyes.

"If he rots, even when he is embalmed, is it not a sure sign that he was not the Antichrist?" asked a weary-looking old man. And he also looked at the tall man, who continued silently to contemplate the tomb.

No one spoke further, and at last he to whom all these looks were directed shook off his absorption and said :

"Unconsciously he fulfilled the will of the Most High. . . . He was the Flail of the Lord, with whom the Just Judge castigates sinful humanity. Do not curse him, do not speak evil of him, my brethren. For he was the instrument of punishment sent to us by Heaven. He has brought us to reflection and understanding."

"How can that be, Father Nekodym, venerable bishop?" cried a voice from the crowd.

"Truly I say that this man wrought a great thing!" the bishop replied in an inspired voice. "He killed in us the spirit of the slaves, he awakened the consciences of the rich and the mighty, he quickened the true faith, he did away with the fear of martyrdom and of death; he led us to the cross-roads that we might realise that only through spiritual effort may freedom and happiness be obtained on earth, and an eternal reward achieved. God guided his blood-stained hand and his lunatic's mind!"

"His legacy is poison," said a woman. "Two generations will be brought up in his corrupt ideas—the young people and the children."

"I tell you they are no more than the flying seeds of a dandelion. The sun will come out, and they will shrink and fade and die away, honoured by none," replied Nekodym.

Heavy sighs were heard, and then low voices: "God grant it!"

"There remain Trotsky, Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and thousands of others," said the old man. "And with them, iniquity and tyranny."

The bishop regarded him with fiery eyes and spoke as though in ecstasy.

"St. John, the favourite disciple of Jesus, received a revelation on the island of Patmos, which he faithfully recorded as God's truth. This is what the Apostle says:

"And God said to me: Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

"He that hurteth, let him hurt still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is just, let him be justified still: and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still.

"Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to render to every man according to his works.

"I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

He bestowed a benignant glance on the gloomy mausoleum, on the Square swarming with people, and then turned swiftly into the nearest street. His friends followed him, missing as they did so the sight of an old beggar who was dragged by the militia-men from the mausoleum. The victim shrieked and yelled, trying to dodge the blows that were dealt out to him. The soldiers snatched at his rags, which gave way, tugged at his hair and beard, urged him on with blows of the fist and of the flat of the sword. The beggar tried to tear himself loose, and as he struggled cried out:

"Men of Russia! Do not submit! Your country, your faith, your shame have been taken away from you. And now Lenin, the father of the poor, has been robbed of his brain, and his heart has been torn from his body and shut in a golden case sealed with seven seals. He lies in his grave, unable to take care of us



any more, unable to love the poor, the homeless and the wronged as he once did. "Listen, good men!"

His complaints were drowned amid the prayer of the oppressed, which was now solemnly intoned beside the grave of their prophet and chief:

"Rise up, men of the soil!  
And you whom hunger torments!  
A new bright hope has come to us,  
To lead us to a new endeavour.  
Let the past be no more!  
Let the tyrant quail before us!  
We will change the balance of the world;  
For to-day we are nothing, to-morrow we have all."

Suddenly the song was cut short. A crowd was advancing on the Square. As it gathered around the gateway of the Kremlin it began to howl, gradually becoming noisier and more menacing:

"We're dying . . . dying of hunger . . . Give us work and bread . . . work and bread! We're dying . . ."

On the wall above, shrouding itself in smoke, a machine gun rattled sharply.

It was an answer to the oppressed, to the poor who were tormented by hunger.

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