

Lenin's 90th Birthday

By William Z. Foster

VLADIMIR ILYITCH ULYANOV (Lenin), the founder of Bolshevism and of the first socialist state in the world, was born 90 years ago, on April 22, 1870, in Simbirsk, now called Ulyanovsk, on the Volga. He came from a middle class family. Lenin graduated from high school with a good knowledge of Latin, Greek, French, and German, and he was especially well up in history, economics, and literature. In high school, Lenin won the highest prize, the gold medal, for scholarship. On August 13, 1887, he entered Kazan University to study law, but was expelled four months later for revolutionary activity. Lenin's elder brother, Alexander, was executed in Schlüsselburg fortress, in St. Petersburg, in the same year, for complicity in the plot against the life of Czar Alexander III. The rest of his life Lenin spent in intense and productive work among the laboring and rebellious masses, in building socialism. He died on January 21, 1924, at the age of 53, to the great grief of the Russian people and the advanced work-

ers, peasants, and other toilers, all over the world.

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Lenin's first major achievement of a general character was his brilliant struggle against the revisionist opportunists of the Second International. It began in the 1890's, and continued from then on. This led to the birth of the Communist movement. The leader of the historic opportunist adventure was the German Eduard Bernstein, who falsely called himself a Marxist. It was the first great attempt to destroy the labor movement under the hypocritical cover of Marxism. Many others have since followed the footsteps of Bernsteinism, which became the policy of the Right wing of the Second International. In the last three or four years, our Party had a bitter struggle with modern revisionism, which is also clearly a descendant of the notorious movement of Bernstein. Lenin, in his time, scored an outstanding victory over the re-

visionists. Whereas they had attempted to bury Marxism under a wet blanket of opportunism, their efforts were exposed and effectively frustrated by Lenin. Socialism had a new birth. Marxism became more powerful than ever. It spread generally throughout the whole labor movement of the world. Leninism has proved, by the hard test of life, to be the only effective labor theory in the many countries of the international labor movement.

Another basic test and justification of Lenin's policy came with World War I. Lenin, for years, had fought against this great imperialist war, which was clearly coming. He was the greatest of all authorities on, and fighters against, imperialism. His line was the historic one of changing the imperialist war into a revolutionary fight for socialism. This tactic was generally so successful that four great capitalist empires—Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, and Russia—who cold-bloodedly slaughtered millions of workers in the war, were shattered into the dust. The bulk of Europe would undoubtedly have gone socialist had it not been for the cold-blooded betrayal of the revisionists, who peddled away the proletarian revolution, in Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, Turkey, etc., for a mess of minor reforms. The great result of World War I, however, under the masterful leadership of Lenin, was to give birth to the

Soviet Socialist Government of Russia.

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The Soviet Revolution, in November, 1917, led by Lenin, was the most important political event in history. It marked a progressive turning point for humanity. For forty years since, the Soviet people have struggled against every imaginable handicap set up by a panicky capitalist class to defeat socialism and to preserve their monstrous graft and exploitation—war, famine, economic blockade, political isolation, etc.; and they triumphed over them all. Without the brilliant foresight of Lenin, however, it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the Soviet people to win through to victory over their many obstacles. In those early years, Stalin was a loyal follower of Lenin. Irresistibly, the Soviet Union has proved its superiority over the obsolete capitalist system. Lenin died in the midst of this heroic period; but his policies lived on invincibly. The Soviet Union is a tremendous monument to the genius of Lenin.

World War II and its aftermath were a stupendous living proof of the power of Marxism-Leninism. Not only did the peoples of the world smash Hitler's fascist monster and save world democracy, principally due to the decisive fight made by the Soviet Union and People's

China, but they also created a dozen or more new revolutionary countries, setting up a great world socialist system with over a billion people. Since then, this socialism has grown very rapidly, faster in fact, than any countries ever grew before. At the present time the socialist system is speedily overtaking the capitalist countries individually and en bloc. The United States of America, the boasted head of world capitalism, is being rapidly overhauled by the Soviet Union. The industrial production of the Soviet Union is increasing more than twice as fast as that of the United States. Besides this, the USSR is running away with the competition regarding exploration of outer space, the development of sputniks and rocket missiles, the peaceful use of atomic energy, the development of science, industrial techniques, education, sports, culture, etc. The greatest development now taking place in the world is the proving of the superiority of socialism over capitalism, on all fronts. Meanwhile, the socialist system has grown so powerful that it has practically served notice on capitalism not to declare war, and to disarm itself. A whole new group of socialist world statesmen have come to the fore—headed by Khrushchev and Mao Tse-tung, all ardent Marxist-Leninists, applying the principles and tactics of Marxism-Leninism according to the particular conditions in their respective countries. The

entire situation is a tremendous triumph of Lenin's magnificent work as a proletarian thinker, organizer, and fighter.

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The future holds a splendid perspective for socialism. Marxism-Leninism is becoming dominant throughout the world of labor and the socialist movement. Lenin has truly become a world figure. The monopolists are making a determined effort to destroy the great theoretical system which he, along with Marx and many other proletarian fighters, built up. The Titos, Stracheys, Browders, and other tools of the capitalists, are crawling out of their holes and patching together such makeshift arguments as they can to try to undermine and destroy Leninism. They are particularly the voices of Right revisionism, which has plagued a number of communist parties in recent years, especially our own. Nor have the sectarian dogmatists been lacking in their anti-Leninist work. But they are all shouting in the wilderness. Marxism-Leninism is invincible, and our Party despite its difficulties, is giving a demonstration of this. In the Party we should see to it without delay that Lenin's books, whose circulation was seriously hampered by the revisionists, are fully restored, and that our membership resumes their study of the wisdom of the brilliant Lenin.

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It was to my great honor and joy that I met with Lenin in person. I also heard him speak several times at the Third Congress of the Communist International, early in 1921. He was a magnetic speaker, as well as a very modest one; and he held the audience of delegates spellbound as he talked. I met him on the street one day as he was going to the Congress Hall. But, as I was just join-

ing the Party in those days, I didn't feel authorized to try to engage him in extended conversation, very busy as he was, and in not too good health. He died only some three years afterward. In my experiences, I have met with many leaders of labor, but never before or since with one who thrilled me so deeply as the great Lenin, who grows in political stature with the years, until now he and Marx are the two greatest political figures in the world.

"NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH . . ."

"As usual, the American press has given some incorrect impressions regarding the Geneva test ban negotiations. . . . Of the various incorrect impressions given by the press, perhaps the most serious is the assertion that the negotiations are now deadlocked due to stalling by the Russians. In my opinion a major dragging of feet has come from our side."

Jay Orear, professor of physics, Cornell, chairman, Disarmament Committee, Federation of American Scientists, writing in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, February, 1960.