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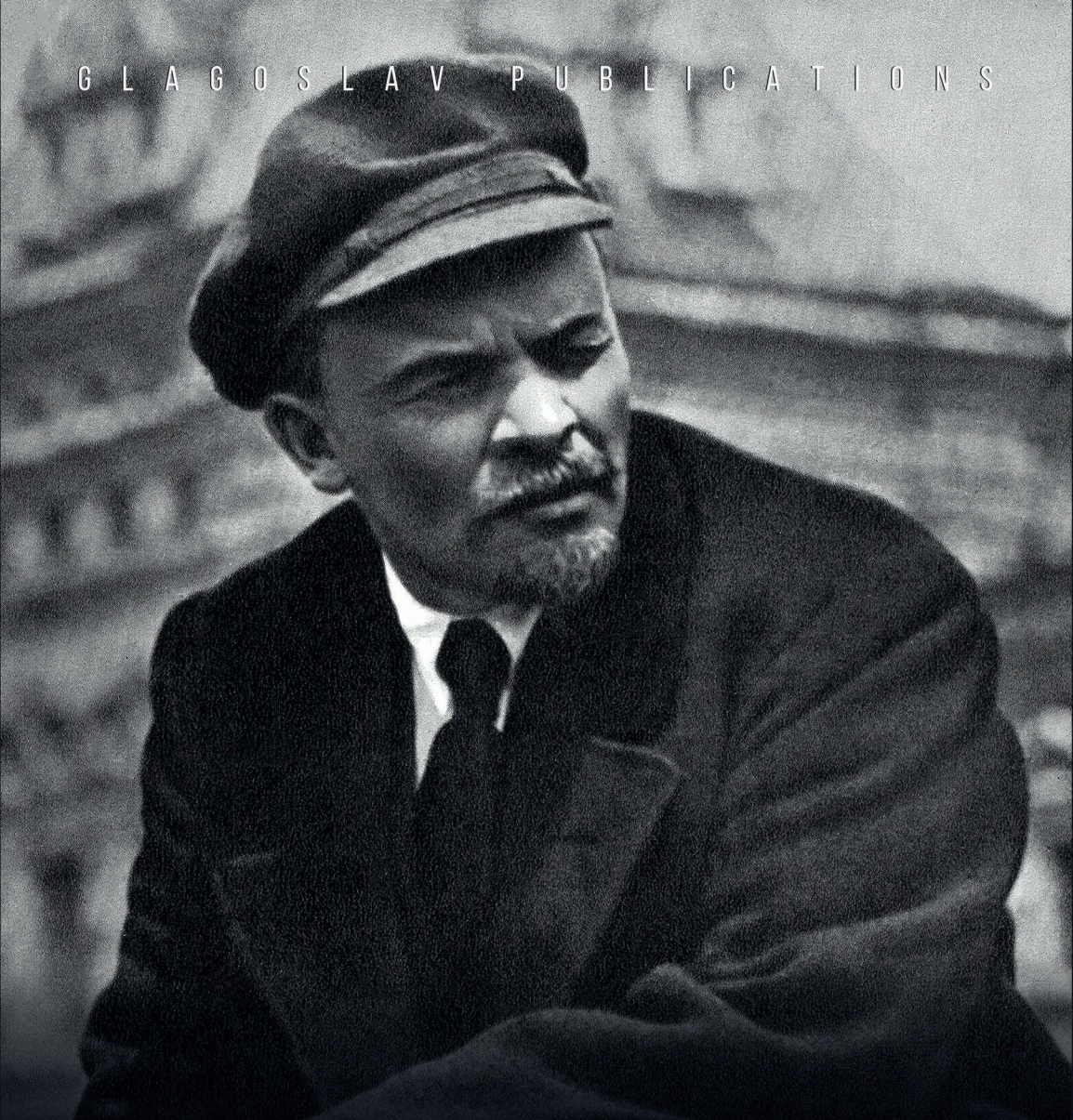

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TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY LEWIS WHITE

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VLADIMIR LENIN – HOW TO BECOME A LEADER

by Vladlen Loginov

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INTRODUCTION

Vladlen Loginov is no newcomer to the study of Lenin's life. He published an article on the theme of Lenin and the Bol'shevik newspaper *Pravda* in 1962 at the height of the Khrushchev thaw and has retained an interest in Lenin's career ever since. Loginov knows his Lenin back to front, so it is perhaps surprising that in this detailed account of the young Lenin, he sets himself a rather modest task. The image of Lenin, Loginov believes, has been over-politicised in the twentieth century and as a result the more literature that appears, "the more confused the issues surrounding the analysis of Lenin's life and activities become". An antidote is necessary, in Loginov's view, and "this book's intention", as he makes clear in the preface, "is not to offer an explanation, but to present some material for consideration, a few details of his biography hitherto unknown to the reader, to apply some additional touches to Lenin's portrait". Emulating the German nineteenth century historian Leopold von Ranke, who argued that the facts should speak for themselves, Loginov wants Lenin's life to speak for itself.

Not all the details given here are "hitherto unknown" to western scholarship, but very many are. Simply adding a few new details to the Lenin story, however, is not the main achievement of this book, for all the modest intentions of the author. The great strength of Loginov's work is to put Lenin in the context of his time, to show that he was a product of his time. As Loginov puts it, "the circumstances and events of each era did influence actions, did determine the destiny of lives, and did define modes of living just as profoundly as familial heritage." Does the reader need to know about Lenin's paternal and maternal grandparents? Well, yes, because this information shows how upwardly mobile Lenin's family was. At the apex of Russian society in the nineteenth century little changed, the Tsar still ruled as an absolute monarch. Below the surface, however, Russian society was being transformed in the middle years of the nineteenth century and Lenin's family was part of that process.

Lenin's father was only a generation away from serfdom, someone who advanced a successful career through education, first at the Astrakhan Gymnasium and then Kazan University. Unsurprisingly, he believed all his life that others could benefit through education in the same way, devoting his life to the cause of education for all. He was a man of the "Sixties", the decade when Tsar Alexander II, the liberator of the serfs, seemed to be encouraging further reform. Until the Tsar closed them down in 1862, an early sign that his reputation as a reformer was exaggerated, Lenin's father was active in establishing Sunday Schools to educate the poor. Later, his move from being a successful classroom teacher to becoming an education bureaucrat, a schools' inspector, reflected his commitment to a universal programme of education - and this included the Muslim Chuvash people of the Volga region, at the request of his father Lenin gave a local Chuvash teacher Greek lessons so that he could enter university.

On his mother's side, Lenin's Jewish ancestry has always been the subject of speculation, grist to the mill of those on the political right who think of all Marxists as Jews and rant about a Judeo-Bol'shevik conspiracy to subvert society. The main point about his maternal grandparents, however, has nothing to do with ethnicity but upward mobility, they too were members of a family moving smartly up the social ladder. The family adopted Christianity to escape the poverty of village life in the Jewish Pale of Settlement, idealised in the twentieth century by the 1970s musical *Fiddler on the Roof*. They moved to St. Petersburg, where Lenin's grandfather, no longer hampered by the limitations on Jewish access to higher education, became a successful doctor, respectable enough to marry into the minor aristocracy; and he retired to run the small estate of Kokushkino not far from the river Volga. It was the purchase of this estate in 1859 which gave the family and its heirs, Lenin included, the status of hereditary nobles.

By the time Lenin was born in 1870, his was a family of some means. His parents had their own house, a couple of servants and the estate at Kokushkino to retreat to in the summer. A decade later, things were beginning to unravel. Russian society was changing and the era of reform was over. Alexander II was assassinated in 1881 and the new Tsar Alexander III epitomised reaction rather than reform – Autocracy, Orthodoxy and the National Spirit became the watchwords of the day. One of Alexander III's early targets was education. For him, the primary education of peasant children should be the concern of the Orthodox Church rather than the state, and the education of Muslim peoples like the Chuvash was simply

unnecessary. Lenin's father, who was not a religious man, found the growing presence of the church in educational affairs difficult to handle. As a schools' inspector, he was employed on a five-year contract, but when this was renewed in January 1886 it was only for a one-year term; the man of the "Sixties" was out of tune with the spirit of the reactionary "Eighties". Tragically, Lenin's father died a few days after the news about his contract was received. What he had achieved through a life-long commitment to education was being dismantled.

Did the apparent fall from grace of his father give Lenin's elder brother a personal motive to hate everything that Alexander III stood for? Something turned the scholarly young scientist into a terrorist. Although only just completing his undergraduate studies, he was already being courted for a future academic career at St. Petersburg University. Yet he threw in his lot with the bomb-makers who hoped to kill the Tsar on 1 March 1887. His arrest and subsequent execution in May had a devastating impact on the Ulyanov family. From being successful and respected members of the local community, they became pariahs overnight, shunned even by old friends. The need to start a new life meant that the Kokushkino estate had to be sold, and to make matters worse, no sooner had Lenin been accepted for study at Kazan University, than he was expelled for taking part in a student demonstration. Throughout all this, Lenin's mother proved a power of strength. It was his mother who repeatedly pleaded with the authorities for Lenin's re-admission to university, even travelling to St. Petersburg in person to confront the Minister of Education. In the circumstances, it is not surprising that, once he qualified as a lawyer with a first class degree from St. Petersburg University awarded on 15 November 1891, Lenin felt obliged to return to his family and support his mother.

What was the impact on Lenin of his brother's execution? All biographers agree that after his brother's execution, over the summer of 1887, Lenin read and re-read Nikolai Chernyshevsky's novel *What is to be done?*, his brother's favourite book. Chernyshevsky's novel, written in 1863, called on intellectuals to devote their lives to the service of the people, and it became a bible for the Populist movement. Populists were socialists who looked to Russia's traditional forms of society for a model of the society of the future. For them the traditional peasant village commune [*obshchina*], which administered taxes and allocated land for ploughing on a shared communal basis, was a primitive form of democracy and collective ownership which could be used to revolutionise Russian

society. It had been the main Populist political party, the People's Will or *Narodnaya Volya*, which successfully assassinated Alexander II and which Lenin's brother had joined for his failed attempt on the life of Alexander III. What did Chernyshevsky teach Lenin over the summer of 1887? Were his future actions motivated be the desire to seek revenge for his brother? All biographers agree that the events of summer 1887 changed Lenin's life. The question is, how much?

The only other detailed study of the young Lenin available in English argues that the summer of 1887 was what made Lenin Lenin. The desire for revenge and the ideas of Chernyshevsky were what turned an obedient school-boy into the future dictator. Nikolai Vladislavovich Volsky, better known by his pseudonym Nikolai Valentinov, published *The Early Years of Lenin* in 1969, drawing on his one-time friendship with Lenin and his later writings as a Parisian émigré. Valentinov picks up on some of the same themes as Loginov - he refers to Lenin's father as "a passionate enlightener" and draws a splendid picture of Lenin's happy childhood, especially skating in the winter and the summer trips to Kokushkino. He is clear that, at school, Lenin had shown little interest in politics and so he suggests that, if it had not been for the events of May 1887 "Vladimir Ulyanov would never have become Lenin"; the execution of his brother was "the key to understanding how Lenin became a revolutionary".[1]

According to Valentinov, the central element of that process was Lenin's reading of Chernyshevsky, not only over the summer of 1887 but while forced to live in Kokushkino after his expulsion from Kazan University in December 1887. He remained isolated in Kokushkino until autumn 1888 and, according to Valentinov, read everything Chernyshevsky had ever published in the bound volumes of the journal *The Contemporary* or *Sovremennik*, which his father had lovingly collected and archived. Valentinov sees Lenin going "into his own kind of mystic communication with the goal, the ideas and feelings of his brother", as he explored Chernyshevsky's writings; "it was in this fashion that he embarked upon his career as a revolutionary", Valentinov suggests, and he devotes the last three chapters of his study to Chernyshevsky's influence on Lenin: "a comparison of Chernyshevsky's teaching about how to make a revolution and the views displayed by Lenin in the years

1 *N. Valentionov.* The Early Years of Lenin. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969. p. 79.

1905-05 and 1917-19 reveal their stunning analogy and correspondence," he concludes, adding that Lenin's revolutionary inheritance had "little in common with Marx".[2]

Loginov's interpretation is very different. He picks up his theme that Lenin was a product of his times and argues that Lenin's intellectual development continued long after September 1888 when he was allowed to leave Kokushkino and live once again in Kazan, although not study at the university. Here there were other influences on his life, besides Chernyshevsky. He continued to mix with student groups and, contradicting Valentinov, Loginov shows the influence of Marx. It was in Kazan that he first attended a talk about Marx's ideas and settled down to read *Das Kapital* for himself. In spring 1889 he narrowly avoided a police crack-down on the student discussion groups he frequented by moving to the family's new small-holding at Alakevka, where he again read avidly. By the time he moved to Samara after graduating, to practice as a lawyer, he had begun to call himself a Marxist. In Loginov's view, this was part of a process of intellectual evolution at least as important as his brother's execution, a process in which two things stand out.

First, there was the famine of 1891, which showed clearly that the bureaucratic apparatus of the Russian autocracy simply could not cope with a social crisis of this magnitude. But while opponents of the regime were united in believing that the famine showed up the incompetence and inhumanity of the Tsarist system, the experience of the famine heightened disagreements between Populists and Marxists. Populists believed that the new society it hoped for, based around the peasant commune, could prevent capitalism from coming to Russia. Marxists believed that capitalism was already coming to Russia, and that one of the causes of the famine was nothing other than the increased marketisation of Russian grain production. Populists and Marxists had long disagreed about the vitality of the peasant commune – whether it was thriving and therefore capable of reviving Russia along communal lines, or disintegrating as capitalist relations penetrated the country more and more. The famine made these discussions all the more acute, with Populists suggesting that the Marxist obsession with unraveling the objective causes of the famine reflected a lack of sympathy for the peasantry – they seemed glad that capitalism had hit the village, even if it did bring famine in its wake.

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2 Ibid. pp. 134, 205, 280.

Aside from the famine, but indirectly related to it, the second major impact on Lenin's thought at this time came from the book written by V. E. Plotnikov *The South Russian Peasant Economy* in 1891. Lenin wanted to get to the bottom of the issue of the vitality of the peasant commune. To this end, he started to read the reports issued by local councils [*zemstvos*] and then came across Plotnikov's detailed study of the peasant economy. This showed clearly that, in southern Russia at least, capitalist differentiation was taking place amongst the peasantry and the village commune was disintegrating as an economic institution for regulating and equalizing the use of plough land. Plotnikov provided the empirical detail needed to confirm Lenin in his belief that the Marxists were correct. Capitalism was coming to Russia and it was undermining the traditional form of peasant society on which Popluists placed so much hope. The evidence showed that the Marxists were right and the Populists were wrong.

Loginov is surely right to look to the whole of Lenin's intellectual world in the period 1887-91 to explain how he became a revolutionary, rather than just focusing on the execution of his brother and the influence of Chernyshevsky, as Valentiov does. It was not just Chernyshevsky, but the famine and Plotnikov. Discussing the evolution of Lenin's ideas, Loginov asserts: "It would seem that at least two conclusions must be drawn in this regard: firstly, that his system of beliefs was formed over a reasonably extended period, and secondly, that this process was not defined by the books he read alone." The logic of Loginov's position is this: if in later life Lenin was accused of rarely changing his mind and forcing his viewpoint on others, the process of establishing those views took years of reading and debating with friends. There was no thunderbolt, it was an evolutionary process, but his conversion to Marxism was completed by 1891 and by 1892 his revolutionary career had begun.

If Lenin became a revolutionary in 1892, when did Lenin become Lenin? Loginov counters Valentinov's view that it was summer 1887, but his answer to this question is very straightforward and a little unsatisfying. Loginov argues that it was just after the first issue of his long-planned underground newspaper *Iskra* appeared, when, in early 1901 he first signed himself "Lenin". Loginov is very convincing that Lenin was a product of his time and that there was far more to his intellectual formation than Valentinov's obsession with Chernyshevsky, but surely Lenin became Lenin when he began to express the ideas that would later become known as Leninism. What defined Lenin as a political leader, rather than being just

one of many Marxist revolutionaries, were the ideas he expressed in his political pamphlet of 1902 *What is to be done?*, consciously borrowing the title from Chernyshevsky. This pamphlet held within it the explanation for his splitting of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party at its Second Congress in 1903 to form the Bol'sheviks as a separate and distinct political faction. Although those ideas would not be fully formed until 1902, it is possible to suggest that the first signs of Leninism can be seen almost as soon as Lenin arrived in St. Petersburg in August 1893.

In April 1894 Lenin wrote the pamphlet which first made his name in the capital's Marxist circles, "Who are the friends of people, and how do they fight the Social Democrats?" Although the thrust of the pamphlet, as the title suggests, was the well-established and ongoing struggle between Populists and Marxists, it also contained, as Loginov correctly notes, a more Leninist notion. A theme that emerges is the need to move working class protest on from "smoldering discontent" to "awakening consciousness". The occasional riot or an isolated strike had to be replaced with something more organised and better planned, and the only way for there to be effective organization and planning, was for the workers to become conscious of their place in society and the tasks assigned them by the class struggle. How to bring class-consciousness to the workers of Russia would become Lenin's concern until the success of the October Revolution in 1917. The logic of what Loginov tells us, despite his assertion that Lenin became Lenin in 1901, is that Lenin was on his way to becoming Lenin as soon as he reached the capital. Those issues which would become his specific concern were already troubling him.

In discussions about working class consciousness, Lenin did not have a lot to go on. His experience of the working class was relatively limited. He made his first contacts with workers early in 1894 and soon became a popular lecturer addressing workers' circles, known affectionately as "baldy". Along with the future Menshevik leader Yulii Martov, Lenin was keen to move beyond workers' circles and the concept of change through education towards agitation and change through strike action. Strikes did take place in December 1894 and in January-February 1895, and Lenin's group produced leaflets and even helped win some concessions from the employers. Inevitably the question arose, how best to lead this movement? The initial step was easy to state, but difficult to achieve in the conditions of the Tsarist autocracy. The émigré community of Social Democrats, with its access to funds, needed to be brought together with all the militant labour

groups growing up in St. Petersburg and elsewhere. Lenin was allocated the key role here, visiting Switzerland, France and Germany, before bringing together the workers' groups of the capital with the aim of producing a newspaper, the *Workers' Cause.* All went well at first. By autumn 1895 more pamphlets had appeared, more strikes had been successful, and the first issue of the *Workers' Cause* had been published under Lenin's editorship. Then, in December 1895, Lenin was arrested.

Unable to give any further direct guidance to the working class movement, Lenin was alarmed by what happened next. Despite the arrest of Lenin and other leaders, leaflets continued to appear and strikes continued to take place. Although these strikes were not covered in the Russian press, the foreign press gave detailed accounts, and K. M Takhtarev, one of the leading labour activists of the day, was clear that the leaflets produced by surviving members of Lenin's group, combined with the fact that the employers had begun to make concessions, had an enormous impact on the workers. The pressure of labour unrest was such that by January 1897 the government had decided to shorten the working day. At one level, then Lenin should have been delighted. As Loginov notes, Lenin was clear that "nothing had such a powerful organisational and educational influence on the working masses as active struggle itself". However, more fundamentally Lenin was alarmed, because without the firm leadership he had offered, the workers were slipping towards what he would call in *What is to be done?* "trade union consciousness".

Loginov gives a rather neutral account of the events of 14-17 January 1897, events which are arguably of great significance in understanding why Lenin was so convinced that the working class needed clear and firm leadership. True to his Rankean view that he will give no explanation and let the facts speak for themselves, Loginov simply describes how Lenin, having been held in prison since December 1895, was sentenced to exile and given three days, 14-17 January 1897, to arrange his affairs before heading east to Siberia. His group of comrades, the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, met on consecutive evenings, well into the night to discuss developments since the arrests of December 1895. Loginov tells us, quoting a participant, that "the bias towards a peculiar 'democratism' and 'workerphilia' . . . elicited a degree of hot temper." He then explains, how, as 1896 had developed, Takhtarev had increasingly argued that the centre of gravity of the League of Struggle should be pushed down to factory based mutual aid funds, funds permitted by the authorities

to operate legally, and the existing Central Group, the guiding leadership structure composed of intellectuals should be abandoned.

As the strike movement had developed in 1896, so ever more mutual aid funds had begun to operate and some workers, supported by Takhtarev, developed the idea of the funds becoming a legal core of the labour movement, rejecting the idea that the leading Central Group of the League of Struggle had the right to lead the labour movement. During his last days in St. Petersburg, the last days of his contact with the labour movement of the capital, Lenin learned that the workers seemed to have abandoned all the lessons he had taught them. Lenin was opposed to the idea that the mutual aid funds should lead the workers' struggle, a concept referred to in the jargon of the day as "workerphilia". He argued on 14-17 January 1897, just as he would in *What is to be done?*, that workers would revert to trade unionism pure and simple if they were not led by conscious Social Democrats. Takhtarev, on the other hand, felt that the League of Struggle should serve the labour movement, responding to its needs, and not always insist on leadership. Here in essence was the dispute which in 1903 would lead to the split within the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party and the emergence Bol'sheviks. As Lenin left Petersburg in January 1897 for years of exile and emigration, his last direct contact with the St. Petersburg labour movement was disturbing to say the least, and his fears about the inherent trade union instincts of workers would follow him to Siberia and beyond. His own experience of the labour movement had been that, without clear leadership, workers left to their own devises could develop only trade union consciousness.

While Lenin was in Siberia, there was plenty of evidence that the 'workerphilia' tendency was not only still strong but moving towards what Lenin feared most, an accommodation with the liberal opposition to the autocracy. In 1897 two May Day appeals were produced: one was traditionally Social Democrat in tone, calling for political freedom and the eight-hour day; the other, however, was reformist in tone, Economist, to use the contemporary jargon, calling simply for the right to strike and the right to form trade unions, demands that liberals had no qualms about supporting. A proclamation of 1899 was limited to health and welfare issues, again issues which liberals could support. By autumn 1900 a workers' committee brought together the mutual aid funds of the capital; it had contact with what was left of Lenin's Union of Struggle, but refused to follow its directives.

Between 1898-1902, sixteen issues of the underground newspaper *Workers' Thought* appeared. It provided workers with a sounding board for their opinions, with no clear editorial line. It registered the diverse views of workers and recounted the reality of factory struggle through its network of worker correspondents. It called for militant strike action in the struggle with capitalism for improved economic conditions, but was critical of demands put on the movement by "repentant intellectuals". In spring 1899, with the support of Takhtarev who had become its editor, *Workers' Thought* produced a 'Supplement' supporting the ideas of the revisionist German Social Democrat Edward Bernstein and reproducing one of his articles on the possibility of reform within the capitalist system.[3] All these developments were of great concern to Lenin, workers were not only reverting to trade unionism, but slipping under liberal influence.

Lenin spent part of his exile destroying the ghosts of the past, writing *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* and *The Heritage We Renounce* aimed at destroying Populism once and for all. However, he also looked to the future, preparing for his return from exile and in this context his concern was the distinction between trade union and political consciousness; his translation of Sidney and Beatrice Webb's study of the *Theory and Practice of British Trade Unionism* enabled him to explore the very worst of trade union reformism. Mostly while in Siberia he avoided the squabbles of exile, but when the left-leaning liberal Yekaterina Kuskova wrote a so-called *Credo*, aimed at placing the labour struggle for economic improvements within a purely liberal framework of opposition to the Tsar, he contacted other Social Democrat exiles to draft a joint response. As Lenin would later put it in *What is to be done?* "following the tail" of the labour movement, rather than leading it, could lead to the workers drifting towards support for liberal reforms.

Once released from exile, Lenin found the situation was not quite as bad as he feared. The year 1899-1900 had been the heyday of Economism, after which it seemed to be on the decline. Leaflets circulating in Petersburg even in 1900 regularly took a revolutionary tone, demanding "Away with Autocracy" and "Long Live Political Freedom".[4] The following year saw

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3 *A. K. Wildman*. Making of a Workers' Revolution: Russian Social Democracy, 1891-1903. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967. pp. 113, 120-124.

4 Ibid. p. 84.

the Obukhov Defence of May 1901, when workers in St. Petersburg's Obukhov factory demanded the eight-hour day and fought with police when attempts were made to restore order. Lenin believed, as Loginov makes clear, that the influence of "workerphilia" and Economism was not a reflection of the strength of their ideas, but of the weak organisation of the revolutionary tendency and that was what he was determined to put right. Lenin's purpose in founding his underground newspaper *Iskra* was to unite these revolutionary tendencies and see off all talk of Economism.

Certainly, then, Lenin became Lenin with *Iskra* in 1901 and the project of seeing off Economism once and for all. But just as Loginov argues that Lenin becoming a revolutionary was a process rather than a single event, it could be argued that Lenin becoming Lenin was a process, not an event like the first use of the pseudonym "Lenin". That process could have begun as early as 1894, and was surely a central part of Lenin's intellectual development during his time in prison and Siberian exile. Indeed, uniting the revolutionary tendency of Social Democracy against liberal Economism was not Leninism, it was a task Lenin carried out in association with his future Menshevik opponents Martov and Alexander Potresov. Leninism as such would appear only once the Economists had been defeated and the issue became one of establishing the correct relationship between the Social Democratic Party and the labour movement, a relationship which ensured that the workers were led by class conscious representatives.

When the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party was held in London in 1903, the easy bit was defeating the Economists. What split the party into Bol'sheviks and Mensheviks was Lenin's insistence that class-consciousness could only come from political struggle beyond the labour movement, and for that to happen, the workers needed to be led. And not only did they have to be led, but, for that leadership to be successful, a specific form of discipline and hierarchical structure in the party organization was essential. The full ramifications of the disputes of 1903 were far from being in place in January 1897 as Lenin prepared for exile, but he first glimpsed elements of that future struggle when he learned of Takhtarev's proposals to move the centre of gravity of the labour movement towards legally permitted mutual aid funds and away from the underground social democratic League for the Emancipation of Labour.

A note on Russian names

Russians have three names, a given name, the name of their father or patronymic, and a family name. Lenin was Vladimir Ilych (son of Ilya) Ulyanov. In practice, the family name is used only rarely and on very formal occasions, the respectful form of address is name and patronymic. Loginov refers on occasion to Lenin's father as Ilya Nikolayevich, and at times he calls Plekhanov, the founder of Russian Marxism, Georgi Valentinovich. One of the many forms of endearment in the Russian language is to refer to someone by their patronymic alone; in her memoirs, Lenin's wife Nadezhda Krupskaya refers to Lenin as Ilych. These usages have not been explained in the text, since they are clear from the context in which they appear.

Geoffrey Swain
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WHAT COLOUR WERE LENIN'S EYES?

Physiognomy lost any semblance of credibility long ago. It is no coincidence that card sharks are said to have the most likeable faces. Yet it is to the face one always looks for first impressions. These may prove accurate, or turn out to be wholly deceptive. One can miss the genius secreted behind an exterior of rank ordinariness, or the mediocrity which guises as brilliance.

When Maxim Gorky met Lenin for the first time, he remarked: "I had expected Lenin to be different. There seemed something lacking in him. His hands tucked into his waistcoat in a cocky stance, the guttural way he rasped the letter R. On the whole – too simple, nothing of a '*leader*' about him at all."[5]

There can be no doubt that Lenin's appearance left such a first impression. Gleb Krzhizhanovsky wrote, "His short stature, in a regular worker's cap, would easily have been lost in the crowd in any factory quarter. An agreeable, swarthy face with a touch of the Asiatic to it – that is about the sum of what there is to say about his outward aspect. With equal ease, Vladimir Ilyich, dressed as he was in a simple rural coat, could have merged with any throng of Volga peasants – there was something in his appearance that seemed to have stemmed directly from these lower classes, as if one of them from birth."[6]

Interesting, then, that many years later, Boris Pasternak, on a wholly separate thread, expressed a similar idea to Krzhizhanovsky's: "The genius is nothing other than the rarest and greatest representative of the ordinary rank and file of the age, its immortal expression. The genius is closer to the average person, more akin to him, than to the many varieties of exceptional people. The genius is the *quantitative extreme of a mankind which is qualitatively homogeneous*."[7]

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5 Vospominaniya o Vladimire Ilyiche Lenine: Five volumes. Moscow, 1969. Vol. 2. p. 238.

6 Ibid, p. 10.

7 Literaturnoye obozreniye. 1978. No 4. p. 105.

Perhaps this is the perspective from which to approach an analysis of such a complex historical figure. However, one need only recall that the old Bol'shevik academic Krzhizhanovsky was not only an ardent supporter of Lenin, but also a close friend, to recognise the precariousness of this starting position: those who did not embrace the revolution, and hence Lenin, will view his appearance completely differently.

One such person was Alexander Ivanovich Kuprin. On 26th December 1918, he, along with the journalist O. L. Leonidov, had met with Lenin; in February 1921, by now living as an émigré in Paris, he published his study *Instant Photography*.

Lenin, he wrote, "is short in stature, square-shouldered and lean. There is nothing unpleasant, pugnacious or deep-thinking about his appearance. He has high cheekbones and his eyes are slanted... The dome of his skull is broad and elongated, but not at all as exaggerated as it appears in photographs... The remaining wisps of hair on his temples, as well as his beard and whiskers, bear witness to the red-headed firebrand he was in youth. His hands are large and very unsightly...

I was continually drawn to his eyes... naturally narrow, Lenin additionally tends to screw up his eyes, likely an attempt to conceal his short-sightedness, and this coupled with the rapid glances he makes occasionally suggest a squint, and perhaps an air of cunning. But it was rather their colour that struck me most...

Last summer in the Paris zoological gardens, observing the golden-red eyes of the lemurs, I exclaimed to myself: finally, I've found the colour of Lenin's eyes! The sole difference is that lemurs' pupils are large and restless, while Lenin's are piercing dots from which blue sparks fly."[8]

Of course, it is not that Lenin was not a "red-headed firebrand" in youth, but that he became to Kuprin a symbolic figure, the personification of that hated "red distemper" and as such, to the writer, even Lenin's eyes took on an apparently "golden-red" hue.

Krzhizhanovsky, on the other hand, wrote, "As soon as one looks into Vladimir Ilyich's eyes, into those extraordinary, piercing, deep brown eyes, full of force and vigour, one already senses that the person before you is far from ordinary. Most portraits of Vladimir Ilyich fail to

8 Quoted in: *D. Volkogonov.* Lenin. Politichesky Portret: Two books. Moscow, 1994. Book 1. pp. 29-30.

convey the impression of distinctive giftedness that quickly supplants the first impression garnered from his outward appearance..."[9]

A. V. Lunacharsky left his own sketch: "His face was especially splendid when serious, somewhat roused, perhaps a little angry. It was then that his eyes, under that heavy brow, would sparkle with a remarkable intellect and intensity of thought. What could be more splendid than eyes which communicate intensity of thought! And with that, his whole face took on an air of extraordinary strength."[10]

The Samara barrister Grigory Klements offers this portrait in 1924: "He was a young man, short in stature, but sturdily built, with a fresh, ruddy face upon which the moustache and beard – reddish in colour – barely showed through, and gently wavy red hair on his head. He looked no older than 23. One was struck by the large head with heavy white brow. His small eyes seemed permanently screwed up, his look serious, thoughtful and cautious. A rather ironic, restrained smile would play across his thin lips..."[11]

Judging by the photographs of Vladimir Ulyanov that survive from 1891, Klements' portrait is an accurate one. It is also interesting to recall the accounts given by those for whom Lenin was an unknown.

On one occasion in 1904, Lunacharsky, who had only recently become acquainted with Lenin, visited the studio of the renowned sculptor Naum Aronson.

Lunacharsky recounts, "Lenin removed his coat and in his usual lively manner went round the studio and curiously, but without comment, examined the plaster casts, marbles and bronzes... Aronson took me to one side:

'Who is that?', he whispered in my ear...

'A friend of mine...'

Aronson nodded his bushy head:

'He has a remarkable appearance.'

'He has?' I asked with surprise, as I had been disappointed that Lenin, who I had long considered a great man, seemed to me too much like your average ... canny *muzhik*.

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9 Vospominaniya o Vladimire Ilyiche Lenine: Vol. 2. pp 10-11.

10 Lenin vsegda s nami. Vospominaniya sovetskikh i zarubezhnykh pisatelei. Moscow, 1969, p. 19.

11 Kommuna. Samara. 1924. 24th April.

'He has a remarkable head,' Aronson told me, looking at me excitedly.

'Couldn't you persuade him to pose for me? I'd only do a small medallion. He'd make a very fine Socrates, for instance.'

'I don't think he'll agree to it,' I said.

Nonetheless, I relayed all this to Lenin, including his apparent resemblance to Socrates. Lenin literally roared with laughter, burying his face in his hands."[12] Aronson's wonderful marble bust of Lenin decorated the Central Lenin Museum in Moscow for many years.

During one meeting with the young Bol'shevik Ivan Popov, later a writer and playwright, Lenin used the expression "physical strength of intellect" when speaking about Georgi Plekhanov. Popov asked: "What is that, Vladimir Ilyich, the physical strength of intellect? I don't understand." Lenin replied, "Well, one can immediately recognise and distinguish the physical strength of an individual. An individual enters the room, you look at them, and you see that they are strong physically... Such is Plekhanov's intellect. You only need look at him to recognise he has the most powerful mind, one which prevails against everything, capable of weighing up everything at once, cutting to the heart of the matter – there is nothing one can conceal from him. And one has the sense that it exists objectively, like a physical force."[13] Lenin produced just such an impression on those around him.

To this we may add another quite authoritative and 'impartial' testimony: the German professor Otfrid Foerster, who could count many eminent figures among his patients through the years, met Vladimir Ilyich in the 1920s. He recounted, "Everyone who hadn't yet become engaged in Lenin's great undertaking fell under the magical spell of his formidable personality upon meeting him... I had occasion myself to experience the strength of his spirit.

I now see him before me as if in life, with his stocky frame, his elastic movements, his magnificent skull, like the dome of a mighty building; from his eyes, which in one moment roved calmly in open glances, the next narrowing, as if to better take the world in his sights, the constant flow of his intellect sparkled forth.

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12 *A. V. Lunacharsky.* Vospominaniya i vpechatleniya. Moscow, 1968. pp. 84-85.

13 Lenin vsegda s nami. pp. 94-95.

His facial expressions were marked by their fabulous liveliness, each feature betraying the constant intensity of his mental processes and his profound internal tension."[14]

Today we know an incomparable amount more about Lenin than did his contemporaries. 55 volumes of his collected works have been published, as well as 40 volumes of the Lenin Collection, 14 volumes of *Decrees of the Soviet Government*, 12 volumes of the *Biographical Chronicle* and hundreds of memoirs. In all this published material, around 30,000 documents associated with Lenin have emerged. Nonetheless, until recently, approximately 6,500 such documents have remained in the archives. Of these, 3,000 are official documents merely signed by Lenin. Around 2,000 are so called "marginalia" - notes scribbled on books, newspapers, other letters and so on. However, there are around 1,000 letters, memoranda and resolutions of real substance. An entire volume of the most fascinating documents relating to Lenin – over 400 previously considered 'top secret' – has recently been made available.

However, the remarkable thing is this: the more literature appears, the more confused the issues surrounding the analysis of Lenin's life and activities become. New myths appear to replace the old. The difficulty is not so much in the 'mystery' of Lenin as a figure, as much as it is in the previously mentioned over-politicisation of his image.

After the revolution of 1917, portraits of Lenin replaced icons of the Virgin Mary with child and images of the tsar and his heir in the "red corners" of peasant huts. His image, independent of the real-life man, became a kind of symbol of the "new faith", of the battle of 'poor' against 'rich', the struggle for justice. For millions, it became an object of near religious veneration.

As a result, any serious act of state in the Soviet Union, or any political leader, was regarded as legitimate only with Lenin's 'blessing'. And in this table of ranks, each leader is either a "devoted disciple" or a "glorious successor" of his cause. This is, in fact, why searching for the roots of modern problems in Lenin's past deeds is at the very least unfair, since it has now become a wholly separate narrative: it is akin to blaming Christ for the Crusades and the bonfires of the Inquisition since in both cases the name and word of God is evoked.

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14 Pravda. 1925. 21st January.

As Krzhizhanovsky reflected, "When over the course of human history individuals appear who, like pillars of fire, illuminate the road of life for others, and when we call such individuals geniuses, we often to fail in our attempts to explain the genius of these people."[15]

This book's intention is not to offer an explanation, but to present some material for consideration, a few details of his biography hitherto unknown to the reader, to apply some additional touches to Lenin's portrait.

So what colour *were* Lenin's eyes? Were they really a "fiery-red"?

Objective testimony does exist: in 1895, gendarmerie officials composed a verbose portrait of the leader of the "League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class", Vladimir Ulyanov: "Height – 2 *arshins*, 5½ *vershoks* [166.7 cm – *author*], medium build, of amiable appearance, blond, straight hair on his head and eyebrows, reddish moustache and beard, *brown eyes*, average-sized, round head, average-sized, high forehead, average nose, round face, regular features, ordinary mouth, round chin, average-sized ears."[16]

15 Vospominaniya o Vladimire Ilyiche Lenine. Vol. 2. pp. 9-10.

16 Krasny Arkhiv. 1934. No. 1 (62). p 139.

PART ONE – ORIGINS

AMONG THE ROOTS OF THE FAMILY TREE

The Biographical Chronicle of V. I. Lenin begins with the following entry:

"10th (22nd) April

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (Ulyanov) is born.

Vladimir Ilyich's father – Ilya Nikolayevich Ulyanov, a school inspector at the time of Vladimir's birth, later Director of Public Schools of Simbirsk Province. He came from a lower middle class family in Astrakhan. His own father had previously been a serf.

Lenin's mother – Maria Alexandrovna, the daughter of A. D. Blank, a doctor."

It is curious that Lenin himself knew so few details of his family tree. In his family, as in the families of other such non-gentrified ranks, it was not done to go digging into one's genealogical heritage; it was only after Lenin's death that interest in such issues began to grow, namely among his sisters, who carried out the research. In completing the thorough questionnaire issued for the 1922 party census[17], to the question of his paternal grandfather's occupation, Lenin answered honestly: "I don't know."[18]

Three generations of Lenin's ancestors were certainly serfs. His great-grandfather, Nikita Grigoryevich Ulyanin, born in 1711, and his eldest son, Vasily Nikitich Ulyanin, born in 1733, lived in the village of Androsovo in Nizhny Novgorod Province.

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17 The party census, conducted in spring 1922, aimed to purge the party of so-called "unreliable" elements. Social background, participation in the Revolution and ideological literacy were ascertained.

18 *V. I. Lenin.* Polnoye sobraniye sochineny. Vol. 44. p. 150.

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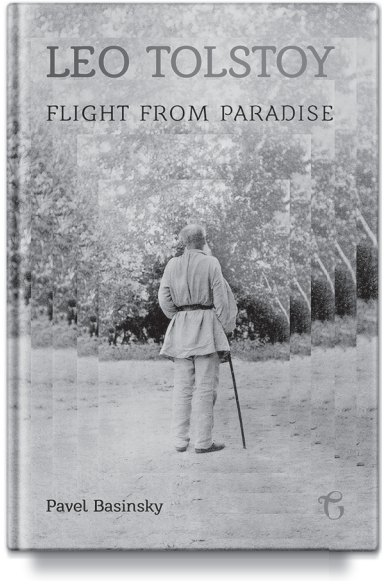
Leo Tolstoy – Flight from Paradise

by Pavel Basinsky



Over a hundred years ago, something truly outrageous occurred at Yasnaya Polyana. Count Leo Tolstoy, a famous author aged eighty-two at the time, took off, destination unknown. Since then, the circumstances surrounding the writer's whereabouts during his final days and his eventual death have given rise to many myths and legends. In this book, popular Russian writer and reporter Pavel Basinsky delves into the archives and presents his interpretation of the situation prior to Leo Tolstoy's mysterious disappearance. Basinsky follows Leo Tolstoy throughout his life, right up to his final moments. Reconstructing the story from historical documents, he creates a visionary account of the events that led to the Tolstoys' family drama.

Flight from Paradise will be of particular interest to international researchers studying Leo Tolstoy's life and works, and is highly recommended to a broader audience worldwide.

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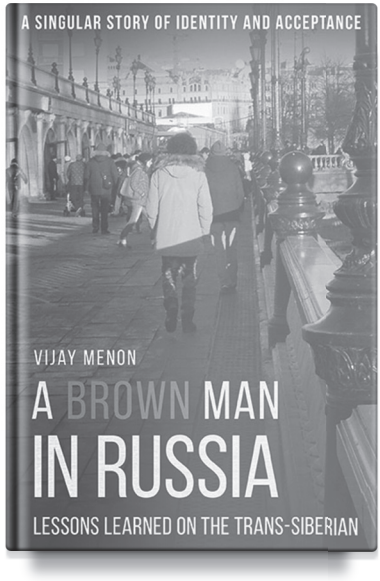
A Brown Man in Russia
Lessons Learned on the Trans-Siberian
by Vijay Menon



A Brown Man in Russia describes the fantastical travels of a young, colored American traveler as he backpacks across Russia in the middle of winter via the Trans-Siberian. The book is a hybrid between the curmudgeonly travelogues of Paul Theroux and the philosophical works of Robert Pirsig. Styled in the vein of Hofstadter, the author lays out a series of absurd, but true stories followed by a deeper rumination on what they mean and why they matter. Each chapter presents a vivid anecdote from the perspective of the fumbling traveler and concludes with a deeper lesson to be gleaned. For those who recognize the discordant nature of our world in a time ripe for demagoguery and for those who want to make it better, the book is an all too welcome antidote. It explores the current global climate of despair over differences and outputs a very different message – one of hope and shared understanding. At times surreal, at times inappropriate, at times hilarious, and at times deeply human, A Brown Man in Russia is a reminder to those who feel marginalized, hopeless, or endlessly divided that harmony is achievable even in the most unlikely of places.

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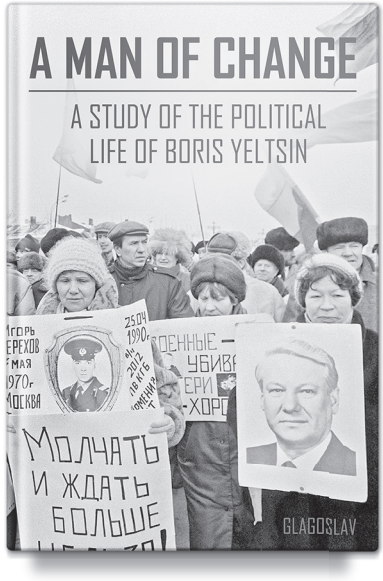
A Man of Change –
A study of the political life of Boris Yeltsin



A Man of Change is a gift from the Foundation of the First President of the Russian Federation B.N. Yeltsin otherwise known as The Yeltsin Fund, produced in cooperation with Glagoslav Publications and distributed with the aim to preserve the knowledge and memory of Russia's first President.

Boris Yeltsin will be remembered as the fierce, daring political leader who fought for democratic ideals of his nation during an unprecedented crisis when the Soviet empire had already fallen apart and new emerging nations had not yet firmly established themselves in the region. Russia took over from the previously mighty union of nations, but the country had to be rebuilt and its leadership needed to be reaffirmed.

During the years when others were abandoning the sinking ship, Boris Yeltsin showed a remarkable strength of character and took it upon himself to salvage the nation despite unfavorable odds. Yeltsin created a stronghold for the new Russian governance, and

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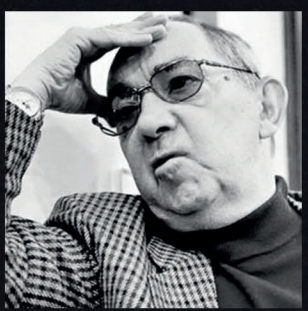

Vladlen Loginov is one of Russia's most prominent historians and screenwriters and is chiefly known for his work on Lenin.

Having graduated from the V. P. Potemkin Moscow Municipal Pedagogical Institute in 1950, Loginov served in the army before beginning work as a research associate in the Central Party Archive, where he remained for 30 years. Later, he took a job in the Party's Department of the History of Marxism-Leninism. From the early 1980s, Loginov worked as a professor at the Party's Institute of Social Studies.

Today, Vladlen Loginov is the director of the Centre for Historical Research, Professor of National and World History at the Russian Academy of Education, and author of over 400 academic works on the 20th century history of Russia.

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