JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

GLIMPSES OF WORLD HISTORY

BEING FURTHER LETTERS TO HIS DAUGHTER, WRITTEN IN PRISON, AND CONTAINING A RAMBLING ACCOUNT OF HISTORY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

WITH 50 MAPS BY
J.F. HORRABIN

PENGUIN BOOKS

against it. They waited and watched. But the landlords of the large estates, fearing that their property would be confiscated, divided it up into small holdings and gave it to dummy owners who would keep it on their behalf. They also transferred much of their property to foreigners. In this way they tried to save their lands. The peasantry did not like this at all, and they asked the government to stop all land sales by a decree. The government hesitated; what could it do? It did not want to irritate either party. Then the peasants began to take action themselves. As early as April some of them arrested their landlords and seized and divided the estates. The soldiers back from the front (who were, of course, peasants) played the leading part in this. The movement developed till the lands were seized on a mass scale. By June even the Siberian steppes had been affected. In Siberia there were no big landlords, so the peasantry took possession of Church and monastery lands.

It is interesting to note that this confiscation of the big estates took place entirely on the initiative of the peasants, and many months before the Bolshevik revolution. Lenin was in favour of the immediate transfer of the land to the peasants in an organized way. He was wholly against haphazard anarchist seizures. Thus, when the Bolsheviks came to power later on they found a Russia of peasant proprietors.

Exactly a month after Lenin's arrival another prominent exile came back to Petrograd. This was Trotsky, who had returned from New York after being detained on the way by the British. Trotsky was not one of the old Bolsheviks, nor was he now a Menshevik. But soon he lined up on the side of Lenin, and he took his place as the leading figure of the Petrograd Soviet. He was a great orator, a fine writer, and very much of an electric battery, full of energy, and he was of the greatest help to Lenin's party. I must give you rather a long extract from his autobiography—*My Life* the book is called—in which he describes the meetings he addressed in a building called the Modern Circus. This is not only a fine piece of writing, but it also brings a vivid and pulsating picture before our eyes of those strange revolutionary days of 1917 in Petrograd.

> The air, intense with breathing and waiting, fairly exploded with shouts and with the passionate yells peculiar to the Modern Circus. Above and around me was press of elbows, chests, and heads. I spoke from out of a warm cavern of human bodies; whenever I stretched out my hands I would touch someone, and a grateful movement in response would give me to understand that I was not to worry about it, not to break off my

speech but to keep on. No speaker, no matter how exhausted, could resist the electric tension of that impassioned human throng. They wanted to know, to understand, to find their way. At times it seemed as if I felt, with my lips, the stern inquisitiveness of this crowd that had become merged into a single whole. Then all arguments and words thought out in advance would break and recede under the imperative pressure of sympathy, and other words, other arguments utterly unexpected by the orator but needed by these people, would emerge in full array from my subconsciousness. On such occasions I felt as if I was listening to the speaker from the outside, trying to keep pace with his ideas, afraid that, like a somnambulist he might fall off the edge of the roof at the sound of my conscious reasoning.

Such was the Modern Circus. It had its own contours, fiery, tender and frenzied. The infants were peacefully sucking the breasts from which approving or threatening shouts were coming. The whole crowd was like that, like infants clinging with their dry lips to the nipples of the revolution. But this infant matured quickly.

So the ever-changing drama of revolution went on in Petrograd and in other cities and villages of Russia. The infant matured and grew big. Everywhere, as a result of the terrible strain of the war, economic collapse was becoming evident. And yet, profiteers went on making their war profits!

The Bolshevik strength and influence went on increasing in the factories and Soviets. Alarmed by this, Kerensky decided to suppress them. At first there was a great campaign of slander against Lenin, who was described as a German agent sent to bring trouble to Russia. Had he not come across Germany from Switzerland with the connivance of the German authorities? Lenin became terribly unpopular with the middle classes, who considered him a traitor. Kerensky issued a warrant for Lenin's arrest, not as a revolutionary, but as a pro-German traitor. Lenin himself was keen on facing a trial to disprove this charge; his colleagues would not agree to this, and forced him to go into hiding. Trotsky was also arrested, but later released on the insistence of the Petrograd Soviet. Many other Bolsheviks were arrested; their newspapers were suppressed; workers, who were supposed to favour them, were disarmed. The attitude of these workers had been growing more and more aggressive and threatening towards the Provisional Government, and huge demonstrations had been held repeatedly against it.

There was an interlude when counter-revolution raised its head. An

> dastards and traitors will not escape the bullet. This I solemnly promise in the presence of the entire Red Army.

And he kept his word.

Another army order issued by Trotsky in October 1919 is interesting as it shows how the Bolsheviks always tried to distinguish between the people and the capitalist governments, and never took up a purely national attitude. "But even today," the order runs,

> when we are engaged in a bitter fight with Yudenich, the hireling of England, I demand that you never forget that there are two Englands. Besides the England of profits, of violence, bribery and blood-thirstiness, there is the England of labour, of spiritual power, of high ideals of international solidarity. It is the base and dishonest England of the Stock Exchange manipulators that is fighting us. The England of labour and the people is with us.

Something of the doggedness with which the Red Army was made to fight can be seen in the decision to defend Petrograd when it was on the point of falling to Yudenich. The decree of the Council of Defence was: "To defend Petrograd to the last ounce of blood, to refuse to yield a foot, and to carry the struggle into the streets of the city".

Maxim Gorki, the great Russian writer, tells us that Lenin once said of Trotsky: "Well, show me another man who would be able, within a year, to organize an almost exemplary army and moreover to win the respect of the military specialists. We have such a man. We have everything. And miracles are still going to happen."

This Red Army grew by leaps and bounds. In December 1917, soon after the Bolsheviks had seized power, the strength of the army was 435,000. After Brest-Litovsk much of this must have melted away and had to be built up afresh. By the middle of 1919 the strength was 1,500,000. A year later it had risen to the prodigious total of 5,300,000.

By the end of 1919 the Soviets had definitely got the better of their opponents in the civil war. For another year, however, the war continued, and there were many anxious moments. In 1920 the new State of Poland (freshly formed after the German defeat) fell out with Russia, and there was war between them. All these wars were practically over by the end of 1920, and Russia at last had some peace.

Meanwhile internal difficulties had grown. War and blockade and disease and famine had reduced the country to a miserable condition.

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THE PIATILETKA, OR RUSSIA'S FIVE YEAR PLAN

July 9, 1933

Lenin, so long as he lived, was the unchallenged leader of Soviet Russia. To his final decision every one bowed; when there were conflicts, his word was law and brought together the warring sections in the Communist Party. Trouble came inevitably after his death when rival groups and rival forces fought for mastery. To the outside world, and to a lesser extent in Russia also, Trotsky was the outstanding personality among the Bolsheviks after Lenin. It was Trotsky who had taken a leading part in the October Revolution, and it was he who, faced by stupendous difficulties, created the Red Army which triumphed in the Civil War and against foreign intervention. And yet, Trotsky was a newcomer to the Bolshevik Party, and the old Bolsheviks, Lenin apart, neither liked him nor trusted him greatly. One of these old Bolsheviks, Stalin, had become general secretary of the Communist Party, and as such he was in control of the dominant and most powerful organization in Russia. Between Trotsky and Stalin there was no love lost. They hated each other, and they were wholly unlike each other. Trotsky was a brilliant writer and orator, and had also proved himself a great organizer and man of action. He had a keen and flashing intellect, evolving theories of revolution, and hitting out at his opponents with words that stung like whips and scorpions. Stalin seemed to be a commonplace man beside him, silent, unimposing, far from brilliant. And yet he was also a great organizer, a great and heroic fighter, and a man of iron will. Indeed, he has come to be known as "the man of steel". While Trotsky was admired, it was Stalin who inspired confidence. He came from the masses himself, being a Georgian of peasant origin. There was no room in the Communist Party for both these towering personalities.

The conflict between Stalin and Trotsky was a personal one, but it was really something more than that. Each of them represented a different policy, a different method of developing the revolution. Trotsky had, many years before the Revolution, worked out a theory of "Permanent Revolution". According to this, it was not possible for a single country, however advantageously situated it might be, to establish full socialism.

Real socialism would only come after a world revolution, as only then could the peasantry be effectively socialized. Socialism was the next higher stage in economic development after capitalism. As capitalism became international, it broke down, as we see happening in the greater part of the world today. Only socialism could work this international structure to advantage, hence the inevitability of socialism. That was the Marxist theory. But if an attempt were made to work socialism in a single country—that is, nationally and not internationally—this would mean a going back to a lower economic stage. Internationalism was the necessary foundation for all progress, including socialist progress, and to go back from it was neither possible nor desirable. According to Trotsky, therefore, it was not economically possible to build up socialism in a separate country, even in the Soviet Union, big as it was. There was so much for which the Soviets had to rely on the industrial countries of Western Europe. It was like the co-operation of the city and the village or rural areas; the industrial West was the city, and Russia was largely rural. Politically, also, Trotsky was of opinion that a separate socialist country could not survive for long in a capitalist environment. The two were—and we have seen how true this is—wholly incompatible with each other. Either the capitalist countries would crush the socialist country, or there would be social revolutions in the capitalist countries and socialism would be established everywhere. For some time, of course, or some years, the two might exist side by side in an unstable equilibrium.

To a large extent this seems to have been the view of all the Bolshevik leaders before and after the Revolution. They waited impatiently for world revolution, or at any rate revolutions in some European countries. For many months there was thunder in the air of Europe, but the storm passed off without bursting. Russia settled down to NEP and a more or less humdrum life. Trotsky thereupon raised the cry of alarm, and pointed out that the Revolution was in danger unless a more aggressive policy aiming at world revolution were followed. This challenge resulted in a mighty duel between Trotsky and Stalin, a conflict which shook the Communist Party for some years. The conflict resulted in the complete victory of Stalin, chiefly because he was the master of the Party machine. Trotsky and his supporters were treated as enemies of the Revolution and driven out from the Party. Trotsky was at first sent to Siberia, and then exiled outside the Union.

The immediate conflict between Stalin and Trotsky had taken place on Stalin's proposal to adopt an aggressive agrarian policy to win over the peasant to socialism. This was an attempt to build up socialism in

Russia, apart from what happened in other countries, and Trotsky rejected it and stuck to his theory of "permanent revolution", without which, he said, the peasantry could not be fully socialized. As a matter of fact Stalin adopted many of Trotsky's suggestions, but he did so in his own way, not in Trotsky's. Referring to this, Trotsky has written in his autobiography: "In politics, however, it is not merely *what*, but *how* and *who* that decides."

So the great struggle between the two giants ended and Trotsky was pushed off the stage on which he had played such a brave and brilliant part. He had to leave the Soviet Union, of which he had been one of the principal architects. Nearly all the capitalist countries were afraid of this dynamic personality, and would not admit him. England refused him admittance, as did most other European countries. At last he found temporary refuge in Turkey in the little island of Prinkipo, off Istanbul. He devoted himself to writing, and produced a remarkable *History of the Russian Revolution*. His hatred of Stalin possessed him still, and he continued to criticize and attack him in biting language. A regular Trotskyist party grew up in some parts of the world, and this ranged itself against the Soviet Government and the official communism of the Comintern.

Having disposed of Trotsky, Stalin devoted himself to his new agrarian policy with extraordinary courage. He had to face a difficult situation. There was distress and unemployment among the intellectuals and there had even been strikes of workers. He taxed the *kulaks*, or the rich peasants, heavily, and then devoted this money to building up rural collective farms—that is, big co-operative farms in which large numbers of farmers worked together and shared the profits. The *kulaks* and richer peasants resented this policy and became very angry with the Soviet Government. They were afraid that their cattle and farm materials would be pooled with those of their poorer neighbours, and because of this fear they actually destroyed their livestock. There was such a great destruction of livestock that in the following year there was an acute shortage of foodstuffs, meat, and dairy produce.

This was an unexpected blow to Stalin, but he clung on grimly to his programme. Indeed, he developed it and made it into a mighty plan, covering the whole Union, for both agriculture and industry. The peasant was to be brought near to industry by means of enormous model State farms and collective farms, and the whole country was to be industrialized by the erection of huge factories, hydro-electric power works, the working of mines, and the like; and side by side with this, a host of other activities relating to education, science, co-operative buying and selling,