

## BROTHERS IN LENIN

BY NIKOLAI BUKHARIN

[We print the following extracts from an alleged letter by Bukharin, one of the most brilliant and courageous theorists of the Communist Party, to an intimate friend in the opposite revolutionary camp, with some doubt as to its authenticity — at least in the entire form as published. But *se non è vero è bene trovato*; and there is good reason to infer the genuineness of the passages quoted. The entire 'letter,' of which approximately three-fifths is given here, has been printed privately at Berlin, as a booklet under the title *Ibo ia bolshevik* — 'Since I am a Bolshevik.']

KREMLIN, MOSCOW (*date illegible*)

MY DEAREST EXILE!

You are quite incorrigible. Neither the threat of execution, nor a long exile in Siberia where we had put you regardless of your title of 'Member of the Moscow Soviet,' nor yet your final exile into 'the rotten West' and your homesickness for dear old Moscow, have made you sensible. On one hand, I admire your consistency, but I see clearly now that there is not room for both of us under the Russian sun. . . .

And yet — do you remember how often we have had heart-to-heart talks together, although I knew that you were a counter-revolutionary and that my frankness toward you was a breach of Party discipline? Yet I could not help taking refuge occasionally in your little corner of another world, with the oil lamp before the sacred images and yourself poring over the mystical abracadabra of Vladimir Soloviev and Jacob Boehme, whom no one else will

give a glance in these days. Do you remember how I used to tell you anecdotes of Soviet and Communist Party real life — incidents that unfortunately were no fairy tales, though they invariably sounded like the poorest sort of jokes? . . . I often feared lest Cheka agents might come for you with a search warrant, as they often did, and find one of the 'leaders of the world revolution' at your apartment. Telephones would ring crazily all over Moscow trying to locate me so as to drag me to another night session of the Central Executive Committee; and Ilich [Lenin] would curse in true boatswain style when they reported to him that I was 'nowhere to be found.'

Obviously, these talking-spells were a mere human weakness of mine. But does not your Dostoevskii say, through the lips of his drunken Marmeladov: 'But, sir, everyone must be able to go away somewhere; because there are times when one must go away, at any cost, no matter where!'

Yes — we all are like Marmeladov, drunk, some with wine, others with illusions, and others with blood. So now that a mutual friend of ours is going abroad to recuperate after a few years of Soviet paradise, I long 'to go away' to you; and I beg him to take this letter — probably the last I shall ever write you — and to put it in your own hands. It must be done cautiously, so as to avoid the ubiquitous eye of Felix Dzerzhinskii, who, by the way, is now suffering from the deep Communist hypochondria that afflicts all of us since Lenin died.

How glad I am that you are not here! Nasty times: we are compelled to throw fat bones now and then to the insatiable 'lower strata' of the Party, who have been forced to fast severely since we started the 'New Economic Policy.' We cannot do otherwise; for if we did, all of this Communist scum would turn against the Communist system we have erected, and we should be thrown out, instead of fighting on for the world's social revolution — which, by the way, is coming confoundedly slow! We have 'done' in fine shape those simpletons — or greedy gulls — who trusted to our earnest professions of tolerating trade and speculation. Now we are tossing them to the Communist helots to be devoured, although we originally encouraged these speculators in order to exploit, and not to kill them. With one hand we beckon to foreign capital, with the other we strangle domestic capital; because, if we did otherwise, we should ourselves be strangled.

Nasty times! If Lenin himself, whose slow embalming has been such a bother to us and such a profitable enterprise for the embalmers, should rise again, I am sure he would only curse like a pirate, in the style of a ten-year-old boy from the League of Communist Youth, but would be helpless to remedy the situation.

Yet — who knows? Perhaps he would be the only man able to find a way out of this devilish cobweb. For it is all wrong for you to call him a third-rate prophet. He was of course a home-made theorist, no question about that; and his Marxism, to-day called Leninism, was a poor mixture of Blanqui, Bakunin, Pugachov, and something borrowed from Fedjka, Dostoevskii's desperado. I grant you also that his philosophical processes were something to be laughed at, and that his book *Materialism and Empirism* is a masterpiece only of obtuse efforts to

think abstractly. It is also true that I frequently used to expose his ignorance of economics to the great terror of the Party Synod, and that only our bought and hired professors can write differently of him.

But on the other hand, have I not always insisted on other things, which even Zinoviev confirms — Zinoviev, with whom I refuse to shake hands in spite of all my Party discipline, and never will, even though they should threaten me with an 'indefinite leave of absence'?

Did I not tell you that in the summer of 1917, when many of us Bolsheviki were clamoring that we should surrender to Kerenskii, get arrested, publicly disclaim the story of our German espionage, and preach Bolshevik truths from the defendants' bench, it was Lenin who stopped us, called us fools, and predicted that power would be in our hands inside two or three months?

Have I not told you that when everyone, even Trotskii, insisted that the Brest-Litovsk Treaty was impossible, it was Lenin alone who forced us to sign 'the obscene peace,' predicting the downfall of Wilhelm and a revolution in Germany?

Remember! When all of us stuck, like a flock of sheep, to our 'war-time Communism,' and were for summarily executing any peasant who refused to give up all his grain, it was Lenin who saw that every sunrise was bringing us one day nearer our destruction, and compelled us to change our economic course.

Who, if not he, dared to proclaim the New Economic Policy, to the utter terror of us pure Communists, and thereby saved the Party?

Who but Lenin, having gotten all the use he could out of our Social-Revolutionary and Menshevik opponents, knocked them on the heads, and discussed measures even with us Bolshe-

wiki only after he had already made his decisions? 'You don't want to?' he used to thunder. 'Good, go to the Devil. I'm tired of you, and I'm going away to the country.' This 'I'm going away to the country' was our worst bugbear — worse than Denikin. And so we submitted in silence, — in spite of theory, Party programme, and the rest, — and the results were splendid!

Do you remember how you and I once met in a pitch-dark street? — those were days when even the Central Executive Committee held its sessions by the light of a single sixteen-candle-power lamp. Denikin was at Tula, only a hundred miles from Moscow. Our grips were packed and our pockets bulged with forged passports and traveling-funds. I, a great lover of birds, thought seriously of choosing Argentina as my future home, because of its abundance of parrots. Lenin — and he alone! — was perfectly calm, and said — or rather prophesied: 'The situation is —' he used words I cannot repeat. 'It has never been worse. But we have always been lucky, and we shall be lucky this time.'

And when the infernal ring of the blockade tightened so that we thought of capitulating and asking for mercy, who but Lenin kept saying that the blockade would soon burst asunder and in a short time he would be discussing the situation peacefully with European diplomats? His optimistic prophecies were without end, and from them we drew our strength and our faith, even when foolish facts knocked over all our plans twenty times a day.

Oh, yes! . . . If only Lenin were with us! I have always said that the most terrible and the most counter-revolutionary thing in the world — more counter-revolutionary even than yourself — was Death. Unless a remedy is found for this pug-nosed Menshevik Death, there is little sense even in

bringing about a World Union of Socialist Republics. Immortality is the chief — although unwritten — point of our programme. I tell this to you — I, the author of it!

And so, we are in a wilderness, and without a leader. Judge for yourself —

Stalin — zero. He sees the salvation in one million more — how many will that make? — one million more dead bodies.

Kamenev — another zero. He teaches us how to sit comfortably between two chairs.

Krupskaia — a zero and a dunce, whom we have permitted, for the satisfaction of our 'lower Party strata,' to advertise her Herostratic exploits such as burning libraries and suppressing schools, supposedly after the teaching of Ilich. For, you know, anything can be credited to the dead who 'have no shame.'

Zinoviev — permit me not to speak of Zinoviev.

Rykov — also a zero. He has even lost his gift of witticism, his only gift whether drunk or sober; which loss is much to the liking of Lunacharskii, whom he used to call Luna-Park-skii, and also something funnier and worse: or instead of calling him *narkom* ['people's commissioner' in Bolshevik jargon] he called him *narkomik*, or 'people's clownlet.'

Dzerzhinskii is a zero in everything except the Cheka or GPU, and so he converts anything that we entrust to him — railways and what not — into departments of the GPU.

I myself? — my dear friend, I, too, am a zero if you take me off the platform or away from the writing-desk and put me to real work. I know it, and therefore never accept any 'business posts' — the more so as I happen to have Spartan tastes and no liking for embezzlement.

I know, you are waiting for a word

about Trotskii. But he too has always been a zero politically, and will remain so to the end of his days — even if destiny were to make him dictator.

In the first place, Trotskii, who did not join our Party until the eve of his triumph, when it became the only organization that promised a career, never had anything Communistic in him; that is why Lenin was right again in disliking and distrusting him.

You say he created the Red Army? Enough of that talk. First of all, if you want to know the truth, we have no army; unless by army you mean parades, demonstrations against world imperialism, and punitive expeditions at home. A prominent German general, whom we asked to take charge of our military instruction, came to Moscow, looked things over, waved his hand, and said something that was not flattering and is not fit to repeat on paper. And did not Trotskii himself say once that his Red Army was like a radish, red on the outside, but white inside? It is not without significance, in my opinion, that Sergei Sergeevich Kamenev, the actual military head of the army and an old-time officer, has never joined the Communist Party, and keeps twisting his magnificent moustache with a silence that seems to hide a great deal.

There is no greater coward than Trotskii. That is why he so loves loud, boastful — and always cold and artificial — talk and demagogic slogans. By the way, he sometimes gets lost in these, as when, for instance, he, to our great and general confusion, cited in one of his army and navy orders the words of Jesus to Judas Iscariot — forgetting their source and meaning: 'That thou doest, do quickly.'

Recall our famous debate on trade-unions, which threatened to cause a Party schism and to put Trotskii in the place of Lenin. Indeed that was the

real issue at stake, hidden under a heap of theoretical rubbish. Trotskii actually commanded a majority in that Party Congress, because the Party had not been sufficiently vigilant and the wrong local representatives had been 'elected'; but at the last moment he was frightened by the prospect of power and responsibility, and shamefully took to cover.

Or remember his latest exploit, his book, which was a breach of Party discipline. It cost his supporters dearly, for at the critical moment he deserted them. He might without difficulty have sat in the place of the dictator, for the 'lower Party strata,' as well as the army, were for him. But he could not conquer his cowardice, and took 'a leave of absence, for his health,' in the distant Caucasus at the order of 'the triumvirate,' there to spend his time shooting crows, in imitation of Nicholas II — he always imitates someone. Later he came back to Moscow like an obedient lamb and resumed his belligerent talk again, threatening war on Europe and what not — in imitation, I believe, of Paul I.

He is as cold as an icicle, and only naïve people mistake his false pathos and his boldness for 'the sacred fire of revolution.' Do you remember how this talking machine stood on the stage of the Great Theatre and received the ovations of the huge audience: nose in the air and the face of a mummy — and not a nod of his head! Not a sign of response!

Compare this with Ilich, who used to say so simply, like a child: 'My dear friends, this and this is my opinion. I know I'm right. You don't agree? So much the worse for you, because I shall act as I think best, and not as you wish. Good-bye.'

I hardly think it worth my while to speak of the fourth-rate ones — Krasin, Krestinskii, who failed to control

his fellows in his trade-delegation, and so on. Because then, I'm afraid, I might have to pollute the paper with the name of Steklov, the editorial writer.

They are nonentities; but as to our so-called 'young guards,' our League of Communist Youth, our 'Lenin pioneers,' our 'converts' from other political Parties, and our imported foreign sweethearts, — for we have a great plenty of them, — they are not merely zeros, they are negative quantities, and such serious drawbacks to the cause that we puzzle helplessly what to do with them.

And as to thieving! *Donnerwetter*, how they do steal!

Here we come to a devilish puzzle. Why is it that persons who only a short while ago sacrificed their all to their convictions, and lived like your church ascetics, have suddenly conceived a taste for sumptuous homes — not apartments, not even twenty-room apartments, but residences of the most luxurious sort, champagne, gay female companions, private trains, 'thirty-five thousand servants' merely to run their errands? And their wives will have nothing less than diamonds the size of hazelnuts, — 'a crown jewel, if possible' is the way they put it, — and ten gowns a month from Paris, or at least — with a sour mien — from the great Lamanova. Why is it that so-and-so, after years of a half-starved revolutionary life with his homely but loyal Communist helpmate, when he would readily have given the Party everything he owned, even a million ruble legacy if he had received it, must now move into a palatial residence on the Povarskaia, divorce his Communist wife, 'sign up at the Commissariat' with a seventeen-year-old beauty overloaded with paint and perfumery, and trade briskly in his calling-cards: 'Dear Nicolas, please do this and that for X.,

who has always been a friend of the Revolution'; or: 'Dear Felix, please let so-and-so out of prison. I know he is perfectly trustworthy.' The whole country is being governed by means of these calling-cards, which are bought at fabulous prices such as only the rarest autographs command.

The Party stinks to Heaven!

Have I not heard voices raised in defense of 'self-support,' as they call it, as no sin? Do they not make a shrewd distinction between 'bribery' as something received in return for favors that are contrary to law, and this 'self-support' extorted from the new bourgeoisie for things that are perfectly lawful, like a gift! . . . O Marxian dialectics! That is where they have led us. *Vox populi* justly calls us a gang of cheats — myself included, although you know that money means nothing to me, that I do not care for comfort, that revolution is all in all for me, that I would gladly drown my own dear wife if the Revolution required it.

Then why do these Communists steal? It seems an inexorable law! I know your explanation, which you summed up in a word to the tribunal that tried you. 'Where there is dirt, there will be vermin,' you said. But you must not, you dare not, base such a generalization on a few special cases! Revolution is not dirt, it is sacred fire! Only give me a great, honest Revolutionary-Communist! 'There is no such thing,' you tell me. You lie — you should be shot for it!

'Russia is perishing!' you tell me — you, a Slavophil, you a believer in 'light from the East' and in the divine mission of our thankless fatherland. Of course, you are romantic. And so are we — only we write our creed, not with pen and ink, but with fire and sword, upon the scrolls of inexorable reality. Once, I remember, you drove me out of your room because, after a hot argu-

ment, I admitted to you that we have no 'Soviet Government,' no 'dictatorship of the proletariat,' no trust in our Party as a whole — that all we have is a small group of leaders of the coming world revolution. You then compared me to the 'devils' of Dostoevskii — at which I, losing patience, retorted that unfortunately we could not execute Dostoevskii. Yes, I repeat even now, and with pleasure, that we certainly would have executed Dostoevskii, and that we should have dealt no more gently with Tolstoi, had he broken loose in our days, as he did under the Tsar, with that pamphlet of his '*I Cannot Remain Silent.*' But now I shall assert something even worse than that.

Russia? What is Russia?

To you the word symbolizes a high mystery. To you Russia is a text engraved on the throne of your God, who is a cosmic monarch with no use for constitutional government, 'Six letters of fire and blood — six steps to the divine glory.' To me, however, it is but a geographical conception that we have succeeded in abolishing without the least harm to the Revolution — a word that we have relegated to the musty archives of the past where it belongs. To me modern Russia — that is, the S. S. R. — is the accidental bivouac of the Central Committee of the Third International.

Do you remember your own letter to

Lenin, which you wrote in 1921, like a people's deputy, in the naïve belief that Lenin, as formerly our own beloved Tsar, was surrounded by bad advisers who would not let him see the truth? We all laughed heartily when we read your kind-hearted stupidities, with which you tried to explain to us what Russia really is and what her destiny will be. Yes, at that time you believed in Lenin. That Byzantine-Moscovite romanticism of yours was the same as that nursed by all Russians throughout their stupid history.

No, my dear youngster, Lenin and all of us — the leaders — understand the Russian reality as well as you do. And as to knowing it — why, our Felix has put two Chekists behind each citizen! We certainly know Holy Russia's people, at least, better than you do.

You may be proud. Iliich read your letter to the last syllable, and do you want to know what he said? 'He must be a good man. A great pity he is not with us.' Then he coughed, cleared his throat, and added: 'And a clever man — very clever — but a fool!'

How can you fail to understand that Russia, — which to you is an end in itself, — interests us only in so far as it gives us means and materials for the world revolution? What we need for that is a more or less secure roof over our heads, and then money — all the money we can get.

# IN THE HOUSE OF THE MUFTI<sup>1</sup>

## A VISIT TO A MACEDONIAN HAREM

BY THEODOR BERKES

[THEODOR BERKES is the veteran Balkan correspondent of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, who has lately been on a special journey through Macedonia.]

IN order to shield their women from chance glances, the Turks, when they still ruled Macedonia, forbade the construction of windows on the street side of houses, and so the Albanian and Turkish *mahalas* (city quarters), unless they were part of the *charchija*, or business section, still have a dead and dreary outward aspect. The narrow streets are long rows of towering clay walls, and only here and there in this gray waste does the gable of one of the houses become visible.

The lady who was my traveling companion was also disillusioned by the colorless clay of the Orient, and her curious, penetrating woman's eyes wanted to pierce the wall behind which the Turkish custom concealed the interesting trousers-wearing members of her own sex — secluded far from the glance of every man, and even from the glance of other women. But though these walls were only clay, they did not part, and the little wooden doors that opened quickly here and there, and just as quickly closed, by no means satisfied these curious eyes. What was there to do?

Our Albanian friend in upper Tonus detected the discontent of my com-

<sup>1</sup>From *Berliner Tageblatt* (Liberal daily), January 11

panion and, gallant squire of dames that he was, fell to thinking how he might satisfy her wish. Presently came the son-in-law of the mufti himself, wearing the *keche*, or white Albanian cap of felt, and laying his hand to his mouth, to his eyes, and to his forehead as a greeting, he said in Albanian, '*Mir se vjen!*' (welcome). We replied, like men of the world, '*Tu ngat jeta!*' and then, with a '*Lutem Zotni!*' we all went to the house of the mufti.

Not even the mufti's house, however, would admit us behind its clay walls immediately, and when at length we stood before them we had still to wait some time on the other side of the street. A little Turkish boy was first sent into the house to bear word of our coming, and also of course to bear word that men were in the party. When the youngster at length came back we went in through the street door, to find ourselves in a little courtyard, but still surrounded by clay walls, — on which tobacco leaves were hung to dry, — forming part of a little house into which, at right angles, led a flight of wooden steps. The mufti's son-in-law told us that this was the *selamlık*, the men's house, and then he went on into it through a little door. Here was a surprise for all of us. Now we had stepped into a magnificent big garden in which little streams of water bubbled and gurgled, while a lusty swarm of bees was humming about the hives. After the grayness of the clay walls this