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# Lenin

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public  
education*



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CHAPTER FROM I. S. SMIRNOV'S  
"LENIN AND SOVIET CULTURE"  
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## Lenin and the New System of Public Education

The tsarist system left a grim legacy for the Soviet state in the sphere of public education. In 1916 70 per cent of Russia's population (excluding children under nine) were illiterate. Only 7,800,000 pupils, or less than 50 per cent of all children of school age, attended elementary and secondary schools. In 1914 Russia had only 1,790 schools providing general secondary education with an enrolment of 823,000, and 91 higher educational establishments with an enrolment of 112,000. Parish schools, fully subordinated to the Church, made up 40 per cent of all elementary schools. In all the other educational establishments the Church was placed in charge of the students' moral upbringing. Pre-revolutionary Russia allocated less than five per cent of the state budget to public education.

Feudal survivals such as the estate system and

the class character of the school permeated the entire system of public education, and the school system in particular. The anti-popular character of this system was reflected in the fact that children of workers and peasants were compelled to break off their education at elementary school level. Secondary and higher education with its high tuition fees remained the privilege of the propertied classes and the nobility.

The policy of national oppression pursued by the tsarist government affected the nationalities inhabiting the borderlands of the Russian Empire where the number of schools was many times less than in Central Russia. Teaching in languages other than Russian was either limited or prohibited altogether.

Taking into consideration the influence of the Church on the school, separate education for boys and girls, the conventional bureaucratic method of drilling and cramming that prevailed in all the educational establishments, and the dependent position of the school teacher, one gets a clear picture of the main evils inherent in the system of public education in pre-revolutionary Russia. When the bourgeois Provisional Government came to power it made no significant changes in this system.

In his pre-revolutionary articles Lenin wrote that the cultural backwardness of the working people was due to Russia's system of bourgeois and landowner government. He showed that only a socialist revolution would give all the people access to education. Lenin worked out a concrete programme of the Bolsheviks for public education. It was published in its initial form in June 1917, when the Bolsheviks were preparing for the

October Revolution, in the booklet *Materials Relating to the Revision of the Party Programme*, edited by Lenin who also contributed a foreword. The programme demanded the right for all people to receive education in their native language, the separation of the school from the Church and the secularization of education, free compulsory general and polytechnical education for all children of both sexes, free provision of textbooks, food and clothes by the state, the involvement of a large number of intellectuals in the sphere of public education and their employment.

In tsarist Russia education was the sphere of culture in which the propertied classes were most strongly entrenched and the bourgeois and landowner government had the strongest possible influence. That is why in all his pre-revolutionary works on culture Lenin gave great prominence to the prospects of a revolutionary reorganization of public education. The fact that on the eve of the October Revolution the Bolsheviks had a practical programme of changes to be made in public education greatly helped the Soviet state to do away with the old state apparatus which controlled the system of education in Russia and to develop that system in the interests of the people and socialist reorganization of the country.

## ***Reforming the School System***

One of the tasks of the victorious proletariat was to break up the old state apparatus of public education and to create a new, Soviet apparatus capable of organizing a system of education in a

country reduced to economic ruin by the world war.

Neither the Ministry of Public Education, which Lenin justly called the "Ministry of Public Miseducation," and its peripheral system, nor the State Committee for Public Education set up by the Provisional Government, could serve the Soviet state with its high aims of cultural development.

As an organ of the bourgeois state, the Ministry had to be abolished while the Committee, which was made up of representatives of public organizations including teachers' organizations, could be retained providing it adopted the Soviet principles of education. A new Soviet body had to be established to guide the development of public education and all the basic spheres of culture and education in the country. Lenin's first proposal on the formation of a workers' and peasants' government, submitted to the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets on October 26, 1917, included the founding of a Commissariat for Education.

Lenin appointed Anatoly Lunacharsky, a highly educated Marxist with an exceptional knowledge of art and literature, to the post of People's Commissar for Education. Lunacharsky did much for the organization of public education and the development of cultural work, for the implementation of Lenin's instructions and uniting of broad sections of the intelligentsia around the Soviet Government especially during the early period of consolidation.

Cultural development in the Soviet state faced immense difficulties. Lenin pointed to at least three principal causes: tsarism had played

havoc with public education over a period of many years; there were not sufficient intellectuals to satisfy the requirements of the new life and cope with the growing creative initiative of the people; and during the first months of Soviet power the greater part of the country's cultural forces, its pre-revolutionary intellectuals, including teachers, opposed the revolution and engaged actively in anti-Soviet sabotage aimed at undermining the dictatorship of the proletariat. "The majority of the intellectuals of the old Russia," said Lenin, "were downright opponents of the Soviet regime, and there was no doubt that it would be not at all easy to overcome the difficulties this involved."

Bourgeois intellectuals from the bourgeois and "socialist" newspapers responded to the proletarian revolution and the first measures of the Soviet Government by an active struggle against the new system; workers in education, including the staff of the Ministry of Education and a considerable number of teachers, refused to recognize or cooperate with the new regime and joined forces with the saboteurs.

When Lunacharsky, the People's Commissar for Education, arrived at the Ministry to take charge, he found but a small group of junior officials who were willing to work under Soviet rule. The senior members of the staff and officials of middle rank refused to cooperate.

Not in the least perturbed by the situation, Lunacharsky fully mobilized the clerical staff and began to develop a Soviet educational system.

Lunacharsky's first publication of November 1, 1917 *On Public Education* addressed to all citizens of Russia, declared that the Ministry should

carry on its handling of educational matters in the interim. But active sabotage by the Ministry's officials, which had the support of counter-revolutionary teachers' leaders showed the impossibility of using even a part of this apparatus.

The above-mentioned document informed the people that the State Commission for Public Education, under its chairman the People's Commissar for Education, would take charge of all educational work.

A decree *On the Foundation of a State Commission for Education* signed by Lenin and Lunacharsky, was printed in the principal newspapers on November 12, 1917. All the functions formerly performed by the Ministry of Public Education were turned over to the State Commission. It was stressed that the Commission was expecting a widespread initiative on the part of the local working people. "The Commission will seek the cooperation of teachers and the public in all its work," read the Decree.

But the Commission, as envisioned by the Decree never met nor functioned. The large-scale subversive activities carried on by hostile bourgeois intellectuals, made it clear that the Soviet Government would have to develop its educational system by overcoming their resistance. The centres of this anti-Soviet resistance were the State Committee for Public Education and the All-Russia Teachers' Union which were under the influence of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks.

The State Committee for Public Education, founded under the Ministry of Public Education soon after the 1917 February Revolution on the initiative of the all-Russia Teachers' Council,

comprised representatives from different public organizations and included some of the country's best-known teachers. However, the prevalence of Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries in its ranks predetermined its conciliatory line, which essentially attempted to justify the anti-popular policy pursued by the Provisional Government. Reforms drafted by the Committee more closely resembled declarations which furthermore were never put into effect. The Committee lost no time in showing its real nature by struggling against Soviet power.

Lunacharsky's address *On Public Education* of November 1, 1917 stated the State Commission's sincere intentions of cooperating with the above-mentioned Committee on condition that it was reconstructed on a democratic basis and reorganized its work on the Soviet principles of education. This was confirmed once again by the Decree *On the Foundation of a State Commission for Education* signed by Lenin. Sincere intellectuals who were eager to place their knowledge and abilities at the people's service were given opportunities for wide-scale work in the sphere of public education. But the Committee's influential members gave a hostile reception to the Soviet Government's proposal.

The Decree on the foundation of the State Commission was adopted on November 9. On November 10 the Committee Bureau decided to cease functioning until it "received instructions from the Committee." Members of the Committee used the following week for anti-Soviet intrigues. It made agreements with counter-revolutionary organizations and obtained information on the scale and nature of the sabotage activities by

bourgeois intellectuals. A special meeting of the Committee held on November 13 adopted a resolution slandering the Bolsheviks and calling upon its members to sever all relations with Soviet official bodies.

It became evident that the Committee was trying to establish itself as a centre of sabotage in the field of education. Lenin responded by signing a decree on November 20 dissolving the Committee because, owing to its composition and political attitude, it would be incapable of meeting the demands of the time, and moreover was working against the new government.

Ever since the victory of the Revolution the workers' and peasants' government had worked hard to create a Soviet apparatus for educational work. The People's Commissariat for Education was one of the first Soviet bodies to begin functioning when the struggle against the counter-revolutionary forces was still at its height in Petrograd and its environs.

It is remarkable that in those tense October days Lenin found time to inform Lunacharsky of his views on organizing the work of the newly created People's Commissariat for Education and gave instructions on actual steps to be taken. Lunacharsky later recalled that in this first talk between the head of the Soviet Government and the People's Commissar for Education Lenin's instructions dealt chiefly with the *necessity of adopting a serious attitude to educational affairs and subordinating all of the Commissariat's activities to the interests of the people's development.*

An analysis of the practical work carried out by the People's Commissariat for Education in the period under review and its directives shows

that the Commissariat focused its attention on the tasks set by Lenin and accomplished them in the main. Lenin's instructions on the democratization of culture and the subordination of the Commissariat's entire range of work to the interests of the people's education were fulfilled to the letter. The Commissariat took a serious attitude to problems of education completely in accordance with state policy. Certain slips and errors observed in the work of its bodies during the first few months of Soviet power should be attributed to the rush in which work was done at that time, lack of experience on the part of its leaders in organizing work on such an extensive scale, and certain undeveloped problems of Soviet pedagogics.

Two months after the October Revolution the Commissariat had already taken shape as a new, Soviet state centre for the guidance of educational work. On December 24, 1917 on Lunacharsky's orders, it was organized into seventeen departments. The rather bulky structure of the Commissariat was accounted for by the nature of its work which included the eradication of illiteracy and the development of adult education, the management of school and higher school activities, pre-school education and the training of teachers, management of the country's scientific institutions and the development of art and publishing.

Lenin's idea of breaking up the old, bourgeois state machine found expression in the sphere of education not only in dissolving the apparatus of the Ministry of Public Education and the State Committee for Education, but in abolishing educational district boards of guardians and local



educational bodies. This was done on orders from the People's Commissariat for Education. The direction of school work was handed over to the local Soviets which drew broad democratic strata into the building of the new school system.

Under the new laws all schools were separated from the Church. On December 11, 1917 a decree issued by the Council of People's Commissars and signed by Lenin transferred to the state all educational establishments formerly under the jurisdiction of the Church.

The decree of January 21, 1918 *On the Separation of the Church from the State and the School from the Church* had a decisive effect on the introduction of a scientific world outlook into school programmes.

The timeliness and vital importance of the decree for the development of Soviet culture is shown by a letter written to Lenin by a school-girl from the remote Siberian town of Krasnoyarsk. It was received by the Secretariat of the Council of People's Commissars on December 17, 1917.

"Dear Comrade Lenin,

I am writing to you from Krasnoyarsk where I am a 3rd form pupil of the Regional Gymnasium for Girls. You are a Bolshevik and I am, too. I ask you to please send instructions to our gymnasium that religion should no longer be a compulsory subject. Our school is a bourgeois gymnasium that is why it has retained this subject in its curriculum. I would be very happy if you would write a few lines to me personally.

My address: Bolshevik Zhenya Zamoshchina, c/o Bolshevik Zamoshchin, 68, Blagoveshchen-

skaya Street, Krasnoyarsk, or Zh. Zamoshchina, Form III, Gymnasium.

In anticipation of your reply, Zhenya Zamoshchina."

One has only to imagine the complex political atmosphere that prevailed throughout the country in December 1917 and in that far-off Siberian town to see that this naive schoolgirl's letter reflected the new elements that were clamouring for life. Zhenya Zamoshchina was not interested in petty problems. She was concerned with serious political issues. It required no little courage to come out openly against the Church and bourgeois system inside the local gymnasium. Without being fully aware of the significance of her action the young "Bolshevik" Zhenya Zamoshchina expressed the sentiments of Russia's progressive youth. In all this one can see the influence of Zhenya's Bolshevik parents and her revolutionary environment.

The Soviet Government, strong in its links with the masses, answering the demands of the people, carried out Lenin's decree on the separation of the Church from the state, and the school from the Church.

All these measures consolidated a great democratic achievement of the Soviet system, the secularization of the school, which Lenin regarded as of primary importance in revolutionizing education and the country's whole cultural life.

The Bolsheviks, in keeping with their programme to democratize the school and make it serve the needs of the communist reorganization of society, put forward a comprehensive plan for the development of a new school system. With state power in the hands of the proletariat the

essential prerequisite for the revolutionary reorganization of education had been created.

This problem was discussed at the Third Congress of Soviets held in January 1918. On January 16, at a meeting of the Cultural and Educational Section of the Congress Lunacharsky spoke about the state of education and its problems. "The contemplated radical reform of the school system in all its aspects must be carried out according to a definite plan with utmost decision and resolution."

Lunacharsky stated the case for a uniform labour school which would provide physical, moral and aesthetic education. He touched on the question of the schoolteacher, so acute at that period, and of the higher school. The meeting discussed adult education and the development of literacy and the level of culture in the country. "It is of utmost importance," Lunacharsky said, "not only to achieve universal literacy, which in itself is an exceedingly complicated task even when elementary knowledge of reading and writing is to be imparted, but to go much farther than that."

Lenin instructed the senior staff of the People's Commissariat for Education that the development of the new school required a thoughtful and serious approach and warned them against hasty and rash action. Like the reorganization of the entire cultural life of the country, the school reform was an integral part of the process of democratizing the social and state system and the development of socialist construction. The rebuilding of public education along socialist lines demanded action on a truly revolutionary scale and a relentless battle against the counter-revolu-

tionary activities of bourgeois intellectuals. Great flexibility and skill were required to combine these activities with a protective attitude towards the country's cultural heritage so that everything of value to the new system was used and everything that was obsolete, repudiated.

In the first post-revolutionary months most educational establishments, private as well as those under the direction of different departments, were handed over to the Commissariat for Education. This process began with a decision taken by the Commissariat, and was then confirmed by a special decree of the Council of People's Commissars of May 30, 1918, signed by Lenin and published on June 5 in the government newspaper *Izvestia*. The centralization of school management was called for by the urgent need to "reorganize the educational process, renewing and consolidating it on the basis of progressive teaching and socialism."

This was both a beneficial and vitally necessary process, which would create a single state centre, the People's Commissariat for Education, for the management of the majority of the country's educational establishments. Unfortunately, there were cases when some of the Soviet Government's directives were not fully understood.

One such case was that of the decision of the Chief Commissar for military educational establishments of the Soviet Republic. Completely ignoring the situation of the young Soviet state, he decided to reorganize the country's military academies, among them the former Academy of the General Staff, into civil education establishments "with only a slight hint of military education." Neglecting the tasks of the country's de-

fence and the vital needs of the newly formed Red Army, this reform would have been highly detrimental to the Soviet state.

On March 10, 1918, Lenin received a report from the Supreme Military Council of the Republic protesting against the measure. He immediately dispatched instructions to the Chief Commissar for military educational establishments to withhold his decision of March 9, 1918 (No. 2735), addressed to the Head of the Nikolayev Military Academy, as the elimination of the Academy or its reorganization into a higher school of a non-military type ran counter to the intentions of the government and the demands of the period. The Commissar was to submit a draft for the reorganization of the Nikolayev Academy to the Council of People's Commissars and report on the execution of these orders to Lenin.

The archives of the Council of People's Commissars have preserved the minutes of an inter-departmental meeting held on May 14, 1918 to discuss the question of transferring the country's educational establishments to the People's Commissariat for Education.

It stated that 95.8 per cent of all general schools came under the jurisdiction of the Commissariat, as well as 21 per cent of the specialized educational establishments, mainly at secondary-school level. The Commissariat was not satisfied with this but demanded, despite the opposition of the departments, the handing over of all educational establishments to the People's Commissariat for Education.

The Government warned the Commissariat against adopting a bureaucratic approach to this

problem. A significant correction was made in the draft of the decree during its initial discussion by the Council of People's Commissars. Into Item I, which defined the type of schools to be transferred to the Commissariat for Education, Lenin introduced a proviso to the effect that specialized educational establishments (concerned with technology) for adults were not to be transferred. The decree was signed by Lenin on May 30, 1918.

Workers in vocational training expressed their dissatisfaction with the decision to transfer all educational establishments to the Commissariat for Education. A special meeting on vocational training held in June 1918 with representatives chiefly from the senior staffs of vocational schools appointed a delegation to petition Lenin for a review of the decree of June 5, 1918 on the issue. Lenin suggested that the delegates prepare a detailed report on the subject, stating all the pros and cons connected with the subordination of vocational training to the Commissariat for Education and said that amendments may be made if their arguments proved to be convincing.

On hearing the report of the delegation on their talk with Lenin, the meeting adopted a resolution expressing opposition to the immediate implementation of the decree of June 5. The meeting considered that without being against the idea of uniting the direction of education under one head the immediate transfer of the vocational schools attached to the Commissariats for Railways, Trade, Industry and Agriculture would undermine the ability of these schools to cope with the vocational training tasks set by the aforementioned Commissariats and would prejudice the technical, material and other support,

such as the provision of conditions for practical training, that had been and would continue to be given to these schools by the relevant Commissariats in their own interests.

The meeting declared that the huge tasks of developing and reorganizing general education which faced the People's Commissariat for Education were sufficient in themselves to take up all its time and efforts.

On the whole the concentration of educational establishments managed by different departments under the authority of the Commissariat for Education had a favourable effect on the reorganization of education and the working out of common principles for the Soviet school system and science of teaching.

One of the chief tasks of the new school system was to do away with the obsolete methods and foundations of the pre-revolutionary school with its bureaucratic system of drilling, cramming and class distinctions.

A special decree of the Commissariat for Education of December 23, 1917, revised the system of Russian orthography (this problem had been raised unsuccessfully in tsarist Russia by progressive-minded teachers and scholars). This was an important step towards eliminating unnecessary complexities in the study of the Russian language.

A decree of February 1918 abolished all school uniforms and badges which had emphasized class distinctions amongst the pupils.

In May 1918 the Commissariat for Education abolished the formerly compulsory study of Latin and thus put an end to one of the strongest pillars of the old scholastic method of teaching.

Another decree of the same month introduced co-education, which gave pupils the opportunity of seeing equality of men and women in practice getting accustomed to this principle and developing the necessary qualities of cooperation and comradeship between the sexes.

These first measures abolishing hangovers from the old school system and clearing the way for the building of the new school, were destined to play an important role in the history of the Soviet school.

A clear picture of the positive programme of Soviet power in the sphere of public education can be gathered from the following three documents of that period: the appeal of the People's Commissar for Education to all citizens of Russia *On Public Education*, drawn up by Lunacharsky three days after the October Revolution and published by the principal newspapers on November 1, 1917; the decision *On the Reform of the Secondary School*, adopted a month after the establishment of Soviet power; and the *Regulations on the Organization of Public Education in the Russian Socialist Soviet Republic*, adopted by the Council of People's Commissars on June 18 signed by Lenin and published on June 26, 1918.

The appeal *On Public Education* declared the struggle against illiteracy and ignorance, one of the hangovers of the old system of exploitation, a primary task in the educational work to be carried on by the new, Soviet system. Its goal was to achieve universal literacy and introduce free universal compulsory education within the shortest possible time. A ramified network of schools complying with all the requirements of modern

teaching, and the training of a sufficient number of teachers to educate the extensive population of Russia were indispensable for the fulfilment of this task. The Soviet state as a truly democratic power was not going to stop at the elementary level of public education but was planning to organize a single secular school system which would give the rising generation access to higher education.

Simultaneously, adult education would be started on a mass-scale as well as all types of cultural and educational work. Public education can produce good results if based on the experience gained by the people in social construction.

The Appeal emphasized that Soviet power would achieve these high aims with the aid of the country's teachers who should try to cooperate with Soviet society. At the same time the government would take measures to improve the material welfare of teachers. In this document, written by Lunacharsky under the impact of his talk with Lenin at the Smolny, was embodied Lenin's idea of democratizing culture and giving all the people access to education.

Lunacharsky's decision *On the Reform of the Secondary School* introduced a democratic system in schools. All vital decisions affecting the school lay with pedagogical councils made up of teachers and representatives of parents, senior pupils and local Soviets. It also obliged the school to inform all pupils of both sexes who have reached the age of eighteen of their civil and political rights, including their right to take part in elections to the municipal and state organizations.

## *The Struggle to Win Over the Teachers*

The reorganization of the school and the realization of Soviet principles of education and upbringing could be achieved providing the vast mass of teachers, who formed the backbone of the school, understood the historical significance of the victory of the proletariat, discarded their outdated petty-bourgeois and bourgeois views on education and, with a newly developed socialist outlook, began actively participating in the building of a new society.

Lenin was well aware that the reorganization of the school along Soviet lines was closely tied up with the task of winning the teachers over to the Soviet regime. That is why he concentrated his efforts on counteracting the influence of the counter-revolutionary leadership of the All-Russia Teachers' Union.

Urgent measures were necessary to cut short the counter-revolutionary conspiracies and anti-Soviet sabotage among teachers.

Lenin regarded propaganda as the most important means of influencing teachers. Through it the meaning of the revolution would be explained and proof would be furnished that only under Soviet system could the school become a genuinely public institution capable of implementing the best ideas of the great teachers of all times and peoples. In several of his speeches Lenin gave convincing proof that teachers had no place among the ranks of bourgeois intellectuals who were sabotaging the Soviet regime. Simultaneous-

ly the Soviet Government took steps to improve the material welfare of teachers.

The counter-revolutionary leadership of the All-Russia Teachers' Union working in close contact with anti-Soviet parties joined the struggle against the proletarian dictatorship and launched counter-revolutionary propaganda. In the first post-revolutionary weeks the Union gained influence over urban teachers and first of all those of Moscow and Petrograd. They went so far in their campaign of sabotage as to persecute and boycott teachers who had already accepted the October Revolution and were actively contributing towards the development of a Soviet school.

With patience and determination the People's Commissariat for Education called upon the strikers and saboteurs to stop their dishonorable activities and apply their efforts to the common cause of Soviet construction.

In their work the Party and the Soviet Government were greatly helped by the Union of Internationalist Teachers founded in Petrograd in November 1917 with the approval of Lenin, whose chief aim was to rally the teachers around the Soviet regime and to foster in them the spirit of communism.

Lenin did much to encourage the activities of the Union and on June 5, 1918, delivered a speech at its First Congress. Only a brief summary of this speech has survived, but it gives a general idea of the range and kind of problems that Lenin discussed, all of which had a vital effect on the development of the Soviet science of teaching.

After greeting the Congress on behalf of the Soviet Government, Lenin remarked that "...the

teachers, who had at first been rather slow in making up their minds to work with the Soviet Government, were now growing more and more convinced that such collaboration was essential." The Soviet state's seven months' experience and its policy in the field of education showed the teachers more and more convincingly that only in close cooperation with the new, workers' and peasants' government, would they be able to develop their capabilities, achieve their ambitions and put into practice the best ideas of the leading exponents of the teaching profession. The adoption of the platform of socialism by teachers reflected the general change that was taking place among intellectuals. "Such cases of conversion from opposition to support of the Soviet Government," said Lenin, "were very numerous among other sections of society too."

Lenin observed that great difficulties arose from the fact that a considerable number of the old intellectuals were taking part in sabotage activities. Yet a favourable attitude towards the new system was already beginning to be felt among the teachers. This new attitude was only a beginning. The teachers had to be more bold in breaking away from the counter-revolutionary All-Russia Teachers' Union. "The process of fermentation among the broad mass of the teachers," said Lenin, "had only just begun, and no school-teacher who had the welfare of the people sincerely at heart could confine himself to the All-Russia Teachers' Union, but must confidently carry his propaganda among the masses." A break with the anti-popular elements in the All-Russia Teachers' Union and active contribution to the solution of the Republic's most urgent problems

were essential for the solution of such a vital question as whose side the schoolteachers would take. The only right way was the one shown by the Bolsheviks. "This road," wrote Lenin, "would lead to a joint struggle of the proletariat and the teachers for the victory of socialism." In the immense work of an unprecedented scale involved in socialist construction teachers were called upon to take part in the solution of problems that were unusually complex and extremely important, namely the raising of the people's level of culture, knowledge and consciousness. "The army of teachers must set themselves tremendous tasks in the educational sphere, and above all must form the main army of socialist education," wrote Lenin. Like the entire social life of the country, education and science had to be freed from bourgeois influence. This could only be achieved if the workers in culture and education in general, and the teachers in particular, were to link their work with the masses' struggle for the socialist reorganization of Russia.

In his speech at the Congress of Internationalist Teachers, Lenin advanced one of the basic premises of Marxist-Leninist pedagogical science: the teachers "must join forces with the entire body of embattled working people. The task of the new pedagogics was to link up teaching activities with the socialist organization of society."

The important demands of the Bolshevik programme in the field of education formulated by Lenin in the summer of 1918 were fully developed in the Party programme adopted in March 1919 at the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party. The linking of the teachers' activities to the task of socialist organization of society would

enable the major demands of the programme to be carried out: the school would become a weapon of the proletarian dictatorship "with the object of completely suppressing the resistance of the exploiters and of building the communist system."

Lenin's speech helped to speed up the process of rallying the teachers around the Soviet Government and brought them closer to the people. The most progressive teachers immediately responded to his programmatic speech. Eight hundred delegates to the Teachers' Congress held in Moscow from July 3 to 8, 1918, adopted a decision condemning the counter-revolutionary activities of the All-Russia Teachers' Union and calling upon all sincere teachers to "renounce the organization and join the ranks of the Union of Internationalist Teachers or new professional unions in order to work joyfully together hand in hand with the organs of the people's will and power to build the bright edifice of a uniform socialist labour school of the future."

The organs of the Party, the People's Commissariat for Education and the Union of Internationalist Teachers launched an extensive campaign to carry out Lenin's directive on the political education of teachers. Huge meetings, conferences and congresses of teachers in which state and party representatives called upon educational workers to cooperate closely with the people, were held all over the country.

A month after the Congress of Internationalist Teachers, the First All-Russia Congress of Teachers, convened by the People's Commissariat for Education, opened in Moscow (July 3-8, 1918). This was followed at the end of August by the

First All-Russia Congress on Education. Speaking at this Congress (August 28, 1918) Lenin developed the basic theses of Marxist pedagogics on the class character of the school and the Party character of education as an integral part of general culture, and on the role of the school in the social life of the Soviet state. He spoke of the importance of knowledge and culture in the people's struggle for socialism under the Soviet state. A record of his speech gives us an account of this remarkable address which is of basic importance in understanding Lenin's views on culture and the cultural revolution.

In the first part of his speech Lenin dwelt on the world political situation. He laid particular stress on the fact that world imperialism had launched a furious struggle against the Soviet republic because they saw it as a dangerous example of the struggle to build socialism. The socialist "experiment" of the peoples of Russia had spread far beyond its national framework and had taken on an international character.

Public education was of prime significance in the struggle for the victory of socialism in Russia and an essential part of that struggle.

The aims of public education in capitalist and socialist countries are diametrically opposed. The propertied classes use education in the selfish interests of their own class. The aim of the bourgeois school is to turn out presentable and efficient servant, or an obliging clerk. But does one have to know much to work as a servant? What worries the capitalists most of all is the danger of workers' becoming involved in politics. For support they utilize the theory of the school's independence of politics and class. "The

more cultured the bourgeois state," said Lenin, "the more subtly it lied when declaring that schools could stand above politics and serve society as a whole.

"In fact the schools were turned into nothing but an instrument of the class rule of the bourgeoisie. They were thoroughly imbued with the bourgeois caste spirit. Their purpose was to supply the capitalists with obedient lackeys and able workers."

Lenin said that the Bolsheviks and the Soviet state openly declared that "education divorced from life and politics is lies and hypocrisy." Contrary to the lies and hypocrisy of the anti-popular bourgeois state, the Soviet state tells the truth. As in the sphere of general politics the Soviet state openly and frankly declared itself the organ of the working majority which had launched an uncompromising struggle against the formerly dominant minority, so it applied the same principles in the sphere of education. "We say that our work in the sphere of education is part of the struggle for overthrowing the bourgeoisie," wrote Lenin. The task of the Soviet school was to educate citizens enjoying equal rights in a developing socialist society, working people capable of controlling all the means of production and administering the state.

At first the working people lacked the required knowledge for this kind of work. Moreover, many of them until recently misunderstood the importance of knowledge for the class struggle. However, the experience of the first post-revolutionary months opened the eyes of the workers and peasants. As they fought to consolidate the



gains of the revolution, they came up against sabotage on the part of the better educated representatives of the old, bourgeois culture, the bourgeois intellectuals. "They used their education," said Lenin, "to frustrate the work of socialist construction, and came out openly against the working people." In bourgeois society knowledge was the monopoly of the rich. As the old, capitalist world clashed with the new world of socialism the bourgeois intellectuals used the force of knowledge as the monopoly of the rich against the working people.

According to Lenin, one of the basic tasks of the cultural revolution is to deprive the bourgeoisie of this monopoly. This means that the working people, the workers and peasants, must master the problems of science and art, and culture as a whole, and create their own people's intelligentsia.

In their struggle against the sabotage of the bourgeois intellectuals the workers and peasants realized the advantages of knowledge, and this gain in itself was a tremendous advance in the people's cultural development.

"The working people," wrote Lenin, "are thirsting for knowledge because they need it to win. Nine out of ten of the working people have realized that knowledge is a weapon in their struggle for emancipation, that their failures are due to lack of education, and that now it is up to them really to give everyone access to education."

Never before had the teachers of Russia listened to such a detailed Marxist view of culture and the tasks of public education. Lenin's entire speech was like a summing up not only for the overwhelming majority of his listeners at the

Congress but for all the teachers of Soviet Russia: "All who really sympathize with the people, all the best teachers will come to our aid, and that is a sure pledge that the socialist cause will triumph."

Lenin's ideological influence and the struggle of the Bolshevik Party for the mass of teachers were wholly successful.

The majority of teachers took the people's side and joined the common cause of socialist construction, thus making amends for their anti-Soviet activities in the early post-revolutionary months. This change of attitude on the part of the teachers was greatly due to Lenin's policy of patient explanation and propaganda among those working in the educational field and his own speeches which enriched Russian pedagogical theories with the beneficial ideas of communism.

Teachers were among the first of the numerous sections of the intelligentsia to put themselves at the service of the victorious proletariat and place their fates in the hands of the socialist state. The significance of this fact goes far beyond the sphere of education not only because teachers were among the first of the intelligentsia to stop working against the Soviet regime but also because more than any other section of the intelligentsia they were bound up with the masses.

A valuable document, showing Lenin's concern for the schoolteacher, is his telegram to the Simbirsk Soviet concerning I. Y. Yakovlev, an honoured worker in public education. During the selection of the teaching staff for the Simbirsk schools Lenin asked the Chairman of the Simbirsk Soviet to inform him about the procedure for selecting the principals of the Chuvash men's and wo-

men's teachers' seminaries. He was particularly interested in the fate of Inspector Ivan Yakovlevich Yakovlev who had devoted 50 years of his life to the national development of the Chuvash people and had been persecuted under tsarism. He proposed that Yakovlev should not be removed from his life-long job.

On May 4, 1918, Lenin received a reply to the effect that Yakovlev had remained at his post of head of women's courses and seminary.

As more and more teachers were drawn into educational development the Soviet state was able to increase the scope of its reorganizational work in public education and the training of new teachers.

## *Democratizing Higher Education*

In Soviet Russia not only the elementary and secondary school was put on a democratic basis, but also the higher school. In pre-revolutionary Russia the actual and legal privileges of the propertied classes which gave them access to higher education greatly reduced the opportunities for the children of workers and peasants to get into higher educational institutions. Only an insignificant minority succeeded in getting into higher schools.

The Soviet Government put an end to this practice. During the first school year higher schools were made accessible to working people. At that

time the struggle against teachers' anti-Soviet activities along with the reorganization of elementary and secondary school and the transfer of schools to the People's Commissariat for Education took up a considerable part of the Commissariat's and the Council of People's Commissars' time and energy. Major attention was given to the reform of elementary and secondary education. In the spring of 1918, after success in solving important problems in the organization of schools, in the winning over of teachers to the Soviet school and strengthening the state apparatus in charge of public education, the Commissariat was ready to begin the reorganization of higher educational establishments.

In keeping with Lenin's policy of enlisting the services of specialists in socialist development, the People's Commissariat for Education decided to prepare and carry out the reform with the active participation of higher-school teachers. The draft of the reform was worked out in the midst of a keen ideological and political struggle. The most progressive specialists and revolutionary students boldly supported the Soviet plan for democratizing higher schools. Reactionary professors fought against it.

In July 1918 the Commissariat convened a conference on this issue which was attended by 400 higher-school teachers, employees and students from all over Russia. After a heated discussion the conference took several important decisions concerning the introduction of free tuition, the necessity of democratizing the student body and establishing faculties for the study of socialism, but was unable to reach unanimity on the drawing up of a draft reform. A Commission was elec-

ted to work out draft university regulations. They were completed during the week of July 15-23, 1918 and sent out to all local universities.

It became apparent, however, that unless urgent measures were taken to reorganize higher schools and first of all to make them more democratic, the development of public education and the training of specialists from the ranks of the people would suffer during the coming school year. It was impossible to wait for the final completion of the draft which was to be discussed at a meeting in September.

The Commissariat decided to set out in legal form a procedure and conditions for acceptance of students into higher schools that would make them accessible to all working people. In the meantime work on the draft regulations could continue.

M. N. Pokrovsky, Deputy Commissar for Education, then submitted to the Council of People's Commissars a draft decree "On the Rules of Admission to Higher Educational Establishments". Lenin regarded this as quite the proper procedure.

On August 2, 1918 the Council of People's Commissars approved the above-mentioned decree and on August 6 it was published over Lenin's signature in the principal newspapers.

The decree abolished all the official obstacles that had barred the working people from entering higher schools. There were no entrance examinations, secondary-school certificates were not required, tuition was free. All working people of both sexes were eligible for higher educational establishments. The decree gave warning that

anyone guilty of discrimination against admission of women would be brought before a Revolutionary Tribunal.

Soviet educationalists acknowledge the importance of secondary school certificates and entrance examinations which are today an indispensable part of the enrolment procedure. But at that time the demands of the old school hindered the process of putting education on a democratic basis. With the victory of socialist democracy and the consolidation of the Soviet state which gave the working people and their children the fullest access to education, higher education as well, new requirements were introduced.

At a meeting of the Council of People's Commissars to discuss the decree on the rules of admission to higher educational establishments, Lenin submitted a proposal which obliged the People's Commissariat for Education to take every step to prepare for the unqualified admittance of all working people who applied for entrance. "The Council of People's Commissars," the draft ran, "instructs the Commissariat for Education at once to draw up several decisions and measures so that in the event of the number of applicants to the higher educational institutions exceeding the usual number of places, special measures be taken to ensure a chance to study for all who so desire, and to ensure there be no actual or legal privileges for the propertied classes. Priority must certainly go to workers and poor peasants who are to be given grants on an extensive scale." Lenin's proposal was unanimously approved and published as a decision of the Council of People's Commissars together with the decree on the rules of admission to higher schools.

The decree *On the Rules of Admission to Higher Educational Establishments of the RSFSR* which was drawn up and adopted by the Council of People's Commissars with Lenin's most active participation laid the legal basis for the reform of the higher school.

A practical step towards making higher education more accessible to the people was the foundation of universities in Nizhny-Novgorod, Voronezh and Ivanovo-Voznesensk.

In August 1918 the first steps were made to organize the Moscow Mining Academy. A draft decree on the foundation of the Moscow Mining Academy was presented to the Government by Comrade N. M. Fedorovsky. Lenin, who was chairman of the meeting, showed great interest in the proposal, but made the point that such mining districts as those in the Urals and the South of Russia were insufficiently provided with higher mining schools and proposed setting up a commission consisting of representatives from the above-mentioned mining districts, the State Control and the People's Commissariat for Finance to decide whether the Mining Academy should be set up in Moscow or in some other region.

After a detailed discussion of the project the Commission reached the unanimous conclusion that the Mining Academy should be set up in Moscow, the representatives from the Urals and southern mining districts being also for it. Due to the fact that Moscow was simultaneously the centre of a mining district, the country's largest industrial centre and an important cultural centre which would provide the future Academy with sufficient teachers, it seemed the most suitable site for the Mining Academy.

Unfortunately, in 1918 the majority of the most progressive-minded young people were not able to avail themselves of the opportunities offered in the sphere of higher education: they went off to join the ranks of the Red Army to defend the socialist gains of their country in the Civil War that broke out that year.

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Among the cultural issues discussed by the Council of People's Commissars under Lenin's leadership, the problems of education were second only to those of the press. Among the financial questions discussed by the government between November 1917 and July 1918 particular attention was paid to the financing of education as a whole, and the different establishments under the Commissariat for Education, in particular.

The People's Commissariat for Education was among the first of the government bodies to submit its budget for 1918 to the Council of People's Commissars on March 2, 1918. This was not simply because it was particularly energetic in setting about its business, but because the cultural development of the people was one of the basic aims of the Soviet state. The government was very generous in financing public education. As regards the state budget for the first half of 1918 the expenses of the Commissariat for Education were envisaged at 465,100,000 roubles, which was only 30,000,000 roubles less than those planned for defence.

During 1918 the Council of People's Commissars repeatedly reviewed the question of raising teachers' pay, a start on which had been made with the January decree granting a lump-sum addition to salaries for November and December 1917.

On June 22, 1918, a decree of the Council of People's Commissars *On the Rates of Teacher's Wages* fixed the monthly wages of elementary- and secondary-school teachers. Long-service increments were also introduced. At the end of 1918 teachers' wages were raised. Lenin regarded the constant concern displayed by the state for the teachers' living conditions as one of the main achievements of the young republic. In the letter to the People's Commissars of August 29, 1918 on the government's resolution on the report on the work of the Commissariats of October 25, 1917, Lenin demanded that note be taken of "...improvement in the position of the masses (raising of the wages for the workers, school-teachers, etc.)."

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Before the Civil War started the Soviet state managed to introduce a number of important changes in the cultural life of the country, in educating the working people. The great educational aims of the Soviet state were given legal expression in the first Soviet Constitution, the Constitution of the RSFSR, adopted by the Fifth Congress of Soviets on July 11, 1918. "To ensure the working people real access to education," read Article 17 of the Constitution, "the Russian Socialist Fe-

derative Soviet Republic sets itself the task of providing the workers and the poor peasants with a complete, all-round education free of charge."

Reorganization measures were carried out during the school year, which, of course, had an effect on the speed and manner of their implementation. Substantial advances had been made by the beginning of the 1918/1919 school year, the first complete school year under the Soviet system. The old, bureaucratic apparatus had been broken up and the People's Commissariat for Education was put in charge of all educational work; the sabotage of the teachers acting under the ideological and political influence of the bourgeoisie was stopped and the majority of them were taking part in Soviet construction. The first decisive steps had been made towards putting education on a democratic basis and giving the people access to culture. These included the elimination of all legal obstacles to education, all hangovers from the old regime in school, enlisting the services of workers and peasants in building the Soviet school system and establishing free tuition.

Soviet pedagogics and the new school system were given legal basis in the form of decrees and decisions of the Council of People's Commissars and the People's Commissariat for Education. Among these, Lenin's decrees can be regarded as landmarks defining the road of Soviet cultural development. They are facts which enable the historian to form a comprehensive idea of the atmosphere during the early post-revolutionary period of the struggle of the working people under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party for a

new, socialist culture.

Putting public education on a democratic basis and its reorganization along socialist lines followed the path set by Lenin. All the most important measures of the Soviet state in the sphere of culture and education were put into effect through Lenin's initiative or with his close participation. In May 1919, speaking at the First All-Russia Congress on adult education, Lenin said: "I am sure that there is not another sphere of Soviet activity in which such enormous progress has been made during the past eighteen months as in the sphere of adult education." It is important to note that almost half of the period mentioned in Lenin's speech refers to the time described in this work.

Lenin regarded public education as an important lever in reorganizing the country's social life, as an integral part of the struggle for socialism. Right from the beginning of the October Revolution Lenin began issuing important instructions on the aims and means of Soviet education. His articles and speeches and the state documents referring to 1917-1918 set a number of definite tasks before the Soviet educational system. Lenin's decrees on education formed the legal basis for the building of the Soviet school. As Lunacharsky justly noted, the great leader of communism was at the same time a founder of Soviet pedagogics. Lenin's ideas laid the groundwork for the development of Soviet pedagogics.

## **Lenin's Teaching on Public Education and Communist Upbringing**

Marx and Engels laid a solid foundation for the theory of communist education. They elaborated important principles, based on a new method for education and the development of proletarian morality and were the first to advance and develop the idea of polytechnical education. The theory of communist education was developed by Lenin.

Lenin drew general conclusions on the struggle of the working class, thereby making an invaluable contribution to Marxism. He developed dialectical materialism, the philosophy of the revolutionary proletariat, added to Marx's economic theories and his theory of scientific communism. Lenin's doctrine on communist upbringing and the teaching of the rising generation is an integral part of Marxist theory.

## ***Lenin on the Class Character of Education and the School***

Lenin always looked at problems of education in their relation to the general political aims of the working class at different stages of social development. During the tsarist regime he regarded the solution of these problems as bound up with the task of developing in the proletariat a progressive class consciousness. In 1895, at the outset of his revolutionary activity, he wrote, "Without knowledge the workers are defenceless, with knowledge they are a force!"

Lenin pointed out to the proletariat of Russia that without a revolutionary struggle against the tsarist autocracy, without overthrowing the landlords and bourgeoisie it was impossible to bring about any radical change in public education.

The spreading of social-democratic ideas among the working class and its understanding of the proletariat's historical mission as the gravedigger of capitalism were hindered at the end of the 19th century by a number of theories whose authors regarded economic development as directly dependent on the progress of education. They also claimed that it was possible to improve the position of the working people through government reforms. Lenin showed the uselessness of trying to develop education independent of its material basis, or regarding it as an objective in itself. On the basis of Marx's theory that education is determined by social relations and depends in the final analysis on the material means of production, Lenin proved convincingly with an analysis based on extensive statistical material

that the development of capitalism in Russia exerted a favourable influence on the growth of the workers' class consciousness and the development of literacy. However, this influence was only relative, as it is not in the interests of a bourgeois landowner government to equip the working people with knowledge.

Lenin was extremely critical of all attempts to conceal the class nature of education in a class society. In his articles *Gymnasium Farms and Corrective Gymnasias* (1895), and *Gems of Narodnik Project-Mongering* (1897) in which Lenin develops the ideas expressed in the first article, he exposed the reactionary and utopian nature of the plan proposed by S. N. Yuzhakov, the prominent theoretician of the liberal Narodniks, to create a "national school independent of class" in a tsarist state.

Yuzhakov planned to reform the secondary school by establishing in Russia for poor peasants 15-20 thousand separate boys' and girls' gymnasia which would simultaneously serve as the kernel of production associations. There the pupils would study during the winter, and in summer take part in agricultural work to pay for their maintenance at school. The usual secondary schools requiring the payment of tuition fees would be retained for the well-off sections of the population. Gymnasium farms were to provide the majority of peasants' children with secondary education which, according to the author of that project, would lead to the emergence of a general type of state secondary school and the elimination of the class school.

In his article *Gems of Narodnik Project-Mongering* Lenin gave a splendid definition of the na-

ture of class and estate school. "Estate schools," he writes, "demand that pupils shall belong to a given social estate. The class school knows no estates, it only knows citizens. Of all pupils it demands *one thing only*, namely that they should pay for their education."

Lenin regarded the struggle against the estate elements, which were still strongly represented in the system of public education in Russia of the nineties, as one of the proletariat's vital tasks during the preparation of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. At the same time he emphasized that the organization of a general type of state secondary school in bourgeois and landowner Russia would not mean the elimination of the class character of education, as Yuzhakov supposed, but simply the replacing of the estate school by the class, bourgeois school which would make education "organized in one and the same way and equally accessible to all the wealthy." Lenin proposed in contrast to the bourgeois class school a truly democratic uniform compulsory labour school which would be established by the proletariat after the overthrow of tsarism.

As the revolutionary movement developed Lenin resolutely opposed attempts by various types of opportunists and revisionists to disguise the class character of education, culture and the school in a class society. A valuable work on this question is his *Critical Remarks on the National Question* (1913) in which he criticizes the theory of national cultural autonomy, produced by the Austrian Social-Democrats. In disputing one of the provisions of this theory, which presupposes the existence of a single national culture in a capitalist society, Lenin wrote: "The *elements* of

democratic and socialist culture are present, if only in rudimentary form, in *every* national culture, since in *every* nation there are toiling and exploited masses, whose conditions of life inevitably give rise to the ideology of democracy and socialism. But every nation also possesses a bourgeois culture (and most nations a reactionary and clerical culture as well) in the form, not merely of 'elements,' but of the *dominant* culture." Lenin's theory on the existence of two cultures in every national culture was a warning to the proletariat of the danger of bourgeois nationalism, which fosters in the rising generation the spirit of national isolation and intolerance of other peoples.

In his article *On the National Pride of the Great Russians*, written at the beginning of the First World War when chauvinist ideas were being widely propagated not only by monarchists and the Cadets but also by the Menshevik leaders, Lenin explained the Marxist interpretation of patriotism and the feeling of national pride. He emphasized that all politically conscious Great-Russian proletarians linked both these feelings with their revolutionary struggle against the monarchy of landlords and capitalists, with class solidarity in regard to the working class of Russia and on a world-wide scale: "The interests of the Great Russians' national pride (understood, not in the slavish sense) coincide with the *socialist* interests of the Great-Russian (and all other) proletarians." Lenin's teaching on the indissoluble links between proletarian patriotism and internationalism, on the full equality of all peoples and the necessity of providing each of them with every opportunity for the building of a national



culture of its own, is being carried out in the USSR and other socialist countries where a multinational socialist culture is developing and growing stronger.

By giving concrete form to the Marxist doctrine on the class character of education in class society, Lenin showed that Russian tsarism was deliberately barring the way of the people to knowledge. In 1895 a "strictly confidential" letter written by the Minister of Internal Affairs Durnovo to the reactionary Procurator General of the Holy Synod Pobedonostsev, accidentally fell into Lenin's hands. It discussed the danger of Sunday schools to the tsarist regime. In his article *What Are Our Ministers Thinking About?* Lenin wrote, "The Minister regards the workers as gunpowder, and knowledge and education as a spark; the Minister is convinced that if the spark falls into the gunpowder, the explosion will be directed first and foremost against the government." In many of his speeches, in his articles for *Iskra* during 1900-1903, in his booklet *To the Rural Poor*, in the article *Signs of Bankruptcy* and in other works Lenin explained that the tsarist autocracy was the bitterest enemy of the people's cultural development. It was doing everything to suppress the people's desire for education; it had made a pact with the Orthodox Church, and was carrying out a colonial policy towards the non-Russian peoples which deprived them of schools in which instruction was given in the native languages.

The class nature of the policy pursued by the tsar's government in the sphere of education was particularly exposed in the draft of a speech which Lenin wrote in 1913 for A. E. Badayev, a Bolshevik deputy to the Fourth State Duma, dur-

ing the discussion of the 1914 budget for educational needs. The speech, later included in Lenin's Collected Works under the title of *The Question of Ministry of Education Policy*, gives official statistics showing the state of "public mis-education." Proceeding from the fact that four-fifths of the rising generation of Russia were doomed to illiteracy and that only 27 per cent of the adult population were literate, Lenin came to the conclusion that, "There is no other country so barbarous and in which the masses of the people are *robbed* to such an extent of education, light and knowledge—no other such country has remained in Europe; Russia is the exception." This "barbarous" state of the masses, Lenin said, was inevitable in a country where serfdom was a state system, in a country which declared itself too poor to develop public education but was "rich enough to waste millions and tens of millions on aristocratic parasites, on military adventures and on hand-outs to owners of sugar refineries, oil kings and so on."

Lenin gave convincing proof that Russia would lack finance for education until the people overthrew the government of the bourgeoisie and landowners which was exceptionally hostile to their interests. Even before the October Revolution in October 1914 the Bolshevik Party guided by Lenin struggled steadfastly to equip the proletariat with knowledge and to develop the workers' political outlook. The Party regarded this as an indispensable condition for preparing the proletariat for the seizure of power and the reorganization of bourgeois society into a socialist one which would give the masses the broadest access to culture and education.

## ***Lenin on the Cultural Revolution and the Role of the School in the Struggle for Communism***

Lenin considered a social revolution an indispensable prerequisite for a cultural revolution. He was devastating in his criticism of the claims of various reformists that transition from capitalism to socialism could be achieved in a peaceful way requiring only a certain level of development in culture and the productive forces in a bourgeois society. In May 1923 *Pravda* published Lenin's *Our Revolution* where he wrote, "If a definite level of culture is required for the building of socialism (although nobody can say just what that definite 'level of culture' is, for it differs in every West-European country), why cannot we begin by first achieving the prerequisites for that definite level of culture in a revolutionary way, and *then*, with the aid of the workers' and peasants' government and the Soviet system, proceed to overtake the other nations?"

The cornerstone of Lenin's teaching on cultural revolution is the thesis that the people whom tsarism had kept in a state of intellectual darkness and ignorance had to be given access to culture in order to become active builders of socialism and creators of new cultural values. Speaking in January 1918 at the Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets, Lenin said, "In the old days, human genius, the brain of man, created only to give some the benefits of technology and

culture, and to deprive others of the bare necessities, education and development. From now on all the marvels of science and the gains of culture belong to the nation as a whole, and never again will man's brain and human genius be used for oppression and exploitation." Lenin regarded the people's participation in revolutionary activity as an essential factor in their development of a progressive, socialist consciousness.

In many of his early post-revolutionary speeches Lenin pointed out that in contrast to utopian socialists, who planned the building of a new society with especially virtuous people brought up in special "hothouse" establishments, the Party's aim was to build communism "from the mass human material which has been corrupted by hundreds and thousands of years of slavery, serfdom, capitalism, by small individual enterprise, and by the war of every man against his neighbour to obtain a place in the market, or a higher price for his product or his labour." Marxism-Leninism teaches us that only in the process of building socialism, which means the doing away with all forms of exploitation of man by man, will people be able to overcome the vestiges of the past in their consciousness and discard habits which have grown up as a result of private ownership.

Lenin emphasized that a cultural revolution was not achieved in a day but was a long process. Its practical weapons are the eradication of illiteracy among the adult population, the introduction of universal education for all children of school age, the raising of the cultural level of the working people of all nationalities and the creation of a genuine people's intelligentsia.

Lenin regarded the school as an important factor in bringing about a cultural revolution. After the victory of the proletariat, the Bolshevik Party set public education the task of completing "the work that began with the October Revolution in 1917 to convert the school from an instrument of the class rule of the bourgeoisie into an instrument for the overthrow of that rule and for the complete abolition of the division of society into classes." The considerable political importance attached by Lenin to the education of the rising generation in the spirit of communism is evident in his speech at the First All-Russia Congress on Education: "We say that our work in the sphere of education is part of the struggle for overthrowing the bourgeoisie. We publicly declare that education divorced from life and politics is lies and hypocrisy." The proletarian revolution radically changes the character of education by placing it at the service of the working people and turning it into an instrument for the revolutionary reorganization of society.

In his speeches Lenin invariably stressed the fact that the school must be closely linked with life and the building of socialism and the training of active fighters who work for the victory of the new social system.

### *Educating the New Man in a Socialist Society*

From the very start of his revolutionary work Lenin concentrated on the ideological and political education of student youth and on bringing

it into active political work. While preparing for the Second Congress of the Bolshevik Party he worked out a draft resolution on the attitude towards student youth. He proposed that all groups and circles of students concentrate their attention on the development among their members of an integral and consistent revolutionary outlook. For this purpose he recommended serious study of Marxism as well as acquaintance with the views of the Russian Narodniks and West-European opportunists who represented the main stream of those engaged in the progressive struggle of their time. The youth was warned against "false friends" who diverted them from revolutionary education with empty words and implanted in them an unprincipled and light-minded attitude towards revolutionary work. The draft noted that in the process of taking up practical revolutionary work youth should establish contact with Social-Democratic organizations.

Under pressure from opportunist representatives to the Congress the phrase about "false friends" was excluded from Lenin's draft. Apart from that, the resolution was adopted in its initial form and played an important role in the ideological and political education of young people studying in secondary and higher schools of Russia, and in drawing them into active revolutionary work. In February 1905, at the height of the revolutionary struggle, Lenin once again brought up the question of drawing the youth more actively into revolutionary work. "This is a time of war," he wrote. "The youth—the students, and still more so the young workers—will decide the issue of the whole struggle."

Lenin's article *The Youth International* is full

of faith in youth's revolutionary aspirations and creative powers. "The middle-aged and the aged," he wrote, "often *do not know how to approach the youth, for the youth must of necessity advance to socialism in a different way, by other paths, in other forms, in other circumstances than their fathers.*" Taking into account youth's own particular qualities and the new conditions under which they live and work, Lenin advocated giving them an independent organization, as without full independence they would not be able to develop into capable socialists or advance socialism.

After the Young Communist League was founded Lenin devoted much time and thought to its problems. Speaking at the Third Congress of the Young Communist League on October 2, 1920, Lenin proposed a programme for the communist education of youth and specified the ways and means of carrying it out. In it he advanced a thesis of importance of the theory of communist education saying that conscious mastery of vital knowledge and the development of a new, proletarian morality was possible only if the young people were directly engaged in a determined struggle for the reorganization of the old society, for the triumph of communism. Lenin's thesis originated in the Marxist doctrine on the role of practical revolutionary experience in transforming the world and the minds of the masses.

This view of practical revolutionary experience also provides a basis for evolving a fundamentally new treatment of the problem of developing man's individuality which was first formulated by Marx and later developed in Lenin's works. They established that man's activity as an indi-

vidual was an indispensable factor in his development. It brings out the inherent characteristics of a person's individuality, which are formed in close relationship with external social conditions of development, namely environment and education. Only under socialism, when social inequality is ended, can the real conditions be created for the free development of the individuality and the fullest use of man's abilities.

Coming out against the attempts made in Russia to distort the socialist doctrine of equality, Lenin wrote: "When we say that experience and reason prove that men are not equal, we mean by equality, equality in *abilities* or *similarity* in physical strength and mental ability.

"It goes without saying that in this respect men are *not* equal. No sensible person and no socialist forgets this. But *this kind* of equality has *nothing whatever* to do with socialism." Further on Lenin went on to say that when socialists speak of equality they mean social equality not the equality of physical and moral abilities. This equality is ensured by the economic relations which are established in a socialist society, where there unfolds a process of eliminating classes and distinctions between town and country, between physical and mental labour. In several of his works written in 1919 Lenin showed that these new social relations must become a basis for the harmonious development of people. *Draft Programme of the R.C.P.(B.), A Great Beginning, and Economics and Politics in the Era of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat are among such works.* He explored this question thoroughly in "*Left-Wing*" Communism—an Infantile Disorder (1920). Taking as a basis the experience of socia-

list construction in Soviet Russia, which began immediately after the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship, Lenin assumed that in due course communist society would be able "...to eliminate the division of labour among people, to educate and school people, give them *all-round development and an all-round training*, so that they *are able to do everything*."

## *Lenin on the Assimilation of Knowledge*

When he unfolded the programme of educating the new man, Lenin said that the assimilation of knowledge and the raising of the working people's cultural level was a task of first importance. In several of his speeches made during 1918-1920, he mentioned the people's desire for education and remarked that this desire was bound up with the struggle for revolutionary and social changes. At the First All-Russia Congress on Education Lenin said, "The working people are thirsting for knowledge because they need it to win. Nine out of ten of the working people have realized that knowledge is a weapon in their struggle for emancipation, that their failures are due to lack of education, and that now it is up to them really to give everyone access to education."

Lenin pointed out that the victorious proletariat would have to overcome not only the military and political resistance of the capitalists but also their ideological resistance, which was the most powerful of all. He gave warning that the cultural aim

would not be reached as quickly as the political and military aims, that the task of educating the broad masses would take a long time and would require great persistence and systematic work. Particular stress was placed on equipping the rising generation of working people with scientific knowledge.

The Soviet Government made secondary and higher school legally accessible to every worker. At the same time Lenin raised the problem of creating conditions that would enable the proletariat to study. The plan for the People's Commissariat for Education was supplemented by an undertaking to provide grants for all students from the proletariat and poor peasantry. Lenin supported the proposal of the Deputy Commissar for Education M. N. Pokrovsky to establish workers' faculties which allowed the enrolment of young people in higher institutions of learning before completion of secondary school. Lenin directed the truly titanic enterprise of organizing the educational front; not a single important question related to the work of the People's Commissariat for Education escaped his attention.

Lenin explained to the working youth that its chief task was to study. He devoted his speech at the Third Congress of the Young Communist League to the problem of what and how young people should study to achieve success in the struggle for communism begun by their fathers. He showed clearly what it meant to study communism and how to treat the cultural heritage of the past. In warning against the superficial use of communist slogans and booklets, Lenin pointed out the primary importance of a broad general education. "You can become a Commun-

ist," he said, "only when you enrich your mind with a knowledge of all the treasures created by mankind." In these theses Lenin showed the unbreakable continuity of the cultures of different epochs. Lenin wrote that proletarian culture "is not clutched out of thin air; it is not an invention of those who call themselves experts in proletarian culture. That is all nonsense. Proletarian culture must be the logical development of the store of knowledge mankind has accumulated under the yoke of capitalist, landowner and bureaucratic society."

Lenin displayed a profound understanding of the relations between the old and the new culture. In his classical work *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* he upheld and developed the theoretical premises of the Marxist Party, having summed up all the essential achievements of science, particularly in the natural sciences, in the period following the death of Engels. In a number of articles Lenin shows the continuity between proletarian ideology and progressive ideas advanced in the preceding stages of the liberation movement in Russia.

Lenin repeatedly emphasized that all the progressive elements in a cultural heritage should be critically analyzed by the proletariat and used to develop socialist culture and to educate energetic and conscientious builders of a communist society. In the light of these tasks Lenin demanded the exclusion from the legacy of the old school of all that had been to the advantage of the exploiting classes, the rejection of all that had provided the capitalists with obedient workers. But he always stressed the great importance of a systematic education for the young.

In criticizing the old school, Lenin said that a radical reorganization was necessary for the achievement of real communist education. He firmly condemned the system of cramming which existed in the old school, and pointed out the necessity of enriching the mind "with all those facts that are indispensable to the well-educated man of today." Without knowledge of basic facts, communism would become meaningless. The secondary school, in his opinion, had to provide its graduates with a broad general education and the fundamentals of scientific knowledge. Only on the basis of such an education could one train highly-educated, highly-cultured and high-principled young people capable of absorbing communist theory and using the knowledge accumulated by man for the building of communism. The school was called upon to provide a thorough mastery of the "fundamentals of knowledge," and "all those facts" comprising the basis of contemporary education.

These theses had and still have immense practical and theoretical significance for Soviet education. The full-scale building of communism in the USSR, the progress of science and technology and the changes in the character of labour and the patterns of the trades and professions in production have confronted the modern Soviet school with a series of new problems. For example, in order to raise the level of general education it is necessary to overcome the contradiction between the continuous growth in scientific and technical information and the possibilities of assimilating this material in school. It is quite obvious that the maximum effort should be exerted to improve school curricula and the organization

and methods of education, so as to bring them into conformity with all modern achievements of science and technology and to establish close contacts between education and life.

Lenin repeatedly stated that assimilation of knowledge was a necessary requisite for the formation of a communist outlook on the world and a communist standard of behaviour in the young. By developing a scientific outlook, people come to know the objective laws of natural and social development and become active participants in revolutionary changes. "Our school," said Lenin, "must provide the youth with the fundamentals of knowledge, the ability to evolve communist views independently; they must make educated people of the youth." For the youth communism shall be something "that will embody conclusions inevitable from the standpoint of present-day education."

Precise knowledge of facts is of great importance for the correct analysis and appraisal of phenomena. However, Lenin warned against the danger of a subjective approach and such unscientific methods as the use of isolated facts and manipulation of examples at random. Facts have to be taken as a whole, in their context and entirety. Only the dialectical method shows their objective connection and provides a guarantee against an arbitrary selection of facts. "Firstly, if we are to have a true knowledge of an object," wrote Lenin, "we must look at and examine all its facts, its connections and 'mediacies'. That is something we cannot ever hope to achieve completely, but the rule of comprehensiveness is a safeguard against mistakes and rigidity. Secondly, dialectical logic requires that an object should

be taken in development, in change, in 'self-movement' (as Hegel sometimes puts it)... Thirdly, a full 'definition' of an object must include the whole of human experience, both as a criterion of truth and a practical indicator of its connection with human wants. Fourthly, dialectical logic holds that 'truth is always concrete, never abstract', as the late Plekhanov liked to say after Hegel."

Addressing the students of the Yakov Sverdlov Communist University Lenin said: "And the chief thing is that you should acquire, as a result of your reading, as a result of the talks and lectures... the ability to approach this question independently... Only when you learn to find your way about independently in this question may you consider yourself sufficiently confirmed in your convictions and able with sufficient success to defend them against anybody and at any time."

The formation of a materialist and dialectical outlook helps to educate youth to be able to defend their convictions and wage a struggle against the survivals of the past in the minds of the people and against all manifestations of bourgeois ideology. These theses of Lenin received further development in the CPSU Programme: "The Party considers it an integral part of its communist education work to combat manifestations of bourgeois ideology and morality, and the remnants of private-owner psychology, superstitions, and prejudices."

When Lenin spoke on the education of the younger generation, he repeatedly mentioned the necessity of bridging the gap between theory and practice, so very characteristic of bourgeois

education. Without eliminating this gap and without uniting theory and practice, conditions for the training of highly-educated and energetic people to build communist society cannot be provided. Therefore, education cannot be limited to the precincts of the school and alienated from practical experience. Lenin rejected scholarship in the sense of empty book learning. He believed that communism could only be learned "by inseparably linking each step in the activities of the schools, each step in training, education and teaching, with the struggle of all the working people against the exploiters." Every day young people in town and country should tackle at least some very small and simple problem arising from their joint work. Only by directly participating in building socialism can the young turn their knowledge into convictions to guide them in their daily work; this is the only way for students and pupils to develop a positive attitude to life. Lenin's teaching on the connection between school and life, education and practical communist construction, has become the basis of Soviet practical and theoretical education.

### ***Lenin on the Combination of Teaching with Productive Labour and Polytechnical Education***

Many of Lenin's speeches and works on education before and after the revolution were concerned with developing the Marxist thesis

that education be combined with productive labour.

In the *Gems of Narodnik Project-Mongering* Lenin stated very definitely that the "ideal future society cannot be conceived without the combination of education with the productive labour of the younger generation: neither training and education without productive labour, nor productive labour without parallel training and education could be raised to the degree required by the present level of technology and the state of scientific knowledge."

Lenin regarded the combining of children's schooling with their participation in productive labour as a historically progressive phenomenon. He considered the attempts to ban teenagers completely from capitalist industry, as reactionary, but denounced their brutal exploitation by factory owners. To protect the health of the rising generation Lenin called upon the proletariat of Russia to fight to keep children who had not yet reached a certain age from employment in capitalist enterprises, and to obtain "adequate hygienic conditions" for young workers.

After the October Revolution Lenin made it his particular concern to see that the Soviet state did not allow children to engage in work beyond their strength, working teenagers were to be provided with conditions which would help to develop their physical and intellectual abilities. Simultaneously he raised with great urgency the question of drawing the entire younger generation into social labour and the building of socialism.

Lenin regarded the major defect of the entire system of bourgeois education its alienation from real life and labour. As he said, "One of the fun-



damental faults of education in the capitalist world was its alienation from the basic task of organizing labour, since the capitalist had to train and educate obedient and disciplined workers. There was no connection in capitalist society between the actual tasks of the organization of social labour and teaching." The school under socialism had to overcome this main shortcoming in the system of education. At the Third Congress of the Young Communist League Lenin spoke of combining the education of the young with their participation in economic rehabilitation, in developing culture and education, which he regarded as an important factor promoting the struggle of the working people for communism.

Like his predecessors Marx and Engels, Lenin closely linked the education of young people under socialism with productive labour. Marx regarded polytechnical or technological education as teaching the rising generation the basic principles of all the processes of production and the knowledge of how to operate the simplest piece of industrial equipment. The theory of polytechnical education was first formulated by the founders of Marxism. They established that large-scale machine production, founded on a "revolutionary technological basis" required from the workers a general technological culture, ability to operate different machines and to handle different jobs. At the same time they showed that only under socialism would it become fully possible to study the fundamentals of modern production in theory and practice, when society itself would be interested in achieving a high level of industrial and agricultural production and the all-round development of its members.

In polytechnical education Lenin considered electrical engineering a subject of major importance to youth. He proposed in 1920, when the state plan for the electrification of the country was being worked out, the idea of developing a nation-wide campaign for the study of electricity which would involve active school participation. The *Theses on Production Propaganda* which were drafted by Lenin on November 18, 1920, proposed that the services of journalists, engineers, agronomists, teachers, and Soviet specialists be used in the propaganda campaign to spread information about production, regularly publishing booklets and leaflets which along with text-books and reviews of foreign technology would help to disseminate vocational-technical and polytechnical instruction.

According to Lenin's wife and comrade Nadezhda Krupskaya, in 1920 and 1921 Lenin concentrated more than ever before on production propaganda and polytechnical education. This was because he closely associated their implementation with the electrification of the country, and the transition to a planned national economy. Essential to a planned economy were a socially conscious people, a high cultural level of work and labour training of a kind which would enable the regrouping of the labour force in case of need. To solve these great economic and political tasks one had to give the people access to technical knowledge and found the polytechnical school.

On December 22, 1920, in his report on the work of the Council of People's Commissars to the Eighth Congress of Soviets, Lenin proposed informing the people on a broad scale of the

state plan for the country's electrification which he called the "second Party programme." In his opinion it was essential that each new power station should make a contribution to the advance of education.

Lenin developed the fundamental Marxist theses on polytechnical education, and gave them practical form, defining, in particular, the important branches of socialist production of which students should have a basic knowledge. Among these main branches Lenin included power engineering, mechanics, chemistry and agriculture.

Lenin regarded the reorganization of Russia's backward agricultural economy on the basis of electrification and advanced technology as an important factor for the elimination of distinctions between town and country and the formation of a society without classes. By including the knowledge of agronomy in the field of polytechnical education, Lenin gave this branch of education a broader range than Marx and Engels had. He also regarded as very important the practical measures required for developing polytechnical schools which he recommended putting into effect immediately, despite the backward state of industry and general economic collapse.

Among the measures of importance Lenin mentioned visits by pupils to nearby power stations where they would hear on-the-spot lectures, including demonstrations of experiments; practical work with electricity; organization of excursions to state farms and plants, the building of local museums of polytechnical education, etc. To carry out polytechnical education on a

large scale Lenin proposed inviting the collaboration of all engineers and agronomists, as well as all university graduates of the Physics and Mathematics Department. In this way the country would acquire in a few years sufficient cadres with a polytechnical training to raise industry and agriculture to a higher technological level commensurate with the requirements of socialism.

Lenin opposed early specialization but advocated combining vocational training and polytechnical education. In this respect particular interest is commanded by the draft supplement to the section of the Party Programme on public education: the introduction of polytechnical education for young men and adults (for adults: the development of vocational training developing into polytechnical education), and the development of school children's individual activities.

Lenin followed with keen interest the progress of the Party meeting on public education in which there was a heated discussion of the problem of general and polytechnical education and vocational training which had begun before the meeting. As a result of long debates the meeting decided to adopt as the basic school a seven-year general educational and polytechnical school embracing all children between the age of eight and fifteen; on this basis specialized secondary schools and other vocational schools with a 3 to 4 year course of study would be set up. The senior classes, embracing sixteen- and seventeen-year-old pupils were to be reorganized into specialized secondary schools.

In his article *The Work of the People's Commissariat for Education* Lenin wrote: "While we

are *temporarily* compelled to lower the age (for passing from general polytechnical education to polytechnical vocational training) from seventeen to fifteen, the '*Party must regard*' this lowering of the age 'as only' (Point I of Central Committee's Instructions) a practical expedient necessitated by the '*country's poverty and ruin*.'" Pointing to the fact that "general arguments with futile efforts to 'substantiate' this lowering are clap-trap," Lenin considered it necessary for the People's Commissariat for Education to concentrate on studying and utilizing constructive practical experience. With this aim in view he proposed in the *Instructions of the Central Committee of the R.C.P. to Communists Working in the People's Commissariat for Education* the wide-scale recruitment of teachers to local and particularly central executive posts, who have had long practical experience and are well-versed in the theory of education, and specialists with extensive experience in vocational and technical as well as agricultural training.

Lenin's theses on the linking of tuition with productive labour, on polytechnical education and the vocational training of young people on a broad polytechnical basis have significance for us today. By using them constructively we can improve the training of pupils for work and strengthen the bonds between school and society.

## ***Lenin on the Teacher***

The teacher is the most important person in the school. It is his ideological convictions, experience and teaching abilities which are responsible for

the entire process of teaching and training. In an answer to a letter from a group of students at a Party school on the Island of Capri, Lenin wrote: "I repeat: the real character and trend of the school is determined not by the good intentions of the local organizations, not by decisions of the 'Council' of students, not by 'curricula' and so forth, but the *lecturing personnel*." This was a new contribution to the Marxist teaching on the class character of education. The statement that neither control nor curricula were able to change the direction of education which is determined only by the teaching staff, undoubtedly reflected the experience of progressive teachers of that time, who took a more resolute and independent line in daily dealing with the teaching problems than their liberal colleagues.

Attaching considerable importance to the work of the schoolteacher Lenin was unsparing in his condemnation of the bourgeois and landowner government of Russia which deliberately tried to keep the minds of the working people in an unenlightened state and expose the schoolteacher to extreme material privations. Regarding the teacher as a representative of the more democratic section of the intelligentsia, closer to the working people, Lenin was particularly interested in using teachers to propagate socialist ideas among the peasants. Lenin and his fellow-workers showed the teacher, in the clearest possible way, the path upon which he could serve the people, and would provide a definite use in their cultural level and their liberation from tsarist oppression.

The Great October Socialist Revolution radically changed the social position of the teacher. It

entrusted him with a task of the utmost responsibility: to equip the people with knowledge indispensable for the success of the struggle for communism, and to educate the younger generation in the spirit of communist morality. Lenin spoke about this problem at the First All-Russia Congress of Internationalist Teachers in June 1918. "The army of teachers," he said, "must set themselves tremendous tasks in the education sphere, and above all must form the main army of socialist education. . . The teachers must not confine themselves to narrow pedagogical duties. They must join forces with the entire body of the embattled working people. The task of the new pedagogics was to link up teaching activities with the socialist organization of society."

Under Lenin's leadership the Party worked to transform the vast mass of teachers into an "army of socialist education." This required first of all an ideological regrouping of the old teaching personnel who had been educated in an atmosphere of bourgeois prejudices and traditions. Besides, it was necessary to train young Soviet teachers from workers and peasants, who would have close links with the Party. In his speeches in 1919-1920 at the Second All-Russia Congress of Internationalist Teachers Lenin pointed to the need for carrying on extensive educational work among teachers.

Teachers had to become the most educated section of the population, guides to general culture and communist ideas. Then the teacher would become a bearer of social consciousness in its highest form, a guide to the Party's ideas and wishes in the remotest parts of the country. Lenin gave constant thought to the ideological and political edu-

cation of teachers, regarding it as an indispensable condition for the successful carrying out of their social mission: to awaken thought, combat superstition and bring communist ideas to the masses.

In his article *The Work of the People's Commissariat for Education* Lenin wrote, "The Communist leader must prove his claim to leadership by *recruiting* a growing number of experienced teachers to help him, and by showing his *ability* to help *them* in their work, to promote *them*, and take account of and bring out *their* experience." The same article comments on the necessity of organizing regular exchanges of experience to enable the Party to single out exemplary districts, regions, educational establishments, or teachers, in order to develop local achievements in education proved by experience on a nation-wide scale. "Attention must be concentrated," said Lenin, "on the 'recording and verification of *practical* experience' and the 'systematic *application* of its lessons'."

Lenin warned against the danger of the administrative itch and a voluntarist approach towards the management of public education, against unjustified reorganizations, and recommended a careful approach to the practical experience accumulated by schools. He demanded that workers in public education show the "ability to make progress—even if very slowly and on a very small scale—so long as it is achieved in *practical* matters, on the basis of *practical* experience."

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Lenin's teaching on the education of the rising generation is an integral part of Leninism. It re-

flects the historical experience of the CPSU and the Soviet school in forming a communist world outlook, communist convictions and morality in the young. Therein lies the world significance of Lenin's ideas in the sphere of culture and education.

A profound study of Leninism and a creative application of Lenin's principles for the theoretical and practical development of communist education are urgent tasks confronting teachers, educationists and all the ideological workers in the USSR and all socialist countries.

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Ленин и народное образование  
на английском языке  
Цена 8 коп.