"A Workers' and Peasants' Revolution"

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin was born in 1870 in Ulyanovsk, Russia, east of Moscow on the Volga River. His elder brother was executed for plotting against Czar Alexander III (r. 1881–94) in 1887. Lenin was drawn at the university to Marxism's sympathetic view of the urban lower classes (the proletariat, who had no ownership of the means of production and worked only for wages) and their struggle for betterment. He was soon expelled for revolutionary student activities. He became a lawyer but was exiled to Siberia in 1895 for five years for Marxist agitation in promoting class war among St. Petersburg's workers. He was forced to leave Russia to continue his plans for a socialist revolution (with the goal of abolishing economic exploitation), and in London he took control of the Bolshevik wing of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1906. He spent long years writing Marxist theory. He believed World War I (1914–18) to be an imperialistic war fought by capitalists. As he saw it, capitalism (where goods and services were produced for profit in a free market by private companies and individuals, rather than the state) had aggravated class inequality following the onset of the Industrial Revolution, and workers needed to unite to gain control over production under the leadership of a "vanguard party" of activists. In 1917 the "February Revolution" broke out in Russia while Czar Nicholas II (r. 1894–1917) was away commanding Russian forces, and Lenin returned to his homeland to oppose the Provisional Government. The czar abdicated the next month (he and his family were later murdered). In October, Lenin led the government's overthrow during the "October Revolution," and the next day delivered this speech outlining aims for his planned workers' government, composed of representatives from soviets (local workers' councils). In November he was elected premier of what was to become the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Lenin's party became the more radical Communist Party in 1918.

Comrades, the workers' and peasants' revolution, about the necessity of which the Bolsheviks have always spoken, has been accomplished.

What is the significance of this workers' and peasants' revolution? Its significance is, first of all, that we shall have a Soviet government, our own organ of power, in which the bourgeoisie will have no share whatsoever. The oppressed masses will themselves create a power. The old state apparatus will be shattered to its foundations and a new administrative apparatus set up in the form of the Soviet organizations.

From now on, a new phase in the history of Russia begins, and this revolution, the third Russian revolution, should in the end lead to the victory of socialism.
One of our urgent tasks is to put an immediate end to the war. It is clear to everybody that in order to end this war, which is closely bound up with the present capitalist system, capital itself must be fought.

We shall be helped in this by the world working-class movement, which is already beginning to develop in Italy, Britain and Germany.

The proposal we make to international democracy for a just and immediate peace will everywhere awaken an ardent response among the international proletarian masses. All the secret treaties must be immediately published in order to strengthen the confidence of the proletariat.

Within Russia a huge section of the peasantry have said that they have played long enough with the capitalists, and will now march with the workers. A single decree putting an end to landed proprietorship will win us the confidence of the peasants. The peasants will understand that the salvation of the peasantry lies only in an alliance with the workers. We shall institute genuine workers' control over production.

We have now learned to make a concerted effort. The revolution that has just been accomplished is evidence of this. We possess the strength of mass organization, which will overcome everything and lead the proletariat to the world revolution.

We must now set about building a proletarian socialist state in Russia.

Long live the world socialist revolution!

**Citation Information**

Copyright © 2020 Infobase Learning. All Rights Reserved.