viks did not make the Russian Revolution they did achieve, eight months later, in November 1917, a feat fully as remarkable. They overthrew it. This accomplishment, under the leadership of Lenin, was performed in two steps, the armed coup d'état of November 1917 and the armed dispersal of the All Russian Constituent Assembly on January 18, 1918.

WHEN Lenin returned to Russia in April 1917 he found his followers, the tiny Bolshevik camp, in a conciliatory mood. They—Stalin among them—favored cooperation with the other socialist parties. All Russia awaited the Constituent Assembly, a longtime dream, to be elected by universal suffrage. Such a mood soon proved intolerable to Lenin. He found Russia at this time, under the democratic regime, to be "the freest country in the world," but nevertheless soon declared war on the young democracy.

He made an abortive putsch in July 1917. The call for the uprising was under the slogan of "All Power to the Soviets." But the ungrateful soviets themselves helped to down the revolt! Lenin thought the game was up. "Now," he said, "they will shoot us all. It is their moment." But he did not count on the talents of his opponents for vacillation. Some Bolsheviks, including Trotsky, were arrested; Lenin went into hiding. This was the point at which, had the government acted decisively, the Bolshevik conspiracy could have been crushed, and the fate of Russia—and the world—thereby altered. But the Bolsheviks were not even outlawed in the soviets.

Thus, Lenin was able to take advantage of the next opportunity. It came in the fall in the form of a blow from the Right against the democracy. This attempt to set up a military dictatorship collapsed when all the socialist organizations—including the Bolsheviks—came to Kerensky's support. Following this the arrested Bolsheviks were released, and they set about preparing for the third, and final, blow against the Provisional Government.

Lenin had discarded the slogan "All Power to the Soviets" after his July failure; he had chosen instead "All Power to the Bolshevik Party." Now he shrewdly dragged out again his cynically manipulated and too soon abandoned slogan. He prepared to take power in the name of the soviets. He regrouped his lines, he promised everything under the sun (a state without police, without privileges, etc.). When he met with opposition in his own Bolshevik ranks, he set in motion a bitter campaign against his dissident colleagues. Finally he made his historic bid, seizing power by armed force in November 1917. Later he said: "It was easy to begin a revolution in such a country. It was easier than to lift a feather."

When immediately *after* he had seized power, there emerged in his Bolshevik camp another movement of opposition (predicting that Lenin's actions would lead to one-party rule of terror), he quashed that. After achieving power, he held on to it as to life itself. He slandered, he vilified, he broke promises, he outlawed and he jailed and he terrorized. All aims became subordinate to one: the retention of power. He held power, and he ruined Russia.

What about the Constituent Assembly? In his pre-power statement he shrieked for it, as Communists always clamor for free parliaments before they take power. He accused the democratic Provisional Government of deliberately postponing the elections. And then Lenin, speaking in the name of the "masses," made certain to seize power less than three weeks before the elections were to be held. In his infinite wisdom he did not choose to wait. His first comment to his inner circle—Trotsky tells us long after—is that the Bolsheviks must postpone the elections. He is told that it would not look right. And so the elections, as scheduled by the now overthrown Provisional Government, are held. More than 36 million Russians vote in universal suffrage, by secret ballot. This is the first free election in Russia's history, and it is held under the Bolsheviks. Lenin's party receives a smashing defeat.

The "masses" in whose name he seized power repudiate him overwhelmingly. On January 18, 1918 the Constituent Assembly—representing the united will of the country—meets in Petrograd. What does a brave Bolshevik do? He disperses the first democratic parliament in Russia's history, at bayonet point. The Assembly—which met for one dav—is to remain Russia's first and last democratic legislative body, from that time until today. Later the Communists will have more experience in holding elections. They will teach the Fascists and Nazis—who will study them closely—how it is done.

HOW DOES Lenin look to non-adoring contemporaries? Two weeks after his coup in 1917, Maxim Gorky (later a front man for Soviet dictatorship) calls Lenin "not an all-powerful magician, but a deliberate juggler, who has no feelings either for the lives or the honor of the proletariat." He writes:

> The working class must not allow adventurers and madmen to thrust upon the proletariat the responsibility for the disgraceful, senseless and bloody crimes for which not Lenin, but the proletariat will have to account.

In 1918, Rosa Luxemburg, the German revolutionary (now a patron saint of the Communists who have banned her strictures on their state), already knows that Soviet communism is:

> at bottom then, a clique affair—a dictatorship, to be sure, not the dictatorship of the proletariat, however, but only the dictatorship of a handful of politicians. . .

Later, in the next three decades, there will be much sophisticated-sounding speculation on when Bolshevik rule "degenerated," when it "got off the track." The Communist world will split wide open in 1936-38, during the maniacal period of purges and trials, and following the Stalin-Hitler Pact of 1939. Stalin—whose villainy needs no embroidering—will be named as the culprit who "betrayed" communism, the mysterious Being (to followers and opponents alike) who dropped out of the heavens after the death of Lenin and almost single-handedly "betrayed" the glorious state of Lenin. From the Western world will be hidden the fact (because all the contending Communists were guilty of complicity in killing Russian democracy) that by the time the "betrayer" took over, Stalin had everything in his arsenal that he needed.

Soviet communism, under its chief prophet, Lenin, our Man of the Half Century, provided for him almost everything that resides in Stalin's grab bag today. Stalin's contribution, in the main, has not been to invent, but to enlarge (as Lenin was desperately anxious to enlarge, an ambition frustrated only partially and by the youth and weakness of the young dictatorship), to make what was horrible, monstrous.

Two events, the armed coup and the armed dispersal of the Constituent Assembly slightly more than two months after the coup, and we have not only the birth of the dictatorial Communist state, but almost, in conjunction with other actions and teachings of Lenin, the entire blueprint for its future, from which Stalin—also a creation of Lenin, but a most willing one—will build the greatest totalitarian society in the history of the world.

Once, in a single paragraph, the great German socialist Karl Kautsky—at one time idolized by Lenin and an opponent of Soviet dictatorship from the start—showed more wisdom about the fictitious "degeneration" of Soviet rule in Russia than many pundits have yet to show in entire books. Kautsky wrote in "Bolshevism at a Deadlock":

> Only a few people at once understood the counter-revolutionary significance of the coups d'état of November 1917 [when the Communists seized power] and January 1918 [when they dispersed the Constituent Assembly]. There are still Socialists today who have quite forgotten that there was a March Revolution in Russia through which the democratic Republic was founded. Not a few even think that the real revolution only began with the coups d'état which gave the death blow to the democratic Republic.

SOON after his ascension to power, Lenin created the organ without which Stalin—and communism—could not hold power for very long. The notion that the Soviet gestapo is an invention of Stalin's is ludicrous. In December 1917, one month after seizing power, Lenin sends a memo to Felix Dzerzhinsky which leads to the creation of the All Russian Extraordinary Commission, soon to be known as the infamous Cheka. (To this very day the Russian people refer to Stalin's police as chekists.) In the next three decades this gestapo—born a decade and a half before Hitler's—is to be given many names (GPU, NKVD, MVD), but its character does not change; its functions merely grow larger.

From the start the regime terrorizes its opponents. But in August 1918 its golden opportunity comes. Dora Kaplan, a Socialist Revolutionary, shoots at and wounds Lenin. She is executed. But the regime does not stop there. It demonstrates its culture, its superiority, as well, to Tsarism which, when Lenin's brother participated in an assassination attempt against Alexander III, executed only those directly involved. Specifically, the Soviet regime sets in motion a mass system of terrorism—and the Communists themselves proudly find a name for this policy. They label it "Red Terror." The brutal repression is felt throughout Russia. Thousands are seized, thousands are shot. How many no one will ever know. Hostages are taken.

Lenin's prized underling, Dzerzhinsky, a professor of murder, becomes the most feared man in Russia. On June 9, 1918 this humane representative of Soviet communism states:

> We stand for organized terror—this should be frankly admitted. Terror is an absolute necessity during times of revolution. Our aim is to fight against the enemies of the Soviet Government and of the new order of life. . . .
>
> We judge quickly. In most cases only a day passes between the apprehension of the criminal and his sentence. But this does not mean that our sentences are groundless. . . . When confronted with evidence criminals in almost every case confess; and what argument can have greater weight than a criminal's own confession . . .?

Latsis, a leader of the Cheka, does not even concern himself with "confessions." (Shades of the Moscow Trials!) In *Pravda*, on December 25, 1918, he orders:

> Do not ask for incriminating evidence to prove that the prisoner opposed the Soviet Government either by arms or by word. Your first duty is to ask him what class he belongs to, what were his origin, education and occupation. These questions should decide the fate of the prisoner. This is the meaning and essence of Red Terror.

Missives From India

Receipt

To: U. S. A.
For wheat you're sending:
Payment pending.

NEHRU

Cracked Wheat Bread & Butter Note

JOSEPH STALIN, Most Honorable Sir:
We pay
salaam
defer
concur.
Your obedient servant,
nehru

CASMI STEFFIN