

THE YOUNG LENIN. By Leon Trotsky. Translated by Max Eastman. Edited and annotated by Maurice Friedberg. Garden City: Doubleday, 1972. xiii, 224 pp. \$7.95.

In 1933 Trotsky started a *Life of Lenin* but was diverted from finishing it by a desire to settle scores with Joseph Stalin. He turned over the completed portion to Max Eastman for translation into English under the title *The Young Lenin*, but after Eastman had finished twelve of its fifteen chapters, both the English translation and the Russian original "mysteriously disappeared," and the translator assumed that Stalinist agents had stolen it from his study. Twenty years later the manuscript "mysteriously reappeared," and, after Eastman's death, the English version was completed by Maurice Friedberg, who also supplied some not too interesting footnotes. It was published in 1972 as *The Young Lenin*. Actually, the mysterious disappearance would seem to have resulted from some disorder in Eastman's files and work habits, for the present reviewer read the work in French in the middle thirties under the title *La jeunesse de Lenine* and acknowledged a considerable debt to it on pages 46–50 of *Three Who Made a Revolution*. A German translation, equally good, appeared simultaneously with the French. In any case, despite the delay of twenty years, the little book is a most welcome and valuable addition to our source material on V. I. Lenin.

In its pages Leon Trotsky has examined all the evidence available in memoirs and documents concerning Lenin's youth, and with patient and ironical persistence reduces all the official legends and apocryphal, made-to-order "memories" to foolishness. Bolshevik political prudery is reticent and mendacious concerning the political views of Lenin's father, Ilia Nikolaevich Ulianov. According to the official legend Lenin's father "regarded the revolutionary movement with great sympathy," made of his home a sort of revolutionary discussion club in which "the tone was given by Alexander, Lenin's older brother, . . . while Vladimir participated frequently in the discussions with great success." These successes in atheist and revolutionary exposition must have occurred when Vladimir Ilich was thirteen and fourteen, since his father died when he was fifteen. Against this and kindred legends, Trotsky adduces the evidence of Lenin's elder sister, who wrote, "Our father was never a revolutionary"—the evidence of the tsarist government which promoted Ilia Nikolaevich from teacher to inspector, from inspector to director of primary instruction for an entire province, and gave him a cash bonus for "his excellent services and his zeal." Finally, Trotsky adds a clincher from Lenin himself, who in answer to a party questionnaire containing the question, "When did you stop being religious?" wrote in his own hand, "At the age of sixteen."

In similar fashion Trotsky disposes of the legend that Lenin got his revolutionary impulses and even the first volume of *Das Kapital* from his brother Alexander, who died on the scaffold. "Half a year after his father's death," Trotsky writes, "Vladimir remained completely untouched politically and did not show the slightest interest in the economics books of Alexander." It is true that Alexander's death and the cowardice of local liberals in their attitude toward the Ulianov family left their mark on Lenin's spirit, yet his development was both different and slower than the stories and "memories" invented on party command. "Unlike coins," comments Trotsky with acerbity as he moves from tall tale to taller tale, "invented stories do not wear down with circulation, but on the contrary grow bigger."

Though this work of sanitation is probably the chief merit of Trotsky's *Youth of Lenin*, the brief book (224 smallish pages) contains much else of value. It begins

with a study of Simbirsk, its atmosphere and its role in Russian history, based largely on the work of Goncharov. It contains an excellent profile of the character of Lenin's brother, Alexander, and an interesting contrast between their two temperaments. It offers Trotsky's own analysis of the role of the Russian intelligentsia, the tsarist terror, which seems strangely mild when we think of the subsequent terror under the regime that Lenin and Trotsky founded, and Trotsky's analysis of the revolutionary terror against the tsar and his officials, which also pales in comparison with the terror from below that has developed as the harsh heritage of the brutalization of our age in the wake of two total wars and two totalitarian revolutions. But the book is most notable for its picture of the young Lenin, which is good enough, and on the whole dispassionate enough, to make us wonder what Trotsky would have made of the later periods of Lenin's life if he had completed his original intention instead of being derailed by what is undoubtedly a far less interesting portrait of Stalin.

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1905. By *Leon Trotsky*. Translated by *Anya Bostock*. *Studies in the Third World Books*. New York: Random House, 1971. xxi, 488 pp. \$15.00.

Anya Bostock's smooth and accurate translation makes available in English this classic study of the Revolution of 1905 first published in German in 1908. The translation is from the 1922 Russian edition, which contains additional speeches and essays on the subject composed by Trotsky between 1907 and 1922 as well as a vivid personal account of his exile in Siberia and subsequent escape.

The book continues to be, after sixty-five years, a significant historical account of the events of 1905 as well as an important source on the development of Trotsky's ideas and the polemics which grew up around them following that revolution. It is not intended to be a balanced or definitive treatment of the entire revolution as much as an analysis centering principally on the events in St. Petersburg (mainly on the Soviet) and not least of all on Trotsky himself. This is accentuated in the addenda (comprising almost half the book) which consist of Trotsky's post-1905 defense of his course of action, both in court (his speech against the prosecution during the 1907 trial of the Soviet leaders) and in print (essays arguing against a wide spectrum of leftist criticism by various Mensheviks, Bolsheviks, and Kadets).

What emerges is a clear elaboration of ideas stemming from the 1905 experience which gave Trotsky his distinctive position in the history of Russian revolutionary thought. These include a perceptive awareness of Russia's peculiarities and the implication that revolution in Russia would not proceed according to Western precedents; an appreciation that the course of history is determined less by rational calculation than by the willingness of human beings to act; a realization of the importance of force in revolution and the crucial role of the army in deciding the outcome; and an early grasp of the significance of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies as a revolutionary institution. In emphasizing the Soviet, Trotsky made his contribution to the whole mystique that grew up around it, which was crucial to the confident assertion of proletarian hegemony that pervaded his thought.

However, Trotsky's confidence in the inviolable unity of party and soviet and worker leads him to avoid altogether the vexing question of the relative importance of each in the organization of this hegemony. The book also contains ample