

EDITOR'S PREFACE



If any man made history, Lenin did. But for him, Marxism would not be accepted now by one-third of mankind, and Marx himself might be remembered only as one of dozens of nineteenth-century intellectuals. Thus Lenin seems to have been the incarnate refutation of the Marxist view of history—and Marxism is in large measure a view of history. According to Marx, major historical developments are in some sense necessary and even predictable, and the presence of this or that individual here or there is not decisive. Such men as Lenin, and also Stalin and Hitler, suggest that Marx was wrong and that accidents play a crucial role in history. Moreover, Marx predicted that “the revolution” would occur in the advanced industrial societies of the West and not in Russia or China. One might therefore have expected Lenin to say, more or less: “You have heard that Marx said . . . But I say . . .” Instead, Lenin made Marxism the creed of millions.

Rolf Then brings to life Lenin as a human being. He shows how Lenin gradually formed his own revolutionary world view and how he transformed Marxism. Then is thoroughly at home both in Lenin’s writings and in the multilingual literature about him and offers many new interpretations. In the notes, everything is documented meticulously, but the text can be read straight through and is never weighed down by the scholarship that backs it up. It is rare for a scholar in

any field to be able to communicate so much excitement, and doubly rare for anyone to compress such a wealth of information into such a short book.

For those who want to find out what Lenin thought and did, this is a superb introduction. At the same time this book is also a genuine contribution to Lenin scholarship. Those who take a more worshipful view of Lenin will have to grapple with Theen's account.

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