

## INTRODUCTION

Every revolution needs its spokesmen or women. While perhaps the most polished orator of the Russian Revolution was Leon Trotsky, it is the voice of Vladimir Lenin, the architect of the Revolution, which rings out through history as the authentic call to arms against the tyranny of *anciens régimes* everywhere.

Lenin knew how to galvanize crowds. He fixed his audience with a penetrating stare and paced purposefully on the platform. His fingers instinctively clutched the edge of the podium as he leaned forward, giving the impression – and authority – of a natural teacher. Yet his rhetorical skills were limited by his awkward manner and stocky appearance. He took time to gather momentum in his speeches and even then never overcome his inability to pronounce properly the letter ‘r’. This apparent rusticity gave him an air of self-conviction in the eyes of the masses, reinforcing his credibility and authority.

Morgan Philips Price, the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent, who heard Lenin speak, recalled: ‘No uncertain words came from his lips. Straight to the point he went from the first moment of his speech and pursued his opponents with merciless logic.’<sup>1</sup>

Lenin’s contemporary, Nikolai Sukhanov, described Lenin as ‘a thunderous orator’ who would pound home his arguments with a relentless logic that enslaved his listeners.<sup>2</sup>

It was this quality which Josef Stalin recalled on first hearing Lenin. ‘I was captivated by that irresistible force of logic...which, although somewhat terse, gained a firm hold on his audience, gradually electrified it, and then, as one might say, completely overpowered it.’<sup>3</sup>

This driving power is also evident in his writing. Lenin captivated readers with the sheer force of his arguments. He heightened their effect through the use of apocalyptic language and hard-hitting descriptions of the perceived adversaries of Marxism. He wrote with the self-conviction of a natural leader, mesmerising even those who did not agree with him. He cast the struggle of the age as one fundamentally of class and advocated the necessity of ruthless, violent measures. He expressed these ideas with such clarity and brevity and force as to create a body of eminently quotable quotations, long before the age of the sound bite.

Lenin’s role as orator of revolution is witnessed by the many unverified and dubious revolutionary quotations attributed to him circulating on the Internet – a fate he shares with many standard bearers of diverse causes, whose preeminent positions are illicitly used to authorize new works. This little volume, culled from the vast 45-volume work *VI Lenin: Collected Works* (Moscow, 1927– ) via the Marxists Internet Archive, gathers some of Lenin’s most memorable sayings. Together, these give a glimpse into the rhetorical power and conviction of a man whose name has become synonymous with the October Revolution and who remains the embodiment of the idea of revolution.

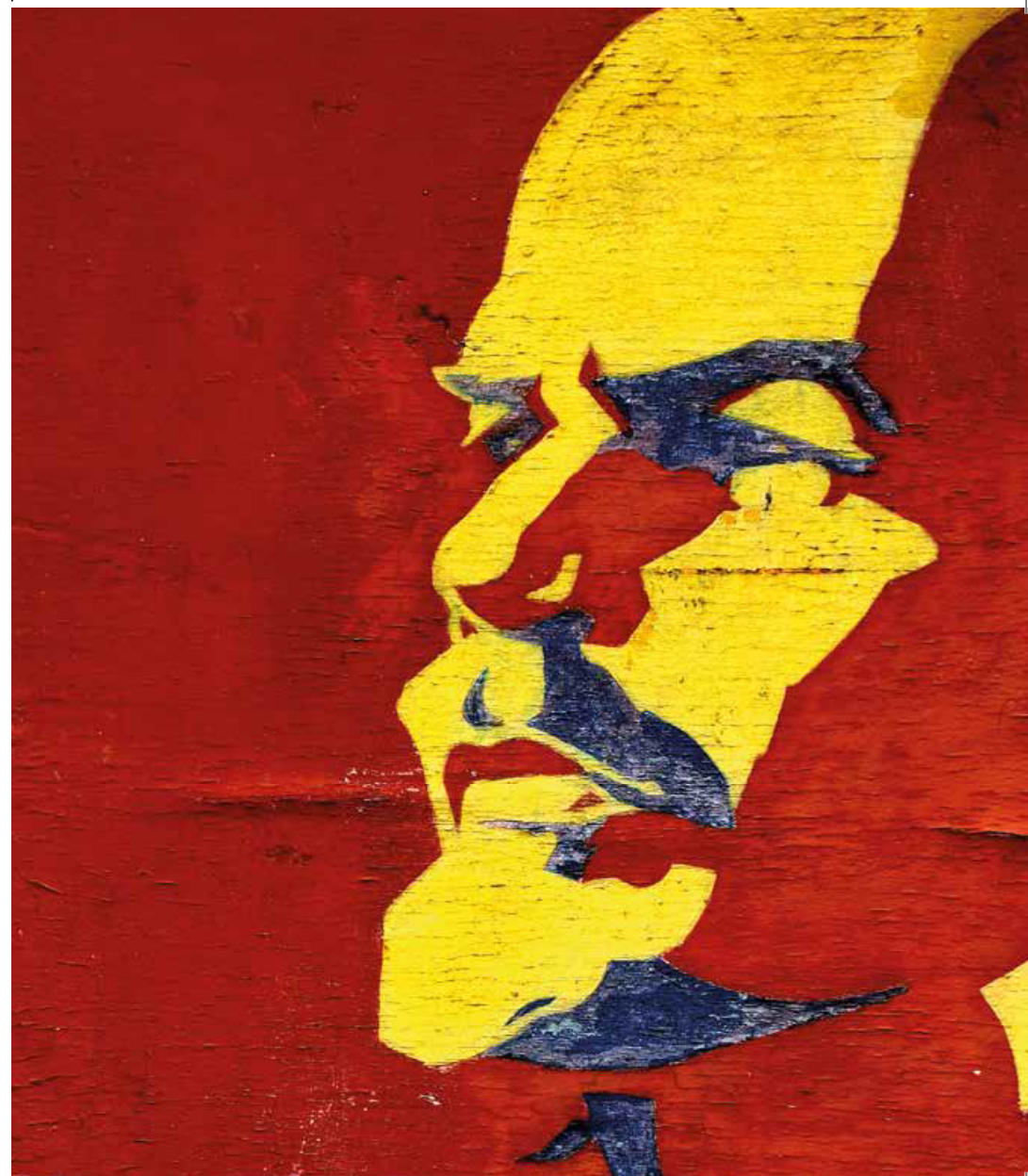
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1. Morgan Philips Price, *My Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution* (London, 1921), pp. 43–6.

2. *The Russian Revolution 1917: A Personal Record* by N.N. Sukhanov, ed. and tr. Joel Carmichael (Oxford, 1955), p. 284.

3. J. V. Stalin, ‘Lenin’, in *Works* (Moscow, 1954), Vol. 6, January–November, 1924, pp. 54–66, consulted via Marxists Internet Archive.

**‘Revolution can  
never be forecast;  
it cannot be foretold;  
it comes of itself.  
Revolution is brewing  
and is bound to flare up.’**



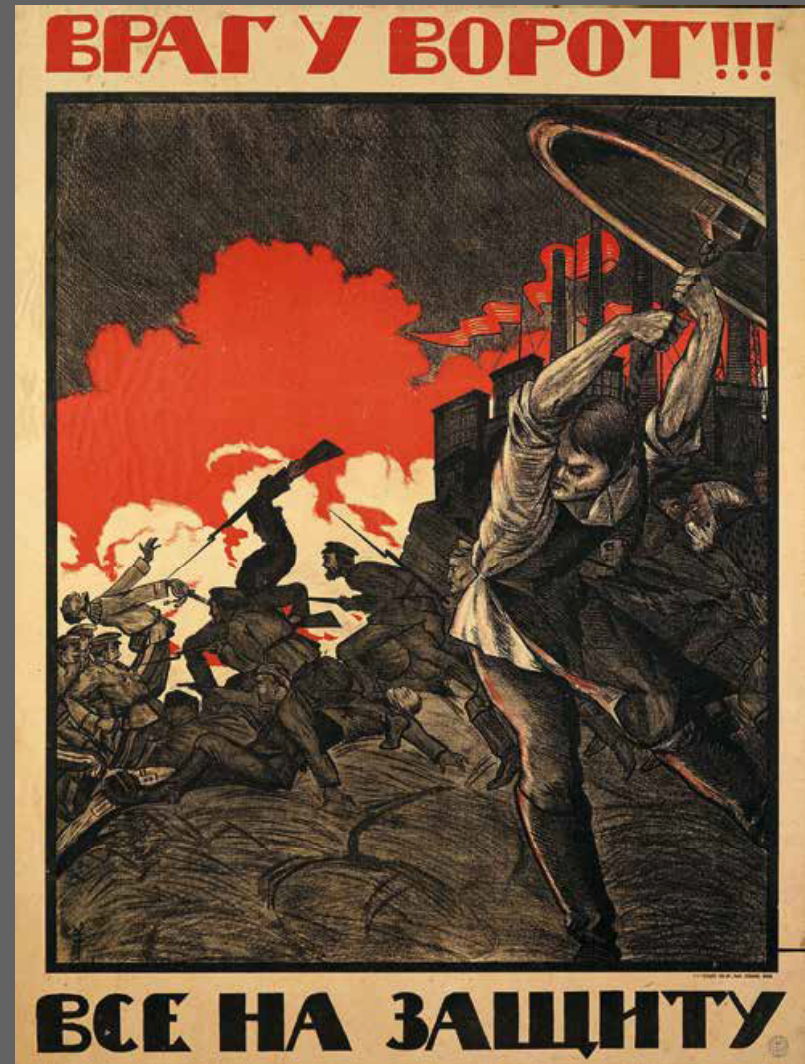


**‘The bourgeoisie incites the workers of one nation against those of another in the endeavour to keep them disunited.’**

*Friendship of the nations, 1923.*  
Detail of a painting by Stepan Karpov.

**‘Surely you do not  
imagine that we shall  
be victorious without  
applying the most cruel  
revolutionary terror?’**

Anti-White Army poster, 1917, with the caption:  
‘Enemy at the gates! Everyone to the defence’.



**'No mercy for these enemies of the people, the enemies of socialism, the enemies of the working people! War to the death against the rich and their hangers-on, the bourgeois intellectuals; war on the rogues, the idlers and the rowdies!'**

Detail from a poster of a Red Army soldier chasing off Finnish, Latvian, Estonian, Romanian and Polish profiteers with the caption: 'Be on your guard!', by D. Moor, 1917.





**‘When a liberal is abused, he says, ‘Thank God they didn’t beat me.’ When he is beaten, he thanks God they didn’t kill him. When he is killed, he will thank God that his immortal soul has been delivered from its mortal clay.’**

Detail from *Painterly Construction*  
by Lyubov Popova, 1920.



**‘Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich — that is the democracy of capitalist society.’**

Poster with the caption, ‘Those who are against the Soviets’, 1917.