

Lenin on the Smoking Question

Fifth Estate Collective

When Lenin and 32 other Russian refugees (30 adult revolutionaries and 2 children) were returning to Russia via a sealed train through Germany they encountered a number of problems living together. One of the earliest conflicts in the railroad carriage arose between smokers and non-smokers. Lenin was a nonsmoker and detested smoking. It had been agreed at the beginning of the journey that those people who wanted to smoke had to do so in the toilet. A line formed in the corridor outside the toilet and eventually arguments broke out between the smokers and the “comrades” who wanted to use the toilet for its intended purpose. Since the vast majority of the people were Bolsheviks, Lenin, as the leader of the Party, was called upon to settle the question. He wrote out passes, which had to be presented in order for the toilet to be used. There were two kinds of passes—those for organic use had the first priority, and those for inorganic, smoking purposes had second priority.

(Summarized from N.K. Krupskaya [Lenin’s wife] *Memoirs of Lenin*, in 2 vols., 1959)



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