

J. V. Stalin

Leninism or Trotskyism

Source: [*The Errors of Trotskyism*](#)

Publisher: [Communist Party of Great Britain](#)

Transcription/Markup: Brian Reid

Public Domain: Marxists Internet Archive (2007). You may freely copy, distribute, display and perform this work; as well as make derivative and commercial works. Please credit "Marxists Internet Archive" as your source.

[At the Plenary Meeting of the Communist Section of the Central Trade Union Council on November 19th, 1924.]

Comrades, I will confine myself to unmasking a few legends which have been spread by Comrade Trotsky and others of the same opinion as to the October revolution, the part played by Comrade Trotsky in the revolution, as to the Party and the preparations for October, etc. In doing so I shall treat Trotskyism as a singular ideology which is quite irreconcilable with Leninism, and speak of the duties of the Party in connection with the recent literary undertakings of Comrade Trotsky.

The Facts as to the October Revolution

First of all, as to the October revolution. Strong rumours are being spread among the members of the Party, that the C.C. as a whole is said to have been opposed to the insurrection in October, 1917. The tale usually goes that on Oct. 10th, when the C.C. passed a resolution regarding the organisation of the revolt, the majority of the C.C. pronounced against the revolt, but that just then a workman forced his way into the committee and said: "You have passed a resolution against the revolt, but I tell you that it will take place in spite of everything." The C.C. is said to have been alarmed by these threats, to have discussed anew the question of the revolt, and to have decided to organise it.

This is no simple rumour, comrades. The well-known John Reed, who was not connected with our Party, and naturally could not know the history of our conspirative meeting on October 10th, so that he fell into Mr. Suchanow's trap, writes about it in his book "Ten Days which Shook the World." This tale is printed and repeated in a whole series of brochures which originate from the pens of Trotsky's adherents, among others in one of the latest brochures about October written by Comrade Syrkin.

These rumours are supported in an increased degree by the latest literary enterprise of Comrade Trotsky. It is hardly necessary to prove that all these and similar "Arabian Nights" do not correspond to the facts, that nothing of the sort happened or could have happened at the meeting of the C.C. We might, therefore, pass over these rumours, for indeed, many unfounded and silly rumours are manufactured in the studies of persons in opposition or not connected with the Party. We have, as a matter of fact, done so until recently, for instance, by paying no attention to the mistakes of John Reed and not troubling to correct them. But after the recent enterprises of Comrade Trotsky, it is really impossible to pass over these legends, for efforts are being made to educate the youth on the lines of these legends, which have unfortunately already met with some success. I feel, therefore, compelled to confront these silly rumours with the actual facts. Let us take the minutes of the meeting of the C.C. of our Party from 10th to 23rd Oct. 1917. Present: Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin, Trotsky, Sverdlov, Uritzky, Dzershinsky, Kollontay, Bubnov, Sokolnikov, Lomov. The question to be discussed is the situation at the time and the insurrection. After the debate, a resolution of Comrade Lenin's as to the revolt is put to the vote. The

resolution was passed with a majority of 10 votes against 2. It seems, therefore, perfectly clear that the C.C. resolved by a majority of 10 against 2 votes to proceed immediately with the practical work for the organisation of the insurrection. At this meeting, the C.C. chose a political central committee with the title of a political bureau, consisting of Lenin, Zinoviev, Stalin, Kamenev, Trotsky, Sokolnikov and Bubnov to lead the revolt.

These are the facts.

These Minutes immediately destroy several legends. They destroy the legend that a majority of the C.C. pronounced against the insurrection. They also destroy the legend that the C.C. was faced by a split on the question of the insurrection. It is evident from the Minutes, that the opponents of immediate revolt—Comrades Kamenev and Zinoviev, joined the organ for the political direction of the revolt, just as did those who were in favour of it. There was not and cannot be any question of a split.

Comrade Trotsky asserts that in the persons of Comrades Kamenev and Zinoviev, we had in October, a right-wing, almost a wing of Social-Democrats in our Party. In view of this it seems difficult to understand how it could happen that the Party escaped a split; how it could happen that, in spite of the differences of opinion, the comrades in question were placed by the Party at the most important posts, were elected to the political central committee of the insurrection, etc. Lenin's intolerance of Social-Democrats is well known in the Party; the Party knows that he would not for a moment have agreed to have comrades with Social-Democratic leanings in the Party let alone in the most important posts.

How is it to be explained that the Party escaped a split? It is explained by the fact that these comrades were old Bolsheviki who stood on the general foundation of Bolshevism. In what did this general foundation consist? In a conformity of views as to the fundamental questions, the questions as to the character of the Russian revolution, as to the driving force of the revolution, the role of the peasants, the principles of party leadership, etc. Without such a general foundation, a split would have been inevitable. No split took place, and the differences of opinion only lasted a few days, and that because Comrades Kamenev and Zinoviev were Leninists, were Bolsheviki.

Let us now pass on to the legend as to the special part played by Comrade Trotsky in the October revolution. Comrade Trotsky's partisans vigorously spread rumours that the inaugurator and the only leader of the October revolution was Comrade Trotsky. These rumours are specially spread by Comrade Lenzner, editor of Trotsky's works. By the fact that Comrade Trotsky systematically neglects to mention the Party, the C.C. and the Petrograd committee, and is silent as to the leading part played by these organisations in the work of the revolution, putting himself in the foreground as its central figure, he himself, intentionally or unintentionally, promotes the spread of the rumour as to the special part played by him in the revolution.

I am far from denying the undoubtedly important part played by Comrade Trotsky in the revolution. I must, however, say that Comrade Trotsky, neither did nor could play any special part, that he as chairman of the Petrograd Soviet only carried out the will of the Party authorities in question who supervised everyone of his steps. To members of the petty bourgeoisie, such Suchanov, all this may appear strange, but the facts, the actual facts completely confirm my statement.

Let us take the Minutes of the following meeting of the 16th of October. Present: the members of the C.C. plus representatives of the Petrograd committee plus representatives of the military organisation, of the factory committees of the trade unions, of the railwaymen. Among those present were, besides the members of the C.C., Krylenko, Schotman, Kalinin, Volodarsky, Schlapnikov, Lazis and others. The question for discussion is the insurrection from the purely practical point of view of organisation. Lenin's resolution as to the insurrection was passed by a majority of 20 votes against 2, 2 refraining from voting. The practical central committee for organising the direction of the revolt was elected. Five comrades were elected to this committee: Sverdlov, Stalin, Dsherinsky, Bubnov, Uritzky. The duties of the central committee consisted in directing all the practical organs of the insurrection in accordance with the instructions of the C.C. As you see, something "terrible" happened at this meeting of the C.C. *i.e.*, the "inaugurator," the "central figure," the "only leader" of the insurrection, Comrade Trotsky, was not elected a member of the practical central committee, whose duty it was to direct the insurrection.

How can this be reconciled with the opinion in general circulation as to the special part played by Comrade Trotsky? It is indeed somewhat “strange” as Suchanov or Comrade Trotsky’s adherents would say. Strictly speaking, there is, however, nothing “strange” in it, for Comrade Trotsky a comparatively new man in our Party at the time of October, neither did nor could play a special part, either in the Party or in the October revolution. He, like all the responsible functionaries, was only an agent of the will of the C.C. Anyone who knows the mechanism of the Party leadership of the Bolsheviki will understand without much difficulty, that it could not have been otherwise, for had Comrade Trotsky begun to act contrary to the will of the C.C., he would have been deprived of his influence on the course of things. All the talk about the special part played by Comrade Trotsky is a legend which is spread by officious “Party” gossips.

This, of course, does not mean that the October revolution did not have its instigator and leader. But this was Lenin and no other—the same Lenin whose resolutions were accepted by the Central Committee in deciding the question of the revolution, the same Lenin who was not hindered by illegality from becoming the instigator of the revolution, in spite of the assertions of Comrade Trotsky. It is foolish and ridiculous to endeavour by gossiping about illegality to erase that indubitable fact that the leader of the Party, V. I. Lenin, was the instigator of the revolution.

These are the facts.

Granted, they say, but it cannot be denied that Comrade Trotsky fought well in the October period. Yes, it is true, Comrade Trotsky really fought bravely in October. But in October, not only Comrade Trotsky fought bravely, so did even the left social revolutionaries who at that time stood side by side with the Bolsheviks. Altogether it must be said that it is not difficult to fight bravely in a period of victorious insurrection, when the enemy is isolated and the insurrection is growing. In such moments even the backward ones become heroes. But the battle of the proletariat is not always an attack, not always exclusively a chain of successes. The fight of the proletariat has its trials, its defeats. A true revolutionary is one who not only shows courage in the period of victorious insurrection, but who at the same time shows courage at a moment of retreat of the revolution, in a period of defeat of the proletariat; who does not lose his head nor fall out, if the revolution fails and the enemy succeeds; who, in the period of the retreat of the revolution, does not fall a victim to panic and despair.

The left social revolutionaries did not fight badly in the October period when they supported the Bolsheviks. Who however, is not aware that these “brave” warriors were seized with panic in the Brest period when the attack of German imperialism threw them into despair and hysterics? It is a sad but indisputable fact that Comrade Trotsky, who had fought well in the October period, lost his courage in the Brest period, the period of temporary failure of the revolution, to such an extent that in this difficult moment he was not steadfast enough to resist following in the footsteps of the left social revolutionaries. There is no doubt that the moment was a very difficult one, that it was necessary to display an iron self-possession so as not to be worn out, to give way at the right moment and to accept peace at the right moment, to protect the proletarian army against the thrust of German imperialism, to preserve the peasant reserves and after having in this way attained a breathing space, to strike out at the enemy with renewed force. But alas, Comrade Trotsky did not display such courage and such revolutionary steadfastness at this difficult moment.

In Comrade Trotsky’s opinion, the chief lesson of the proletarian revolution of October is “not to run off the rails.” This is wrong, for the assertion of Comrade Trotsky contains only a small part of the truth as to the lessons of the revolution. The whole truth as to the lesson is to avoid “running off the rails,” not only in the days of the revolutionary attack, but also in the days of retreat of the revolution, when the enemy has gained the upper hand and the revolution is suffering defeat. The revolution is not exhausted with October. October is only the beginning of the proletarian revolution. It is bad to run off the rails when the revolution is in the process of development, it is worse when it happens in the hour of severe trial of the revolution, after power has been seized. It is no less important to hold fast to the power on the day after the revolution, than to seize it. Since Comrade Trotsky ran off the rails in the Brest period, the period of severe trial for our revolution when it was almost a case of yielding up the power, he ought to understand that his pointing out of the mistakes made by Kamenev and Zinoviev in October, is entirely out of place.

The Party and the Preparations for October

Let us now pass on to the question of the preparations for October. If one listens to Comrade Trotsky, one is tempted to think that the Bolshevik Party during the whole period of October only did just what turned up, that it was devoured by internal dissensions, and that it hindered Lenin in every possible way and that, had it not been for Comrade Trotsky, no one knows how the revolution might have ended. It is rather amusing to hear these strange statements of Comrade Trotsky about the Party, who in the same “preface” to Volume III. states that “the chief weapon of the proletarian revolution is the Party,” that “without the Party, beyond the Party, independently of the Party, by a substitution of the Party, the proletarian revolution cannot win,” from which argument Allah himself could not understand how our revolution could have been victorious, since “its chief weapon” was inadequate and yet no victory is possible “independently of the Party.” It is not, however, the first time that Comrade Trotsky serves us up such strange fare. We must take it for granted that the entertaining speeches about our Party belong to the usual peculiarities of Comrade Trotsky. Let us glance briefly at the preparations for October according to the various periods.

1. The Period of Re-Orientation of the Party (March-April). The fundamental facts of this period are: (a) the fall of Czarism; (b) the formation of the provisional government (dictatorship) of the bourgeoisie; (c) the rise of soldiers and workmen’s soviets (dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry); (d) the double government; (e) the April demonstration; (f) the first crisis of power.

The characteristic feature of this period is the fact that side by side, concurrently and simultaneously, there exist both the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and that of the proletariat and the peasantry, the latter showing confidence in the former, believing in its efforts for peace, voluntarily conferring the power on the bourgeoisie and thus turning itself into its appendage. Serious conflicts between the two dictatorships had not yet arisen. Instead of this there was a “contact commission.”

This was the greatest change in the history of Russia and a hitherto unexperienced turn in the history of our Party. The old pre-revolutionary platform of the direct overthrow of the government was clear and definite, but was no longer united to the new conditions of the fight. It was now impossible to aim directly at the overthrow of the Government, for it was bound up with the Soviets which were under the influence of the social patriots, and the Party would have had to carry on an unbearable fight against both the Government and the Soviets. But it was also impossible to carry out a policy for the support of the Provisional Government for this was a government of imperialism.

A re-orientation of the Party under the new conditions of the fight was necessary. The Party (its majority) approached this re-orientation very cautiously. It adopted the policy of a pressure of the Soviets on the Provisional Government in the question of peace, but did not at once make up its mind to take the further step from the old slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry to the new slogan of all power to the Soviets. This double-faced policy was calculated to convince the Soviets through the concrete questions of peace of the genuinely imperialistic nature of the Provisional Government, and thus to tear them away from the latter. This was an entirely mistaken policy; for it produced pacifist illusions, supplied water to the mills of social patriotism and rendered the revolutionary education of the masses difficult. This mistaken attitude I shared at that time with other members of the Party, and I only renounced it altogether in the middle of April after I had subscribed to Lenin’s theses.^[1]

A re-orientation was necessary. This reorientation was given to the party by Lenin in his famous theses of April. I will not enter into detail as to these theses, as they are known to everyone. Were there at that time differences of opinion between the Party and Lenin? Yes, there were. How long did these differences of opinion last? Not more than a fortnight. The conference of the organisation of the whole town of Petrograd (second half of April), which accepted Lenin’s theses, was a turning point in the development of our Party. The State Conference at the end of April only completed the work of the Petrograd conference in a measure appropriate to the State, gathering, by the united attitude of the Party, nine-tenths of the Party round itself.

Now, after seven years, Comrade Trotsky shows malicious joy at long passed differences of opinion among the Bolsheviks, by representing these differences of opinion almost as a fight of two Parties within Bolshevism. But

first of all, Comrade Trotsky exaggerates in an outrageous manner, and inflates the whole subject; for the Bolshevik Party has outlived these differences of opinion without being in the least shaken. In the second place our Party would be a caste and not a revolutionary Party if it did not admit different shades of opinion in its midst, but it is well-known that there were differences of opinion amongst us also in the past, thus, for instance, in the period of the third Duma, which, however, did not interfere with the unity of our Party. Thirdly, it will not be superfluous to ask what was Comrade Trotsky's attitude at that time, he who now takes malicious pleasure in long past differences of opinions.

The so-called editor of Trotsky's works, Comrade Lenzner, maintains that the American letters of Comrade Trotsky (March) "completely anticipate" Lenin's "Letters from Abroad" (March) which form the foundations of Lenin's April theses. He writes verbatim: "completely anticipate." Comrade Trotsky makes no objection to this analogy, so evidently accepts it with thanks, But first of all, Comrade Trotsky's letters "in no way resemble" Lenin's letters, either in spirit or in their conclusions, for they fully reflect Comrade Trotsky's anti-Bolshevik slogan: "No Tsar, but a Labour Government," a slogan which means the revolution without the peasantry. It is only necessary to look through these two groups of letters to convince oneself of this fact. Secondly, how can it be explained in this case that Lenin thought it necessary two days after his return from abroad to draw a line of separation between himself and Trotsky?

Who does not know of Lenin's repeated declarations, that Trotsky's slogan "No Tsar, but a Labour Government" is an attempt to "overlook the peasant movement which is not yet out of date," that this slogan is playing with the seizure of power by the Labour Government?^[2] What can Lenin's Bolshevik theses have in common with the anti-Bolshevik scheme of Comrade Trotsky, with his "playing with the seizure of power"? And where do these people get the passion with which they compare a miserable hovel with Mont Blanc? Why did Comrade Lenzner have to add, to the many legends about our revolution, another legend about "the anticipation" of Lenin's famous "Letters from Afar," by the American letters of Comrade Trotsky?^[3]

2. The period of the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses (May-August). Fundamental facts of this period: (a) The April demonstration in Petrograd and the formation of a Coalition Government with the participation of the "Socialists"; (b) the demonstration on May 1st in the most important centres of Russia with the slogan of the "democratic peace"; (c) the June demonstration in Petrograd with the chief slogan: "Down with the capitalist ministers"; (d) the June offensive on the front and the failures of the Russian army; (e) the armed July demonstration in Petrograd and the resignation of the ministers of the Cadet party from the government; (f) the bringing up of counter-revolutionary troops from the front, the destruction of the editorial office of the *Pravda*, the fight for the counter-revolution against the Soviets and the formation of a new coalition government with Kerensky at its head: (g) the Sixth Party Session at which was given the slogan for the preparation of an armed insurrection; (h) the counterrevolutionary imperial council and the general strike in Moscow; (i) the unfortunate attack of Kornilov on Petrograd, the revival of the Soviets, resignation of the cadets and formation of the "directorium."

As the characteristic feature of this period we must regard the sharpening of the crisis and the destruction of that unstable equilibrium between the Soviets and the Provisional Government, which in the previous period had, for better or worse, continued to exist. The double rule was unbearable for both sides. The fragile construction of the "contact commission" saw, its last days. The "crisis of power" and the "ministerial leap-frog" were at that time the most fashionable expressions. The crisis at the front and the disintegration behind the front did their work in that they strengthened the extreme wings and wedged in the social compromisers and social patriots on both sides. The revolution was mobilised, which brought about the mobilisation of the counter revolution. The counter revolution on the other hand fanned the flame of the revolution by intensifying the revolutionary conflagration. The question of the transference of power to a new class became the question of the day.

Were there at that time differences of opinion in our Party? There were. But, contrary to the statements of Comrade Trotsky who attempted to discover a "right" and a "left" wing of the Party they were of a purely objective nature. That is to say, they were differences of opinion of a kind without which no active Party life and no real party work can exist.

Comrade Trotsky is wrong when he maintains that the April demonstration in Petrograd brought about differences of opinion within the C.C. The C.C. was in this question absolutely unanimous and condemned the attempt of a group of comrades to arrest the “Provisional Government” at the moment when the Bolsheviki were in the minority both in the Soviets and in the army. If Comrade Trotsky had not written his “history” of October according to Suchanov’s material, but on the basis of the actual documents, he could easily have convinced himself of the incorrectness of his assertion.

Comrade Trotsky is undoubtedly wrong when he asserts that the “right” members of the C.C. designated as an “adventure” the attempt, on “Lenin’s initiative” to organise a demonstration on June 9th. If Comrade Trotsky had not written in accordance with Suchanov’s information he would certainly have known that the demonstration of July 9th was postponed in complete agreement with Lenin and that Lenin defended the postponement in an important speech at the well-known meeting of the Petrograd Committee (see Minutes of the Petrograd Committee).

Comrade Trotsky is entirely in the wrong when he speaks of the “tragic” differences of opinion within the C.C. in connection with the armed July demonstration. Comrade Trotsky is simply using his imagination when he assumes that some members of the leading group of the C.C. “must have regarded the July episode as a harmful adventure.” Comrade Trotsky, who at that time was not yet a member of the C.C. but only our Soviet representative in Parliament, could not, of course, know that the C.C. only regarded the July demonstration as a means for getting information about the opponent, that the C. C. (and Lenin) did not wish to turn nor think of turning the demonstration into an insurrection at a moment when the Soviets of the chief towns were still in favour of the social patriots. It is quite possible that some of the Bolsheviki actually pulled long faces in connection with the July defeat. I know for instance that some of the Bolsheviki who were arrested were even ready to leave our ranks. But to draw conclusions from this against some who are said to have been “rights” and to have been members of the C.C. is to distort history in a reckless manner.

Comrade Trotsky is wrong when he declares that in the Kornilov days, some of the heads of the Party showed a tendency to form a block with the social patriots in order to support the Provisional Government. Of course, the same so-called “rights” are meant, the comrades who disturb Trotsky’s sleep. Trotsky is wrong; documents exist, such as the central organ of the Party at that time, which upset Comrade Trotsky’s statements. Comrade Trotsky refers to a letter of Lenin’s to the C.C. with a warning against supporting Kerensky. But Comrade Trotsky fails to understand Lenin’s letters, their significance, their object. Sometimes Lenin purposely anticipates in his letters and places in the foreground those possible mistakes which might occur, criticises them in advance, so as to warn the Party and deter it from mistakes, or he sometimes exaggerates a “trifle” and “makes a mountain out of a molehill” for the same educational purpose.

A party leader, especially when he is in an illegal position cannot act otherwise, for he must see further than his companions and it is his duty to warn against every possible mistake, even “trifles.” But to draw a conclusion as to “tragic” differences of opinion from these letters of Lenin (and there are plenty of such letters) and to blazon it forth, shows a lack of understanding of Lenin’s letters, a lack of knowledge of Lenin. This no doubt explains the fact that Comrade Trotsky sometimes entirely fails to hit the mark. To resume: There were in the days of Kornilov’s advance, as a matter of fact, absolutely no differences of opinion in the C.C.

After the July defeat, it is true, a difference of opinion did arise between the C.C. and Lenin as to the fate of the Soviets. It is well-known that Lenin, who wished to concentrate the attention of the Party on the preparations for the insurrection outside the Soviets, warned it against allowing itself to be seduced by the Soviets, as in his opinion, the Soviets which had already been rendered nauseous by the social patriots, had become hopelessly barren. The C.C. and the Sixth Party Session took a more cautious line and decided that there was no sufficient reason for thinking it impossible to revive the Soviets. Kornilov’s advance showed that this decision was right. In any case this difference of opinion had no actual significance for the Party. Lenin subsequently admitted that the line taken by the Sixth Party Session had been the right one. It is interesting that Comrade Trotsky did not cling to this difference of opinion and did not exaggerate it to a “monstrous” degree.

A united and consolidated Party which stands in the centre of the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses, this is the picture of the situation of our Party at that period.

3. The Period of the Organisation of the Attack (September-October). The fundamental facts of this period are: (a) the summoning of the Democratic Council and the collapse of the idea of a block with the cadets; (b) the going over of the Soviets of Moscow and Petrograd to the Bolsheviks; (c) the Soviet Congress of the Northern district and the resolution of the Petrograd Soviet against the transfer of troops; (d) the resolution of the C.C. of the revolutionary military committee of the Petrograd Soviet; (e) the resolution of the Petrograd garrison regarding the system of the commissioners of the revolutionary military committee; (f) the formation of armed Bolshevik fighting forces and the arrest of members of the "Provisional Government"; (g) the seizure of power by the revolutionary military committee of the Petrograd Soviet and the formation of the Soviet of the People's Commissioners by the Second Soviet Congress.

As the characteristic feature of this period we must regard the rapid growth of the crisis, the complete confusion of the ruling circles, the isolation of the S.R. and of the Mensheviks and the wholesale going over of the vacillating elements to the Bolsheviks.

An original peculiarity of the revolutionary tactics of this period must be pointed out. This peculiarity consists therein that the revolution attempted to carry out every, or almost every step of its attack under the appearance of defence. There is no doubt that the refusal to permit the transfer of troops was a serious aggressive act of the revolution; nevertheless this attack was undertaken under the slogan of the defence of Petrograd against a possible attack of the external enemy. There is no doubt that the formation of the revolutionary military committee was a still more serious step in the attack against the Provisional Government; nevertheless it was carried out under the slogan of the organisation of the Soviet control over the activities of the military staff. There is no doubt that the open going over of the garrison to the revolutionary military committee and the organisation of the network of Soviet commissioners indicated the beginning of the insurrection; nevertheless these steps were taken under the slogan of the defence of the Petrograd Soviets against possible attacks of the counter-revolution.

It is as though the revolution had hidden its acts of aggression under the cloak of defence so as to attract all the more easily the undecided elements into its sphere of influence. This must also explain the apparent defensive character of the speeches, articles and slogans of this period, which none the less, in their intrinsic value, bore a thoroughly offensive character.

Were there at this period differences of opinion within the C.C.? Yes, there were, and those not unimportant ones. I have already mentioned the differences of opinion as regards the insurrection. They were fully explained in the Minutes of the C.C. of October 10th and 16th. We must now give more attention to three questions: the questions of the participation in the "Preliminary Parliament," of the part played by the Soviets in the insurrection and the time fixed for the insurrection. This is all the more necessary because Comrade Trotsky in his eagerness to put himself in a conspicuous place, unintentionally misrepresents Lenin's attitude towards the last two questions.

There is no doubt that the differences of opinion as to the question of the Preliminary Parliament were of a serious nature. What was, so to speak, the object of the Preliminary Parliament? That of helping the bourgeoisie to push the Soviets into the background and to lay the foundations of bourgeois parliamentarism. Whether the Preliminary Parliament, in the revolutionary situation which had become so complicated, was able to carry out this task, is another question events have shown that this object was unattainable, and the Preliminary Parliament itself represented a miscarriage of the Korniloviad. There is, however, no doubt that this was the aim pursued by the Mensheviks and the social revolutionaries when they created the revolutionary parliament. What can, under these circumstances, have been the share of the Bolsheviks in the Preliminary Parliament? Nothing else than the intention to deceive the proletariat as to the real character of the Preliminary Parliament. This chiefly explains that passion with which Lenin, in his letters, scourges the adherents of the Preliminary Parliament.

The participation in the Preliminary Parliament was doubtless a serious mistake. It would, however, be wrong to take for granted, as does Comrade Trotsky, that the partisans of participation entered the Preliminary Parliament with the object of organic work, to "guide the Labour movement into the channel of social democracy." This is quite wrong. This is not true. If it were true the party would not have succeeded in correcting this mistake by the demonstrative exit from the Preliminary Parliament. The living force and the revolutionary power of our Party were expressed, among other ways, in that it was able so speedily to make good its mistake. And now allow me

to correct a slight inexactness which has crept into the report of the “editor” of Trotsky’s works, Comrade Lenzner, concerning the committee of the Bolshevist fraction which decided the question of the Preliminary Parliament. Comrade Lenzner states that at this meeting there were two reporters, Kamenev and Trotsky. This is untrue. As a matter of fact there were four reporters: two for the boycott of the Preliminary Parliament (Trotsky and Stalin) and two for participation (Kamenev and Nogin).

But Comrade Trotsky is seen in a still worse light when it comes to Lenin’s attitude towards the question of the form of the insurrection. Comrade Trotsky makes it appear as though, had Lenin been followed, the Party would in October have seized power “independently of the Soviet and behind its back” (Trotsky “On Lenin,” p. 71 of the Russian edition). In the subsequent criticism of this nonsense which is ascribed to Lenin, Trotsky “dances and plays” and finally ends with the condescending sentence: “This would have been a mistake.” Comrade Trotsky here tells a lie about Lenin; he misrepresents Lenin’s view as to the part of the Soviets in the insurrection. We could quote a heap of documents which prove that Lenin proposed the seizure of power by the Soviets, by those of Petrograd or Moscow, and not behind the back of the Soviets. For what purpose did Comrade Trotsky need this more than strange legend about Lenin?

Comrade Trotsky comes off no better when he “expounds” the attitude of the C.C. and of Lenin to the question of the date for the insurrection. Comrade Trotsky communicates facts with regard to the famous meeting of October 10th, and maintains that at this meeting “a resolution was passed to the effect that the insurrection should take place not later than October 15th.” (Trotsky “On Lenin,” p. 72, Russian edition). It looks as though the C.C. had fixed the day of the revolution for October 15th, and had then itself made the resolution of no effect by postponing it to October 25th. Is this true? No, it is untrue. In this whole period, the C.C. only passed two resolutions altogether concerning the insurrection, one on the tenth, and one on the 16th of October. Let us look at these resolutions.

The resolution of the C.C. on October 10th is as follows:

“The C.C. finds that for the following reasons an armed insurrection is on the agenda: the international situation of the Russian revolution (mutiny in the German navy, the increasing growth of the socialist world revolution in the whole of Europe, the fear that the imperialists would make peace in order to choke the revolution in Russia), the military situation (the unquestionable determination of the Russian bourgeoisie and of Kerensky and Co. to hand over Petrograd to the Germans), the conquest of a majority in the Soviets by the proletarian Party, all this in connection with the peasant insurrection and with the transference of the confidence of the masses of the people to our Party (elections in Moscow), finally the obvious preparations for the second Korniloviad (removal of the troops from Petrograd, transfer of Cossacks to Petrograd, the encircling of Minsk by Cossacks, etc.).

“The C.C. thus finds that the insurrection has unavoidably and completely matured, and, therefore, calls upon all organisations of the Party to act accordingly and to judge and solve all practical questions (concerning the Soviet Congress of the Northern territory, the removal of troops from Petrograd, the coming into action of those from Moscow, Minsk, etc.), from this point of view.”

The resolution of the conference between the C. C. and the responsible functionaries on October 16th is as follows:

“This assembly welcomes and warmly supports the resolution of the C.C. and calls upon all organisations and all workers and soldiers to support the armed insurrection in every way and with all intensity, and to support the central committee which has been appointed for this purpose by the C.C.; it expresses its full conviction that the C.C. and the Soviets will in due time make known the right moment and the suitable means for the insurrection.”

You see, that Comrade Trotsky’s memory played him false as regards the date fixed for the insurrection and the resolution of the C. C. concerning the insurrection.

Comrade Trotsky is absolutely in the wrong when he maintains that Lenin under-estimated the legality of the Soviet, that Lenin had not understood the serious significance of the seizure of power by the All-Russian Soviet Congress on October 25th, that just for this reason Lenin had insisted on the seizure of power before October

25th. This is untrue. Lenin proposed the seizure of power before October 25th for two reasons. Firstly because it was to be feared that the counter revolutionaries might at any moment hand over Petrograd to the Germans, which would have cost the rising insurrection blood, and that, therefore, every day was precious. Secondly because of the mistake of the Petrograd Soviet in fixing and publicly announcing the day for the insurrection (October 25th), which could only be made good by the insurrection actually taking place before the day legally fixed.

The fact is that Lenin regarded the insurrection as an art and must have known that the enemy who (thanks to the lack of caution of the Petrograd Soviet) was informed as to the day of the insurrection, would undoubtedly make every effort to prepare for this day, that it was, therefore, necessary to steal a march on the enemy, *i.e.*, to begin with the insurrection necessarily before the day formally fixed. This chiefly explains the passion with which Lenin in his letters upbraids those who regard the date, October 25th as a fetish.

Events have shown that Lenin was entirely in the right. It is known that the insurrection was begun before the All-Russian Soviet Congress it is known that the power was actually seized before the opening of the All-Russian Soviet Congress, and that it was seized, not by the Soviet Congress but by the Petrograd Soviet, by the revolutionary military committee. The Soviet congress only took over the power from the hands of the Petrograd Soviets. For this reason Comrade Trotsky's long dissertations on the significance of the legality of the Soviets are certainly quite superfluous.

A living and powerful Party, at the head of the revolutionary masses, who storm and overthrow the bourgeois power, this is the condition of our Party at that period.

This is the truth as to the legends regarding the preparations for October.

Trotskyism or Leninism

We have already spoken of the legends about the Party and about Lenin, which Comrade Trotsky and his followers have disseminated. We have unveiled and refuted these legends. Now, however, the question arises: for what purpose did Comrade Trotsky want all these legends as to the preparations for October, as to Lenin and Lenin's Party? Why were the recent literary attacks of Comrade Trotsky on the party necessary? What is the sense, the purpose, the aim of these attacks, at present when the Party does not wish to discuss, when the Party is overburdened with a large amount of urgent tasks, at present when the Party needs united work for the restoration of its internal economy and not a new quarrel about old questions? Why does Comrade Trotsky want to drag the Party hack to new discussions?

Comrade Trotsky declares that all this is necessary for the "study" of October. But is it not possible to study the history of October without once more attacking the Party and its leader Lenin? But what kind of a "history" of October is this which begins and ends with the dethronement of the chief leader of the October revolution with the dethronement of the Party which organised and carried out this revolution?

No, this is no case of the study of October. This is not the way to study October. This is not the way the history of October is written. There is obviously another "intention." And according to all evidence, this "intention" is, that Comrade Trotsky is, with his literary attacks making another (one more!) attempt to prepare the conditions for replacing Leninism by Trotskyism. Comrade Trotsky feels it "absolutely" necessary to divest the Party and its cadres, which carried out the revolution, of their glory so as to pass from the dethronement of the Party to the dethronement of Leninism. The dethronement of Leninism is, however, necessary in order to represent Trotskyism as the "only proletarian" (no joke) ideology. All this of course (yes, of course!) under the flag of Leninism so that the process of being dragged over may be "as painless as possible."

This is the essence of Comrade Trotsky's most recent literary attacks.

For this Comrade Trotsky's literary attacks strain the question of Trotskyism to breaking point.

What then is Trotskyism ?

Trotskyism has three distinguishing features which place it in irreconcilable opposition to Leninism. What are these characteristic features?

Firstly. Trotskyism is the theory of the “permanent (uninterrupted) revolution”? But what is Trotskyism’s conception of the “permanent revolution”? It is the revolution without consideration of the small peasantry as a revolutionary force. Comrade Trotsky’s permanent revolution is, as Lenin says, the “neglect” of the peasant movement, a “game for the seizure of power.” Where does the danger of this lie? In that such a revolution, if one took the trouble to realise it, would end with a complete breakdown, as it would deprive the Russian proletariat of its ally, the small peasantry. This explains the fight which Leninism has been carrying on against Trotskyism since the year 1905.

How does Comrade Trotsky estimate Leninism from the point of view of this fight? He regards it as a theory which contains in itself “antirevolutionary” features. (Trotsky “1905,” Russian edition p. 285). On what is this angry remark against Leninism based? On the fact that Leninism always has defended and still does defend the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. Trotsky does not confine himself to this angry remark. He goes further when he states:

“The whole construction of Leninism is at present built up on lies and contains the poisonous germ of its own disintegration.” (See Comrade Trotsky’s letter to Tscheidse of Feb. 25th, 1913.)

As you see we are confronted by two opposed lines.

Secondly. Trotskyism is a distrust of the doings of the Bolshevik Party, of its unity, of its hostility to the opportunist elements. Trotskyism is, in the sphere of organisation, the theory of an association of revolutionaries and opportunists, of their groups and grouplets in the bosom of one united Party. The history of Comrade Trotsky’s “August block” is surely known to you, in which Martov’s adherents and Otsovists (those in favour of the withdrawal of the Duma delegates), liquidators and Trotskyians, having formed a “real” Party, work comfortably together. It is known that the aim of this strangely patched Party was the destruction of the Bolshevik Party. What then were at that time our “differences of opinion?” In that Leninism saw the guarantee of the development of the proletarian Party in the destruction of the “August block,” whereas Trotskyism saw in this block the foundation for the creation of a “real” Party.

Again, as you see, two opposed lines.

Thirdly, Trotskyism is a mistrust of the leaders of Bolshevism, an attempt to discredit and dethrone them. I know no current in the Party which could be compared with Trotskyism in its discrediting of the leaders of Leninism or of the central institutions of the Party. What for instance is Comrade Trotsky’s “amiable” remark about Lenin worth, when he describes him as a “professional exploiter of every backwardness in the Russian workers’ movement?” (See the already quoted letter to Tscheidse). This is however, by no means the most “amiable” remark of all the “amiable” remarks of Comrade Trotsky.

How was it possible that Comrade Trotsky who bore such an unpleasant burden on his back, yet found himself during the October movement in the ranks of the Bolsheviks? This happened because Comrade Trotsky at that time relieved himself (literally relieved) of his burden and hid it in a cupboard. Without this “operation” serious cooperation with Comrade Trotsky would have been impossible. The theory of the “August block,” *i.e.*, the theory of unity with the Mensheviks had been destroyed and cast away by the revolution, for how could there be any question of unity when there was an armed fight between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks? Comrade Trotsky had no alternative than to recognise the fact of the uselessness of this theory.

The same unpleasant affair “happened” with the permanent revolution, for none of the Bolsheviks thought of seizing power immediately on the day after the February revolution; Comrade Trotsky should have known that the Bolsheviks, to quote Lenin’s words, would not allow him “to play with the seizure of power.” Trotsky had no alternative but to acknowledge the policy of the Bolsheviks in the question of the struggle for influence in the Soviets, the struggle for the conquest of the peasantry. As for the third characteristic of Trotskyism (the mistrust

of the Bolsheviki leaders) it, of course, had to retire into the background in view of the obvious breakdown of the first two characteristics.

Could Comrade Trotsky in such a situation do anything but hide his burden in a cupboard and go to the Bolsheviki, he who, without even the pretence of a serious group behind him, came to the Bolsheviki as a political bankrupt, robbed of his army? Of course, he could do nothing else!

What lesson is to be learned from this? There is only one lesson: the long co-operation of the Leninists with Comrade Trotsky was only possible through his completely renouncing his old burden, through his completely identifying himself with Leninism. Comrade Trotsky writes on the lessons of October but he forgets that in addition to all the other lessons there is one more lesson of October which I have just told you, and that this is of primary importance for Trotskyism. It would do Trotskyism no harm to pay attention to this lesson of October.

But this lesson, as we have seen, has not agreed well with Trotskyism. The point of the matter is that the old burden of Trotskyism, which was hidden away in a cupboard in the days of the October movement, has now been dragged to light in the hope of disposing of it, all the more so as the market here has widened. Undoubtedly we have in the recent literary attacks of Comrade Trotsky an attempt to return to Trotskyism, to “overcome Leninism” and to drag forward and apply all the special peculiarities of Trotskyism.

The new Trotskyism is not a simple continuation of the old Trotskyism, it has become somewhat ragged and threadbare, it is in its spirit incomparably milder and in its form more moderate than the old Trotskyism, but without doubt, it retains fundamentally all the peculiarities of the old Trotskyism. The new Trotskyism does not make up its mind to fight openly against Leninism, it prefers to work under the general flag of Leninism and protects itself under the slogan of the interpretation, the improvement of Leninism. This for the reason that it is weak. We cannot regard it as an accident that the rise of the new Trotskyism coincided with the moment of Lenin’s death. Under Lenin he would not have dared to take this step.

What are the Characteristic Features of the New Trotskyism?

1. The question of the permanent revolution. The new Trotskyism does not consider it necessary openly to defend the permanent revolution. It “simply” affirms that the October revolution has fully confirmed the idea of the permanent revolution. From this it draws the following conclusion: the correct and acceptable features of Leninism are those which existed since the war, in the period of the October revolution, and on the other hand the incorrect and unacceptable features are those which existed before the war, before the October Revolution. Hence the theory of the Trotskians as to the division of Leninism into two parts: the pre-war Leninism, the “old, worthless” Leninism with its idea of a dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, and the new post-war Leninism of October, which they intend to adapt to the demands of Trotskyism. Trotskyism needs this theory of the division of Leninism as a first, more or less “acceptable” step which should facilitate the subsequent steps in the fight against Leninism.

But Leninism is no eclectic theory which is cemented together out of various elements and which permits of being divided. Leninism is an indivisible theory, which arose in the year 1903, has experienced three revolutions and now marches forward as the war banner of the world’s proletariat. “Bolshevism,” says Lenin, “has existed as a current in political life and as a political Party since the year 1903. Only the history of Bolshevism in the whole period of its existence can satisfactorily explain how it could, under the most difficult conditions, work out and preserve the iron discipline which is necessary for the victory of the proletariat.” (See Lenin “Infantile Sickness.”) Bolshevism and Leninism are essentially one. They are two names for one and the same object. Therefore, the theory of the division of Leninism in two parts is a theory of the destruction of Leninism, a theory of a replacement of Leninism by Trotskyism.

We need not waste words in proving that the Party cannot reconcile itself to these strange theories.

2. The question of the nature of the Party. The old Trotskyism undermined the Bolshevik Party with the aid of the theory (and practice) of unity with the Mensheviki. But this theory has so utterly become a scandal, that one

does not care to be even reminded of it. Modern Trotskyism has invented a new, less scandalous and almost “democratic” theory of the opposition of the old cadres to the youth of the Party, in order to undermine the Party.

Trotskyism recognises no unified and indivisible history of our Party. Trotskyism divides the history of our Party into two unequal parts, the part before, and the part after October. The part of the history of our Party before October is in reality no history, but a “preliminary history,” an unimportant or at least only slightly important period of preparation for our Party. That part of the history of the Party after October is the really genuine history of our Party. There “old, prehistoric,” unimportant cadres of our Party, here the new, real, “historical” Party. It is hardly necessary to point out that this original scheme of the Party history is a scheme for the undermining of the unity between the old and the new cadres of our Party, a scheme for the destruction of the active Bolshevik Party.

We need not waste any words in proving that the Party cannot reconcile itself to this strange theory.

3. The Question of Bolshevism. The old Trotskyism made efforts to belittle Lenin more or less openly without fearing the consequences. The new Trotskyism proceeds more cautiously. It makes efforts to carry on the part of the old Trotskyism in the form of praising Lenin, of praising his greatness. I think it worth while to quote a few examples.

The Party knows Lenin as a ruthless revolutionary. It also knows however, that Lenin was cautious, did not love intriguing politicians, and not infrequently held back too sharp terrorists, including Trotsky himself, with a firm hand. Comrade Trotsky treats this theme in his book “On Lenin.” But from his characterisation it would seem that Lenin only pretended, as “he emphasised on every suitable occasion the inevitability of terror.” (Page 104 of the Russian edition.) The impression resulting is, that Lenin was the most bloodthirsty of all the bloodthirsty Bolsheviks. Why did Comrade Trotsky need this unnecessary and in no way justified laying on of colour?

The Party knows Lenin as an exemplary comrade who did not care to answer questions on his own responsibility, impulsively, without the leading committee, without carefully feeling his way, and after cautious examination. Comrade Trotsky deals with this side of the question also in his book. But he gives us a picture not of but of some Chinese mandarin, who decides at random the most important questions in the silence of his study, as though he were illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

You wish to know how our Party decided the question of the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly? Hear Comrade Trotsky:

“The Constituent Assembly must, of course, be dissolved,” said Lenin, “but what then about the left social revolutionaries?” Old Natanson reassured us, however. He came to us “to talk things over,” and said immediately after the first words: “Well, if it comes to that, as far as I am concerned, dissolve the Constituent Assembly by force.”

“Bravo,” cried Lenin, full of joy, “what is right, must remain right. But will your people agree to it.”

“Some of us are vacillating, but I believe that in the long run they will agree,” answered Natanson. (See Trotsky “On Lenin,” p. 92, Russian edition.)

Thus is history written.

You want to know how the Party decided the question of the supreme war council. Listen to Comrade Trotsky:

“Without serious and experienced military leaders, we shall not emerge from this chaos,” said I to Vladimir Ilyitch, every time that I visited the staff.

“That is obviously true; but they will certainly betray us.”

“We will attach a commissar to each of them.”

“Two would be better still,” exclaimed Lenin, “but stalwart ones. It is surely impossible that we have no stalwart Communists.”

Thus began the formation of the supreme military council. (Trotsky: “On Lenin,” p. 106, Russian edition.) That is how Comrade Trotsky writes history.

Why did Comrade Trotsky need these Arabian Night entertainments which compromise Lenin? Surely not to magnify the Party leader, V. I. Lenin? We can hardly think so.

The Party knows Lenin as the greatest Marxist of our time, the profoundest theoretician and the most experienced revolutionary who was not guilty of even a shade of blanquism. Comrade Trotsky treats this side of the question also in his book. His characterisation however, reveals no giant Lenin, but some kind of a blanquist dwarf, who advises the Party in the October days “to seize power with their own hands independently of the Soviet and behind its back.” I have already said that this characterisation does not contain a word of truth.

Why did Comrade Trotsky need this glaring . . . inexactness? Is it not an attempt to slight Lenin “just a little?”

These are the characteristic features of Trotskyism.

Wherein lies the danger of the new Trotskyism? In that Trotskyism, according to its whole inner content, shows every sign of becoming a centre and meeting place of non-proletarian elements, which are striving to weaken and disintegrate the dictatorship of the proletariat.

What then? you will ask. What are the immediate duties of the Party in connection with the new literary attacks of Comrade Trotsky?

Trotskyism now steps forward with the object of dethroning Bolshevism and undermining its principles. The duty of the Party is to bury Trotskyism as a line of thought.

Reprisals against the opposition and the danger of a split are spoken of. This is nonsense, comrades. Our Party is strong and powerful. It will admit of no splits. As for reprisals, I am distinctly opposed to them. We need no reprisals now, but a developed battle of ideas against the resurrection of Trotskyism.

We did not desire this literary discussion, nor did we strive for it. Trotskyism forces it upon us by its anti-Leninist attacks. Well then, comrades, we are ready!

Notes

1. It is, well-known that Comrade Zinoviev, who Comrade Trotsky would like to turn into an “adherent of Hilferding” entirely shared Lenin’s point of view.

2. See Lenin’s Works, vol. xiv., pp. 31 and 32 (Russian edition). See also the reports at the conference of the whole of Petrograd and at the Imperial Conference of the R.C.P. (middle and end of April, 1917.)

3. We must consider as one of these legends the wide-spread version that Comrade Trotsky was the “only” or the “chief organiser” of the victories at the fronts in the civil war. In the interest of truth, comrades, I must declare that this version is absolutely contrary to the truth. I am far from denying the important part played by Comrade Trotsky in the civil war. I must, however, declare with all firmness, that the honour of being the organiser of our victories falls on no individual but on the great community of the advanced workers of our country, the Russian

Communist Party. Perhaps it will not be superfluous to quote a few examples. You know that Koltchak and Denikin were regarded as the chief enemies of the Soviet Republic. You know that our country only breathed freely after the victory over these enemies. And history says that our troops defeated these two enemies. Koltchak as well as Denikin in opposition to Trotsky's plans. Judge for yourselves!

1. Re Koltchak. It was in the summer of 1919. Our troops attacked Koltchak and operated before Ufa. Meeting of the C.C. Comrade Trotsky proposed to stop the attack on the line of Bjalaja river (before Ufa), to leave the Urals in Koltchak's hands, to remove part of our troops, from the Eastern front and to throw them on to the Southern front. Heated debates took place. The C.C. did not agree with Comrade Trotsky and found that the Urals with their works, their network of railways, should not be left in Koltchak's hands, because he could there easily bring his troops into order, collect large farmers round him and advance to the Volga, but that first of all Koltchak should be driven back over the ridge of the Urals into the Siberian steppes, and that only then should the transference of troops to the South be proceeded with. The C.C. declined Comrade Trotsky's plan. The latter resigned. The C.C. did not accept his resignation. The Commander in Chief, Wazetis, a partisan of Comrade Trotsky's plan, retired. His place was taken by a new Commander in Chief, Comrade Kamenev. From this moment onward, Comrade Trotsky declined any direct participation in the transactions on the Eastern front.

2. Re Denikin. The affair took place in Autumn, 1919. The attack against Denikin failed. The "steel ring" round Mamontov (the storming of Mamontov) was an obvious failure. Denikin took Kursk. Denikin approaches Orel. Comrade Trotsky was called from the Southern front to a meeting of the C.C. The C.C. declared the situation to be disquieting and resolved to send new military functionaries to the Southern front and to recall Comrade Trotsky. These functionaries demanded "non-interference" on the part of Comrade Trotsky on the Southern front. Comrade Trotsky withdrew from immediate participation in the action on the Southern front. The operations on the Southern front up to the taking of Rostov on the Don and of Odessa by our troops, proceeded without Comrade Trotsky.

[Stalin Archive](#)

[The Errors of Trotskyism Index](#)