

Trotsky's October 23, 1923 letter to the Central Committee and Central Control Commission of the Russian Communist Party

Leon Trotsky
23 October 2023

We are publishing here the letter sent by Leon Trotsky to members of the Central Committee (CC) and the Central Control Commission (CCC) of the Russian Communist Party on October 23, 1923. It arrived at the Secretariat, headed by Stalin, on October 24, 1923. Trotsky, ill and bed-stricken, was compelled to write this letter in response to an October 19 reply by “members of the Politburo” to his October 8 letter to the CC and CCC, in which he had outlined his programmatic differences with the Politburo majority. This reply was signed by Nikolai Bukharin, Grigory Zinoviev, Mikhail Kalinin, Lev Kamenev, Vyacheslav Molotov, Alexei Rykov, Joseph Stalin and Mikhail Tomsy — that is, all full and candidate members of the Politburo except Trotsky and the extremely ill Lenin.

In their letter, the Politburo majority accused Trotsky of serving “as the ring-leader of a struggle against the CC, as the initiator giving the slogan of going on the offensive against the CC during a difficult moment in the international situation, in view of which the Politburo doesn't have the right to refrain from answering comrade Trotsky's letter.” Much of the letter by the Politburo majority was focused on falsely claiming that there had been fundamental and long-standing differences between Lenin and Trotsky on matters of economic policy. Indirectly, the letter was also responding to the Declaration of 46 Old Bolsheviks who, one week prior, on October 15, had declared their political agreement with Trotsky's positions. The letter by the Politburo majority also misconstrued the differences surrounding matters of foreign policy, the German revolution, the state monopoly on the sale of vodka and the inner-party situation. It anticipated all the deceitful lies and distortions of anti-Trotskyism that would be developed in the struggle against the Opposition in the months and years to come. The aim was to falsely portray Trotsky as a long-standing antagonist of Lenin and someone who was alien to Bolshevism and what the letter called the “Bolshevik milieu.”

Trotsky's response is the first comprehensive document in the inner-party struggle in which he was forced to answer, in detail, not only political attacks but also distortions of the history of the Bolshevik Party and the October Revolution. In the months and years to come, defense of the historical truth about the conflicts within the Bolshevik Party and the history of the revolution itself would become a central component of the Left Opposition's struggle against Stalinism. Of particular significance in this struggle was the true record of what is now referred to as “Lenin's Last Struggle.” Trotsky cites extensively from documents that Lenin composed in the last months of his active political life when he was initiating a struggle against Stalin and the Soviet bureaucracy. For many decades, several of these and many other documents on the history of the revolution, the Bolshevik Party and the Opposition, were available only thanks to Trotsky's personal archives, which are held at Harvard University's Houghton Library and have now for the most part been digitized.

This letter was first published in full in the October 1990 edition of the Soviet journal *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, pages 167–182. In its issues of November 8 and 15, 1993, the *International Workers Bulletin*, the publication of the Workers League, the predecessor of the Socialist Equality Party (US), published the first English translation of this document as part of the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Left Opposition. We are publishing here an edited version of this translation with more comprehensive endnotes and references to documents cited. In the original document, Trotsky's use of numbers to enlist points was inconsistent. These inconsistencies were maintained in the translation.

TO MEMBERS OF THE CC AND CCC

To the Plenum.

24 October 1923

The [October 19] reply from members of the Politburo to my letter [of October 8] suggests that the authors of the letter considered the necessity and possibility of serious changes in the present party and economic policy to be excluded; it seems as if they have completely brushed aside the thought of creating normal conditions of healthy collective work in the leading bodies of the party. And this circumstance causes the greatest alarm.

I. The inner-party regime

1. First of all, the document shifts the entire question of the party crisis onto the plane of issuing formal accusations about creating a platform, about fractionalism and so forth. Such an accusation is, however, a glaring abuse of the resolution of the Xth Congress. There is absolutely no dispute that the existence of a fraction, i.e., of organized groups of co-thinkers within the party, represents an extraordinary danger. But this is still a long way from calling a fraction every attempt by individual party members or groups of party members to direct the attention of the Central Committee to errors and mistakes in the policy they are conducting. There is nothing more dangerous than taking to a bureaucratic absurdity the resolution banning the creation of fractional organizations inside the party. A truly non-fractional regime in the party can in actual fact be maintained only if the party, from the bottom to the top, remains an active and independent collective, if the development of party opinion doesn't come up against exceedingly artificial barriers, if the ruling bodies do not themselves conduct a policy of concealed fractional selection, and if they pay the greatest attention to the voice of inner-party criticism, without trying to liquidate every independent thought in the party with accusations of fractionalism.

2. On 11 October, at the session of the Politburo [which discussed Trotsky's October 8 letter — editor], comrade Dzerzhinsky blamed the Moscow Committee for circumstances in which rank-and-file members of the Moscow organization feel unable to openly express their opinion within the framework of the party organization but do so behind its back.

Comrade Zelensky, the secretary of the Moscow Provincial Committee, replied to this literally: “You say that in the party cells there is no life, that everyone keeps silent. But at the party conference concerning the German events, wasn’t it exactly the same way? There, too, everyone kept quiet.”

In speaking against the proposal to issue a new resolution of the Politburo obligating members of the party to inform about groupings in the party, comrade Bukharin said the following: “This would only be harmful. It would be understood **as an excess of police-type measures**, and we have enough of that as it is. We must **sharply turn the wheel in the direction of party democracy**.” Comrade Molotov declared that he would not object on his part, and when I asked what was it that he wouldn’t object to, comrade Molotov answered, that he wouldn’t object to “the elementary truths formulated by comrade Bukharin,” i.e., concerning the need to make a sharp turn in the direction of party democracy. All the sentences here have been given verbatim, since, in view of the extraordinary importance of the question, I immediately wrote down all the most important formulations. No one objected to the statement that we had to go ahead not with further threats, repression, clamping down, or, as comrade Bukharin said, by stepping up the police-type measures, but by means of a sharp turn of the wheel toward party democracy.

However, in the letter of the Politburo members there isn’t even a hint at such a discussion of the problem. The inner-party regime is declared normal. The letter speaks in great detail about the educational work of the party, about the preparation of new party-workers, and so forth. Without any doubt, the party apparatus has grown immensely, including its educational apparatus; without any doubt, this educational work has developed extensively, and this, of course, is a great gain. But this fact by no means excludes or denies the extreme lowering of the political and critical activity of the party, the weakening of its internal life as a party, and the parallel growth of purely mechanical, organizational measures to guarantee the line of the leading bodies of the party.

3. My reference to the unhealthy methods used in the period of preparing the XIIth Congress [in April 1923] in order to counterpose one section of leading comrades to another ^[1]—without sufficient, or, in any case, clearly expressed ideological grounds—gave rise to an answer from the group of authors which is once again a basically unfounded, formal accusation that I “denigrate” the correct composition of the XIIth Congress. In my letter there was not even a hint of this. To raise a formal question about the competence or authority of the XIIth Congress is at the very least inappropriate. But it is completely appropriate and correct to raise the question about the need to guarantee an inner-party regime in which the party can form its opinion on important questions from day to day, and by doing so determine its will in the best way through the medium of its congresses.

4. The “reply” from members of the Politburo ascribes to me the demand for some kind of absolute, “full-blown” democracy, and asks me whether I am demanding the cancellation of all party resolutions which limit the use of “full-blown” democratic methods. In actual fact, my letter says that many speeches in defense of workers’ democracy once seemed to me (during the Xth Congress [in March 1921]) exaggerated and demagogic “in view of the incompatibility of complete, fully developed workers’ democracy and a dictatorial regime.” Thus, all the arguments in this regard in the “Reply” are a complete misunderstanding. I didn’t even demand “a sharp turn of the wheel in the direction of workers’ democracy,” as was done on 11 October by comrade Bukharin at a session of the Politburo, without any objections from anyone. It would be absolutely sufficient if the change were to be sincere and conscientious, if only it were not sharp, but cautious—as the situation demands. Only such a change would truly be productive. The limitations which the party established must be preserved until experience has shown them to be wrong. But within the framework of these limitations, the party must live

the genuine life of a leading and ruling organization, and not remain silent. This is the essence of the question.

5. That Myasnikovism^[2] is not a new phenomenon—as the “Reply” points out—is beyond dispute. But it was the Politburo itself which sounded the alarm, with full legitimacy, regarding the **growth** of Myasnikovism, regarding the spread of illegal cells in the party, the participation of party members in strikes, and the passive attitude toward many of these phenomena on the part of many party members who don’t belong to the illegal cells. This was the main idea of the conclusions reached by comrade Dzerzhinsky’s commission.^[3] This is the essence of the problem. It seems that the danger of the situation was a mystery to no one.

Proceeding precisely from this point, comrade Dzerzhinsky demanded a revamping of the Moscow Committee, since it was too bureaucratic, to use his expression. It was precisely for this reason that comrade Bukharin demanded a sharp turn toward party democracy, and comrade Molotov admitted that these were “elementary truths.” Now all this is declared nonexistent, everything is reduced to the expelled Myasnikov and ... to comrade Ryazanov.^[4] Such a striking and by no means principled re-evaluation of yesterday’s conclusions by itself represents the greatest danger and threatens to sharpen the contradictions which have accumulated in the party.

II. The attempt to invoke Lenin’s name in our debate

The letter from members of the Politburo attempts to drag Lenin’s name into the present debates, as if, on the one hand, there is a continuation of comrade Lenin’s policy, and, on the other, there is a struggle against this policy. In a more cautious and concealed form, attempts to portray the differences in this way were made more than once—both leading up to the XIIth Congress and especially after it. Precisely because these attempts took the form of hints and passing remarks, it was impossible to react to them. And these hints were made precisely because they were counting on silence on my part. Today’s “Reply” from members of the Politburo, which tries to more concretely formulate these hints, nevertheless, as we will now see, reveals their complete bankruptcy and also gives us the opportunity to clearly and exactly refute them. I will examine the questions being debated point by point, providing accurate citations and references to documents which are readily available for verification.

1. One of the central problems in the realm of the economy has been and continues to be the question of the role of leadership in planning, that is, the systematic combination of the basic elements of state economy in the process of adapting them to the growing market. I held, and I continue to hold the point of view that one of the main reasons for our economic crises, and particularly their sharpness and destructiveness, is the absence of correct, uniform regulation of the economy from above. It is absolutely true that I had disagreements with comrade Lenin on the question of organizing the management of planning. Comrade Lenin’s authority means no less for me than for any other member of the Central Committee. But I thought and continue to think that the party chooses members of the CC in order for them to defend in the Central Committee whatever they think is right in each given instance. How was the problem resolved on the part of comrade Lenin? On June 2 of this year the Politburo received from N. Krupskaya a special note written by comrade Lenin “On Giving Legislative Functions to Gosplan,” which was dictated on 27 December 1922. In this document comrade Lenin writes the following:

This idea was advanced by comrade Trotsky, it seems, long ago. I spoke out against it then, because I found that in such a case there would be a fundamental lack of co-ordination in the system of our legislative bodies. But upon reviewing the matter more carefully, I find that in essence there is a good idea, namely: Gosplan stands

somewhat off to the side, apart from our legislative bodies, despite the fact that, as a collection of knowledgeable people, experts, scientists and technicians, it possesses, in essence, more data for correct judgements about matters...

In this regard, I think that we can and should meet comrade Trotsky halfway, but not with regard to the chairmanship in Gosplan or with regard to any particular person from among our political leaders, or chairman of the Supreme Council of the People's Economy and so forth.

In conclusion, comrade Lenin spoke against the type of work done by Gosplan where the latter reviews individual assignments, and in favor of the type of work where Gosplan could "systematically resolve a whole group of problems which belong to its jurisdiction."^[5] As we can see, the question here is discussed with sufficient clarity and fullness.

The question of combining the role of the Chairman of the Supreme Economic Council of the People's Economy with the role of the Chairman of Gosplan is a subordinate, technical question. We now have combined, by resolution of the CC, the role of Deputy Chairman of the Council of Labor and Defense with the role of Chairman of the Supreme Economic Council of the People's Economy, which goes much further than my proposals along these lines. More than once I spoke and wrote to the CC that combinations of this type are, of course, conditional, and that the essence of the matter lies not in them. The essence is the need to create an authoritative, competent economic general staff, which will review every single economic question. Until now, when comrade Lenin stood at the head of the economic work, he was to a great extent his own general staff, and the question of the role of Gosplan couldn't have the decisive significance that it received after comrade Lenin fell ill.

And here, while assessing the leadership of the economy as it developed after he was forced from work, comrade Lenin declares that my basic proposal was a good idea. The prolonged absence of comrade Lenin from work in the leadership can to a certain extent be compensated only by arranging the management of the economy in an organizationally correct way.

Meanwhile, rather than taking a step forward, we have taken a step backwards in this matter. Economic questions are more than ever before decided hastily and through improvisation, and not by systematic leadership.

2. Another economic question where there were disagreements in the Plenum of the CC not long before the XIIth Congress, and in which comrade Lenin participated, concerns the monopoly of foreign trade, i.e., a question which, at the XIIth Congress—without any objections from anyone—I called one of the pillars of the socialist dictatorship under conditions of capitalist encirclement. I have a rather extensive correspondence with comrade Lenin on this question. I will introduce here only one letter in full from comrade Lenin from 13 December 1922. It clearly illustrates the way he raised the question:

Comrade Trotsky,

I received your response to Krestinsky's letter and to Avanesov's plans. I think that you and I have the maximal agreement, and I think that the question of Gosplan in the present discussion excludes (or moves to the side) the debate about whether Gosplan needs executive rights.

In any case, I would very much ask you to take upon yourself at the upcoming Plenum the defense of our common point of view concerning the unconditional necessity of maintaining and strengthening the monopoly of foreign trade. Since the preceding Plenum adopted a resolution in this regard which completely goes

against the monopoly of foreign trade, and since there can be no retreat on this question, then I think, as I say in a letter to Frumkin and Stomonyakov, that if we are defeated on this question, then we must transfer the question to a party congress. To do this we must briefly outline our differences before the party fraction of the upcoming Congress of Soviets. If I can, I will write such an outline, and I would be very glad if you spoke in the same vein. Vacillation on this question will do us untold harm, and arguments against can fully be reduced to accusations that the apparatus is imperfect. But our apparatus is imperfect everywhere and in every way, and to back away from the monopoly because of the imperfection of the apparatus would mean to throw out the baby with the bathwater.

13 December 1922

Lenin.^[6]

Thus, on one of the most important questions of our economic policy, comrade Lenin demanded that, if the Plenum didn't cancel its obviously erroneous resolution, I should speak openly, outlining the disagreements at the fraction of the Congress of Soviets. This shows rather clearly, first of all, what significance comrade Lenin attributed to the Plenum's mistake, and secondly, that he, understanding rather well one would think, the significance of formal discipline, placed content higher than form in the given instance.

3. The most important disagreement of the last year—with comrade Lenin's participation—involved the national question. Here once again all the facts and documents are at hand. What significance comrade Lenin gave the national question and mistakes in this problem are rather evident from his letter (from 30 December 1922), which begins with the words: "I suppose I have been very remiss with respect to the workers of Russia for not having intervened energetically and decisively enough..."^[7] Having learned from someone else what point of view I had defended concerning the national question at the Plenum of the CC, comrade Lenin sent me the following note:

Top secret.

Personal.

Dear Comrade Trotsky.

I would very much like you to take upon yourself the defense of the Georgian affair at the party's CC. This matter is now being "prosecuted" by Stalin and Dzerzhinsky, and I can not count on their impartiality. If you would agree to take upon yourself this defense, then my mind would be at rest. If for some reason you do not agree, then return the whole matter to me. I will consider this a sign of your lack of agreement.

With the best comradely greetings, Lenin.

Recorded by M.V. on 5 March 1923.

Verified: M.Volodicheva.^[8]

When I proposed to comrade Lenin through his secretary (comrade Lenin was then very ill, and he was not allowed to meet with individuals) to show this note of his and his letter from 30 December, sent to me secretly, to members of the Politburo, in order to achieve a change of course in the national question in the least painful manner, comrade Lenin formally refused to allow me to do this. He said what I was already compelled to report at a session of the Presidium of the XIIth Congress: "By no means," V. I. replied to me through his secretary. "He (this refers to comrade Kamenev, who was being sent to Georgia) will tell everything to Stalin, and Stalin will resort to a rotten compromise, and then deceive

you.”

I can't help but note here that comrade Lenin's letter, which the Council of Elders^[9] at the XIIth Congress said, as something completely obvious, should be published (perhaps only after removing, as others proposed, the personal aspects which were too sharp), remains unpublished to this very day.^[10]

4.^[11] One of the central questions at the XIIth Congress was the question raised by comrade Lenin about reorganizing Rabkrin [People's Commissariat of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection] and the Central Control Commission. It is remarkable that even this question has often been portrayed, and continues to be so, as a point of disagreement between myself and comrade Lenin, whereas this question, much like the national question, casts an entirely different light on the groupings in the Politburo. It is absolutely true that I was very negative in my attitude toward the old Rabkrin. However, in his article, "Better Fewer, But Better," comrade Lenin gave a much more devastating evaluation of Rabkrin than I would have decided to give: "[T]he People's Commissariat of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection does not at present enjoy the slightest authority. Everybody knows that no other institutions are worse organised than those of our Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, and that under present conditions nothing can be expected from this People's Commissariat."^[12] If we recall who headed Rabkrin the longest period of all, [Joseph Stalin] then it is not difficult to understand against whom this characterization was directed, as well as the article on the national question.

What was the attitude of the Politburo, however, to comrade Lenin's proposal to reorganize Rabkrin? Comrade Bukharin couldn't bring himself to publish comrade Lenin's article; comrade Lenin, on his part, had insisted on its immediate publication.

N.K. Krupskaya [Lenin's wife] told me about this article over the telephone and asked me to intervene in order to get the article published as soon as possible.^[13] At the session of the Politburo which was quickly convened at my proposal, all those attending (comrades Stalin, Molotov, Kuibyshev, Rykov, Kalinin and Bukharin) were not only against comrade Lenin's plan, but even against publishing his article. Members of the Secretariat objected particularly sharply and categorically. In light of comrade Lenin's insistent demands that his article be shown to him in printed form, comrade Kuibyshev, the future People's Commissar of Rabkrin, proposed at the same session of the Politburo to print a single copy of a single issue of *Pravda* with comrade Lenin's article, in order to set his mind at rest while at the same time concealing the article from the party. I tried to prove that the radical reform proposed by comrade Lenin was itself progressive—under the condition, it goes without saying, that it was correctly carried out—but that even if there were a negative assessment of this proposal it would be ridiculous and absurd to protect the party against comrade Lenin's proposals. I was answered with arguments in the spirit of the same old formalism: "We are the CC, we bear the responsibility, we will decide." I was supported only by comrade Kamenev, who arrived almost an hour late at the session of the Politburo. The main argument made in favor of printing the article was the fact that all the same, you don't hide Lenin's article from the party.

Later, in the hands of those who didn't want to print it, the letter was treated as though it were a special banner in an attempt to turn it ... against me. Comrade Kuibyshev, a former member of the Secretariat, was put at the head of the CCC. Instead of a struggle against comrade Lenin's plan, the path was chosen to "render it harmless." Whether the CCC during all these goings on received the character of an independent, impartial party body, defending and affirming party rights and unity against any administrative excesses in the party—I won't go into a discussion of this question here, since I think that the question is already clear without it.

5. These are the most instructive episodes from recent times concerning my "struggle" against comrade Lenin's policy. Isn't it striking that the

"Reply" from members of the Politburo passes by these facts of the last year which are all too clear and indisputable, and considers it necessary to introduce comrade Lenin's proposal in 1921(!) to send me to the Ukraine as "plenipotentiary Narkomprod [People's Commissar for Food]." This fact, however, is falsely presented and tendentiously explained. In the fall of 1921 comrade Lenin was afraid that the Ukrainians were not displaying enough energy in collecting the tax in kind (at that time this question was very significant) and proposed to send me (not on behalf of the Narkomprod, but the CC) to apply the corresponding "pressure." During the first three to four years I made more than one such trip: not only to the front, but also to the Donbass, to the Urals (twice), and to Petrograd. None of these trips had anything to do with the internal disagreements within the Politburo, but were in response to unpostponable business matters. Since a previous trip to the Ukraine had convinced me that the Ukrainian comrades would themselves do what was needed, I felt that my trip was unnecessary. The disagreement was purely practical in nature. Comrade Lenin's proposal was accepted. Then I proposed that, in order to avoid a mix-up in our relations, I be temporarily appointed (for four to six weeks) Narkomprod [People's Commissar for Food] of the Ukraine. This, too, was accepted (without, of course, releasing me from other obligations). But on the next day, after receiving more reassuring information from Kharkov, Lenin came to see me at the Military Commissariat and proposed that we cancel yesterday's decision, which I naturally greeted with sympathy, since I considered the adopted resolution to be pointless.^[14] Thus this entire, insignificant episode has nothing to do with the problems which are now troubling the party. To drag in this petty and long since forgotten episode by itself is an extremely clear indicator that in order to feed and support the legend about what is virtually my "anti-Leninist" line, there are no facts or material which are more convincing or of better quality. There are not and there cannot be. For a malicious legend, even if it is assiduously given support, remains a legend.

"Underestimating" the role of the peasantry

One of the most fantastic "accusations," which has several times been made in passing or behind my back, but which is now openly formulated, is my alleged "underestimation" of the role of the peasantry in our revolution. The authors of the letter make not the slightest attempt to prove this declaration, for there cannot be any such evidence. It would be too inappropriate to engage here in a review of the disagreements over evaluating the internal forces of the revolution during the epoch, let us say of 1905–1914. Since that time, we have all learned too much to be able to deduce today's assessments in a purely formal manner from the disagreements of those times. I long ago republished my most principled works in this area ("Results and Prospects" and "Our Disagreements"). Whatever was mistaken in my views of that time I acknowledged and indicated long ago, both in word and in deed. But in any case, my old views did not hinder, but even assisted me in accepting comrade Lenin's April (1917) Theses, from which so many of those who called themselves "Leninists" recoiled.^[15] And more importantly, they didn't prevent me from proceeding side by side with Lenin through the pre-October period and then through the October Revolution. If an analysis of forces and an assessment of classes is ever subjected to a supreme test, then it is precisely during the epoch of a great revolution. That is why I don't find it necessary—at least within the framework of this letter—to return to the pre-October period.

Where, then do we find expression of my "underestimation" of the peasantry after October? During the first three years of the revolution, I was occupied almost exclusively with the formation of peasant detachments with the help of advanced workers. This work alone would be more than enough to force anyone to understand the role of the peasantry and the relationship of the basic classes in our revolution. It was precisely my military experience which forced me to always be on guard

with regard to anything concerning the peasantry. In order to prove this—insofar as any proof is necessary at all—I will introduce a few facts of varying importance, but which are equally persuasive regarding the given question.

a. After Y. M. Sverdlov's death [in 1919], when comrade Lenin advanced the idea of appointing comrade Kamenev Chairman of VTsIK [All-Russian Central Executive Committee], I spoke in favor of placing in that position a figure who would be able to attract the peasantry. When comrade Lenin, followed by the Politburo, accepted this plan, I nominated comrade Kalinin.

b. In March 1919, in a report to the CC, I defended the necessity of setting our course toward the middle peasant in a principled way; I spoke against the inattentive, or superficial attitude which could still be observed in the party on this question. In the report, which was directly inspired by a discussion I had with the Sengilevsky organization,^[16] I wrote: "The temporary, although perhaps prolonged political situation is, however, a much deeper social and economic reality, for even given the victorious proletarian revolution in the West, **we will have to proceed to an enormous degree in our socialist construction from the middle peasant, drawing him into the socialist economy.**"

c. Under the influence of moods in the army and the experience gained from an economic visit to the Urals, I wrote to the CC in February 1920: "The present policy of equalized requisition according to the food scale, of mutual responsibility for deliveries, and of equalized distribution of manufactured products, tends to lower the status of agriculture and to disperse the industrial proletariat, and threatens to bring about a complete breakdown in the economic life of the country."

As a basic practical measure I proposed: "The requisition of surpluses should give way to payment on a percentage basis (a sort of progressive income tax in kind), the scale of payment being fixed in such a way as to make an increase of the ploughed area, or a more thorough cultivation, still yield some profit."^[17]

One can of course say that this proposal in 1920 was premature, but, in any case, it cannot be interpreted as insufficient attention paid to the role and significance of the peasantry.

d. The essence of the discussions which took place in the CC on the eve of the congress regarding the question of the "smychka" [the alliance of the working class and peasantry] consisted in the fact that I showed, in full agreement with the entire thrust of comrade Lenin's main speech at the XIth Congress, that the smychka had basically now become a problem of the relationship of prices (scissors), and that the key to this smychka lay not in agitational formulas, and not in political diversions, but in the lowering of the costs of state production by means of correct organization. Even if this idea had been incorrect, there is no "underestimation" of the role of the peasantry contained within it. But this idea proved to be absolutely correct. We now have come up against the problem of prices with full force.^[18]

e. At the XIIth Congress, comrade Kamenev confirmed that the initiative in discussing the problem of the correct purchase and export of grain belonged to me. This fact can be proven without any difficulty with the appropriate documents.^[19]

Thus, I sweep aside the unfounded and clearly far-fetched assertions about my somehow incorrect line regarding the peasantry as an artificially created legend for justifying the barriers which have been raised inside the party.

Another equally unfounded fabrication is the assertion that I am supposedly trying to weaken the dependence of the state apparatus on the party. In actual fact, all my efforts have been directed and are directed at guaranteeing the real, genuine and true leadership of the party in all the basic questions, and not simply the episodic intervention from time to time. In order to substantiate what I am saying, I will introduce here an excerpt (one of many) from my letter to members of the CC on 22 March

of this year:

1. The characterization of our state apparatus as socially heterogenous, radically unstable and highly susceptible to hostile influences. [There exists] an enormous danger of this under conditions of NEP.

2. The state apparatus has evolved into its present form over these five years, despite the fact that the entire preceding epoch was filled with the efforts of party organizations, groups and cells to immediately direct the governmental work during the entire five-year period. The reason for this lies in the predominantly primitive and episodic methods and means used by the party in influencing the apparatus. We need a radical change in this regard. This change must start with the work of the CC and its Politburo.

3. **The Politburo must work out with its departments the basic problems of their work in a planned manner**, that is, a program of their activity over the long term and, in connection with this, a basic core of personnel must be established.

4. The Politburo must periodically review the reports and accounts of its departments, checking that they have actually carried out the program.

5. Through constant pressure and verification the Politburo must establish planned methods of reassigning or training personnel in all departments. The Politburo must refrain from reviewing the innumerable departmental and interdepartmental conflicts, or financial appeals; this work must be assigned to Soviet agencies.

6. The Politburo and Orgburo must renounce the system which now dominates, namely one which replaces **party leadership and party assignments with secretarial pettiness and harassment.**

I can not now add anything of great significance to this excerpt, which rather convincingly refutes the absurd legend.

After the XIIth Congress the Politburo apparently wanted to make an attempt to adopt the course I had proposed. It passed a special resolution about planning the work of the Politburo. This resolution, however, was never implemented. A regime of chaos in resolving matters is, as before, identified with the dictatorship of the party. The desire to introduce a plan or system in the methods and forms of the party dictatorship is denounced as shaking the foundations of this very dictatorship.

The direction of planning

We already saw above how comrade Lenin raised the question of directing the planning of the economy in his note about Gosplan. The authors of the letter repeat several times that in the realm of the economy quick successes are unthinkable, that we mustn't hurry, be nervous, and so forth. All these considerations, however, are absolutely devoid of meaning when confronting the fact that we are now in a sharp crisis, one of the main causes of which, both in my assessment and according to the statements of the most important economic specialists, is the lack of coordination between the basic elements of our economy, primarily between finances, one the one hand, and industry and trade on the other. If it is true that rapid successes in the realm of the economy are impossible, then it is just as true that rapid **failures**, crises, bottle-necks, and individual catastrophes are entirely possible given the absence of circumspection and the direction of planning. I already cited in my letter the recent declaration by comrades Rykov and Piatakov which reads: "Several decisions by the Politburo force us to direct attention to the fact that under the conditions that are developing, the conduct of the state production which has been entrusted to us, is becoming extremely difficult." Comrade Rykov's signature beneath the "Reply" does not weaken, but, on the contrary, increases the significance of his signature

beneath the words cited. Comrade Piatakov, a member of the CC who on assignment from the Politburo worked first in Gosplan, and then headed the Supreme Council of the People's Economy, signed a note which points to the absence of planned direction of the economy as one of the most important reasons for our crises and break-downs.

On 11 October the representatives of the most important syndicates signed a note, the main conclusion of which reads: "There must be **coordination** of the work of the various governmental agencies, which create the chief conditions for the work of industry and have an enormous, sometimes overwhelming influence on the prices of its products, and which also **determine their own autonomous policy** and their own 'cost accounting,' without any full orientation toward the circulation of commodities and trade in the country."

In a letter sent on 14 October, one of the most influential leaders of industry, comrade Bogdanov, says: "The type of things that are occurring now, when the restricting of credit, established by the State Bank in July, was absolutely unknown to industry, are inadmissible and will only lead to panic and the disruption of the market."

The number of such absolutely indisputable examples could be endlessly multiplied. And all this has occurred within seven months after the XIIth Congress. The absence of any genuine management of planning, which leads inevitably to improvisation and to accidental decisions, is the main evil. Meanwhile, in the face of this absolutely indisputable fact, the "Reply" of the Politburo members declares that talk of "maneuverable flexible regulation of planning" has no real content, consists of "phrases" (!) and deserves only "ridicule" (!).

I must state here that the authors of the letter discarded from their memory the resolutions of the XIIth Congress. There it says, word for word: "**planning** under NEP differs only slightly in scope from planning under war communism. But it differs in the most radical way according to its methods. Administration from central directorates is replaced by **economic maneuvering.**"^[20] Thus, when I point to the necessity of planned, maneuverable flexible regulation, I only repeat the text of the resolution from the party congress. And resolutions from the party congress should not be "ridiculed," but carried out.

The very same resolution from the congress continues: "It is necessary to give Gosplan a more definite status, firmer organization, clearer and indisputable rights, and especially obligations. It must be established as an unshakable principle that not a single state economic question will be decided in the higher agencies of the republic without the involvement of Gosplan." Has this been done? Not in the least.

And finally: "We must fight, with Gosplan as an intermediary," the XIIth Congress stated, "against creating all types of temporary and incidental commissions investigating, directing, verifying, preparing, and so forth, which are **the greatest shortcoming of our state work.** We must guarantee correct work through normal, permanent agencies. Only in this way will it be possible to improve these agencies and develop in them the necessary flexibility—by means of their thorough adaptation to the assignments they are given and on the basis of continuous experience."^[21]

This last quotation from the resolution of the XIIth Congress is particularly clear and convincing in light of the latest information, especially concerning the creation of a number of special commissions on wages, prices, and so forth. "The struggle for the lowering of prices has already begun," says the letter from the Politburo members, as if they were dealing with some kind of independent and isolated assignment. Prices are a product of our entire economic work, including its planned, maneuverable, flexible regulation. The very fact of forming a special commission to lower prices signifies the incorrect work of the normally existing agencies and is, according to the XIIth Congress, "the greatest shortcoming of our state work."

We must at all costs carry out the resolution of the XIIth Congress concerning Gosplan. We must turn it into the general staff of the

economy. We must guarantee the rights of Gosplan in accordance with the proposals from comrade Lenin which were cited above.

Questions of foreign policy

1. A fundamentally incorrect portrayal is given in the "Reply" of the course of the diplomatic negotiations in connection with the Curzon ultimatum.^[22] Here the author of the letter evidently relied on his memory, and none of the signatories checked any documents. I would have to overburden this letter with references and quotations in order to straighten out the obviously erroneous assertions grouped together in only a few lines of the "Reply." I am ready to do this if necessary, wherever and whenever it is suitable. I will limit myself now to the comment that of the four notes which were related to the ultimatum, the first was written by comrade Litvinov and myself, the second by me, the third by comrade Chicherin, and the fourth by me.

2. Our policy with regard to Poland now truly needs no commentary. The shift in policy which I insisted on a month ago has basically been made. Relations with Poland have finally been placed not on a level of third-rate or tenth-rate formal questions, but on the level of negotiations over transit rights and military non-intervention. This is the only correct, realistic, business-like way to raise the question, which is capable of securing certain, perhaps even substantial, practical results and of creating at the same time a clear position for us before the popular masses of our own country. For the given period, the question is therefore exhausted.

I absolutely do not know why and for what reason the Politburo has chosen along the way to take comrade Chicherin under its protection from my supposedly "inappropriate" attacks. I have criticized this or that proposal he has made, as I have done the policy of the majority of the Politburo, insofar as I thought them incorrect. There are not and have not been any "inappropriate" attacks.

On the German Revolution

Disagreements over the problem of the German Revolution are portrayed incorrectly and in a one-sided manner. I feel that these disagreements have basically been liquidated by the resolutions which were passed after very serious and very sharp struggle and then by the practical resolutions which were adopted. The struggle proceeded over three questions: 1) the significance or insignificance of setting a date, 2) the council of deputies versus industrial councils (factory committees) and 3) the relations between the Central Committee of the German Communist Party and the Berlin position. We passed a resolution, in which we pointed out (after we had gone through a serious internal struggle) that the greatest danger to the German revolution would be an insufficiently decisive orientation of the ruling circles in the German party toward an armed uprising, which presupposes a plan and a deadline. It is enough to recall our own pre-October experience in order to understand how much a clear and well-defined position is needed here. The essence of the disagreements which took place are outlined in my article about "scheduling [a revolution]," which was printed in *Pravda*.^[23] In moving the resolution, I fought as decisively as I could against the pseudo-Marxist wisdom which states that "a revolution" (in actual fact, the seizure of power) cannot be made according to a schedule, etc. Without a clear and precise discussion of these questions we would be confronted by the greatest danger that the German events would unfold as they did in Bulgaria. According to all information, and in particular according to the reports from comrade Miliutin, official representative of the Comintern, we lost the revolution in Bulgaria precisely because we did not treat the uprising as an art when we should have.^[24] We are now entering a period of the greatest military and revolutionary convulsions, and the question of the uprising in all its concreteness is becoming one of the most important questions of communist politics.

On the second question, an attempt was made to thrust the assignment on the German party of creating a council of deputies alongside the already existing, industrial councils.^[25] After a very sharp struggle, this

plan, which could have cost the German Communist party dearly, was abandoned.

The assertion that I spoke with contempt of the German Central Committee is a monstrous lie. On the contrary, in all my work—and not for just one month—I have insisted on the need to firmly support the German CC against the light-minded leaders of the Berlin left. But I never concealed from the whole German delegation the overall danger in its temporizing attitude toward the uprising. Here the most decisive help and influence are needed. Here the slightest blunder or lack of preparation is absolutely inadmissible. Since the time of the last Plenum very much has been done in the way indicated.

Personal elements in the letter from members of the Politburo

In the “Reply” there are a number of personal elements and accusations, which I would be very glad to ignore if it were possible. But to do so would be equivalent to silently reconciling myself to the fact that the authors of the letter seem to want to make collective work on a principled basis impossible. I neither want to nor am able to agree to that. I therefore consider it necessary to show that the authors of the letter are fundamentally wrong when they try to make personal issues the grounds for not being able work in a correct and healthy way, which would truly be fully possible if the patently mistaken and harmful aspects of the present party and economic regime were corrected. The meaning of the corresponding passages in the “Reply” can be reduced to the fact that my conceptions about the role of the management of planning, about the bureaucratization of the party apparatus and so forth are nothing more or less than the products of personal ambitions: “We declare,” write the authors of the letter, “**that just as before**, the Politburo cannot assume the responsibility of satisfying comrade Trotsky’s pretensions to his dictatorship in guiding the economy, in addition to the powers which he already has as Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council. It is our duty to say: we cannot assume responsibility for a risk-filled experiment in this area.”^[26]

This portrayal of the matter is absolutely unbelievable in light of the preceding facts. I will introduce the most indisputable and obvious from among them. On 6 January of this year, in a special letter to all members of the CC, comrade Stalin proposed the following measures among a number of others:

...3) To appoint comrade Piatakov head of the Supreme Council of the People’s Economy [VSNKh] and to give him as one of his deputies comrade Bogdanov (for me it is clear that comrade Bogdanov has not been able and will not be able to bring all the scattered trusts under his direction).

4) To appoint comrade Trotsky deputy Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars (comrade Lenin’s proposal), giving him the Supreme Council of the People’s Economy as his special concern.

5) I think that these changes might facilitate our work in liquidating the “chaos.”

It is absolutely clear that comrade Stalin made these written proposals not without the knowledge of the other members of the Politburo.

On 17 January comrade Stalin writes in another circular letter: “I would not object to comrade Trotsky being appointed simultaneously either deputy Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars and Chairman of the Supreme Council of the People’s Economy [VSNKh], or deputy Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars and Chairman of Gosplan.” My oral and written objections to these proposals, purely business-like, were partly organizational and partly personal in nature. There is no need to repeat them now. Moreover, this correspondence is

available for review. It was I who was trying to prove that it was too difficult an assignment to combine the work of the military and of Chairman of the Supreme Council of the People’s Economy. Comrade Stalin was trying to prove that it was possible. In any case, as we can see, things by no means stood as follows: on the one side there were “personal pretensions” to assuming the post of Chairman of the VSNKh, etc., and on the other side there was the refusal of the Politburo to assume responsibility for the “risk-filled experiment.” In actual fact, comrade Stalin, with the undoubted agreement of the other members of the Politburo, insistently proposed this experiment, considering that it might help “liquidate the chaos.” I was avoiding the added responsibility, fearing—among everything else—the results of trying to do too much and the negative sides of holding more than one job. At the XIIth Party Congress, comrade Stalin even felt that it was necessary to publicly state that I **was not inclined to more extensive work.**^[27] How in the world can we reconcile all these facts and statements with what is now being ascribed to me in the “Reply,” i.e., that I am allegedly trying to become Chairman of the Supreme Council of the People’s Economy?

Meanwhile, my desire is so strong that it is the only reason I am making this or that principled or organizational proposal. Isn’t this truly monstrous!

After the XIIth Congress (25 April 1923), comrade Rykov, who was refusing the post of Chairman of the VSNKh, wrote to the Politburo:

In one of his proposals sent to members of the CC, comrade Stalin offered the leadership of the VSNKh to comrade Trotsky. I see no grounds to reject this, since comrade Trotsky has returned to a study of industry and economy several times during recent years and is very familiar both with the main problems of current economic practice and with the apparatus of directing industry.

The extraordinary success which comrade Trotsky’s report enjoyed at the congress gives a full guarantee that the party will fully approve of his appointment.

Comrade Trotsky’s work at VSNKh must be bound up with his participation in the general work of the government, assisted by the reconstruction of the Council of Labor and Defense which comrade Stalin proposed in his letter.

How in the world, I now ask, can the whole story of what has taken place be changed after the fact? How can we reconcile comrade Stalin’s proposals which have been quoted with his signature beneath the last “Reply”? How can we combine comrade Rykov’s statement with his present rejection of my alleged pretensions to seize the VSNKh? Where does all this come from? What is it all for? I refuse to understand it.

And isn’t it truly monstrous to claim that several dozen old, irreproachable party workers are formulating their views and demands in a letter to the CC solely in order to ... secure for me the post of chairman of the VSNKh? And when is this done? Precisely when combining military and economic work is the least feasible both from an economic and a military point of view.

2. I must introduce one more episode, which shows how history is being made and how it is being written. At the session of the Politburo which was working on the agenda for the upcoming XIIth Congress, comrade Stalin, with the support of comrade Kamenev, comrade Kalinin, and, if I am not mistaken, comrade Tomsy (comrade Zinoviev was absent), proposed that I take on the political report of the CC. Discussion of the question proceeded in the Politburo in the most calm and businesslike tones. I replied that if someone were to give a full political report it would only increase the depression in the party which had been caused by Vladimir Ilyich’s illness. It would therefore be better to limit ourselves to

a shorter political report, which comrade Stalin could combine with his organizational report. The basic questions could then be investigated in the corresponding points of the agenda. “Besides,” I added, “we still have substantial disagreements on economic questions.” Comrade Kalinin objected to the last comment and said, “The majority of your proposals have been passed by the Politburo, and you have no reason to refuse to give the political report.” I continued, however, to insist on my proposal. The question was not decided at this session, and then the whole matter, as we all know, was given an absolutely new turn. But isn’t it clear that the fact which I have just introduced, and which, of course, cannot be erased from the minds of those participating in that session of the Politburo, is in glaring contradiction to the general picture which is now given after the fact by the “Reply” of the Politburo members in order to explain and justify a system of artificial barriers in the party?

3. The accusation that in recent years I have “paid absolutely insufficient attention to the army” is absolutely incomprehensible. I don’t know how to explain this accusation: does it mean that my working day is too short, or that I fill my working day with other matters? In carrying out innumerable assignments from the CC, I have more than once been forced to point out that these assignments tear me away from military work. Preparing the report and theses on industry took from me, for instance, about two months of intensive work.

Participation in the work of the Comintern [Communist International] takes a very significant amount of time. The only work which I carry out not on assignment from the Politburo is participation in Moskust (Moscow Combined Group),^[28] but this doesn’t take up more than two-three hours per month. In the “Reply” there is, it is true, a hint at “working on problems of literature, art, everyday life, and so forth,” as a reason for insufficient attention toward the army. But this hint was made obliquely precisely because, as the authors know, I worked on these questions during my medical treatment, when I was forbidden to engage in any stressful intellectual work. I hardly see any reasons to justify myself before the party for using two summer vacations not only for medical treatment, but for writing books about literature and everyday life.^[29] I can only express surprise that they are trying to turn this fact into an accusation.^[30]

It is absolutely true, however, that there was almost no creative work in the area of the army because of the extremely difficult material situation of the army, the complete instability of its budget, the continuous cuts and rearrangements of staffing, and the extremely frequent appointments and dismissals of personnel, which are absolutely senseless, in my opinion, from the standpoint of the interests of the cause. All this has created extremely difficult conditions for work, besides the introduction from above into the army of that special “policy,” examples of which are known now to the majority of responsible personnel in the army and the party. The “Reply” from members of the Politburo is the furthest development of this very policy, the meaning of which is absolutely clear.

Lack of faith in the party

The accusation which would be the most serious, if it were not so superficial, is when I am accused of not having faith in the party, and of not being able to understand it. An expression I used somewhere and at some time about “provincial committee Oblomovism” is offered as proof, without explaining in what sense and in what connection these words were uttered. Finally, my statement that, in view of the extremely responsible circumstances, I consider myself obligated to place the essence of the matter higher than its form and draw the attention of the most important party workers to **the situation which has been created**, the “Reply” evaluates as follows: “We feel that this is a statement which is absolutely unheard of in our Bolshevik milieu.”

In this section the meaning and tone of the “Reply” is all too clear. What a few of the signatories—to the indignation of the others—have earlier been hinting at, is said here rather clearly: **lack of knowledge of the**

party, a lack of faith in its strength and in the strength of its local organizations, and finally, declarations and steps “unheard of in our Bolshevik milieu” I would propose that several members of the Politburo should be more careful in talking about steps and statements “unheard of in our Bolshevik milieu.” My statement had and has as its goal only to impel the CC to speed up the change of course which irrevocably flows from the entire situation. Meanwhile, we have had instances when, on the eve of decisive battles and when they were taking place—this was in October 1917—the most responsible posts were abandoned, with appeals to the party against the CC—in front of non-party elements and enemies.^[31] I feel that faith or lack of faith in the party and its creative powers is revealed most reliably and truly during days of the greatest trials, such as the ones we passed through in every corner of our country. There is hardly a provincial committee which I didn’t have to work with hand in hand during the most difficult hours of the civil war, and among the mistakes which I made there was not criminal lack of faith in the creative powers of the party and the working class. I cast aside this false accusation, with all its deliberate abusiveness.

* * *

These then are my explanations regarding the most important points in the letter from members of the Politburo. The least painful and shortest way out—and I repeat this again—can only be found if there is the serious and firm desire on the part of the ruling group of the CC to remove the artificial barriers which have been erected inside the party, to more attentively respond to the unpostponable demands of changing the party’s course, and thereby to help the party to regain its independence, its aggressivity and its unity. If this path were to be taken, the CC would meet the most active support from the overwhelming majority of party members—and those questions, which now seem to be, or are portrayed to be, personal questions, would disappear by themselves.

23 October 1923

L. Trotsky

[RGASPI, f.51, op.1, d.21, l.54ob-57ob; printed text, checked according to the typewritten text which is preserved in the archive of the Central Committee of the CPSU]

[1] Trotsky is referring to the fact that on the eve of the XIIth Congress of the RCP(b), at many provincial party conferences, delegates to the Congress were selected according to recommendations from the secretaries of the provincial committees, which, in turn, from the summer of 1922 on, were chosen according to recommendations from the CC, i.e., they were in actual fact appointed by the Secretariat of the CC, which was headed by Joseph Stalin.

[2] Trotsky is referring to the oppositional group “Workers Truth” and “Workers Group of the RCP.” “Workers Truth” was an illegal group in the RCP(b) which formed in the spring of 1921. Its participants thought that with the transition to the NEP the RCP(b) “was all the more irreversibly losing its ties and contact with the proletariat.” “Workers Truth” adopted the goal of “introducing class clarity into the ranks of the working class.” In a few of its illegal publications it set the task of forming a new workers’ party. “Workers group RCP” was formed in the spring and summer of 1923 by G.Myasnikov and N.Kuznetsov, members of the former “workers opposition” who had been expelled from the party. It was joined by several old Bolsheviks who did not subordinate themselves to the decisions of the Xth and XIth Congresses of the RCP(b) concerning the inadmissibility of inner-party groupings. “Workers Group RCP” considered that it was necessary to form Soviets (Councils) of workers’ deputies at all factories and plants; to choose the directors of trusts and syndicates at congresses of Soviets; and to follow the principle of “proletarian democracy” in directing industry; to make trade unions organs of control; to eliminate the Soviet of People’s Commissars; and “to remove the ruling group in the party,” which “had decisively broken

from the working class.” The September (1923) Plenum of the CC RCP(b) stated that “Workers Truth” and “Workers Group RCP” were conducting “anticommunist and antisoviet work” and declared that participating in them was incompatible with membership in the RCP(b). By resolution of the Central Control Commission in December 1923 active participants of these groups were expelled from the party.

[3] This refers to the commission composed of F. E. Dzerzhinsky, G. E. Zinoviev, V. M. Molotov, A. I. Rykov, I. V. Stalin and M.P. Tomsky, formed to analyze the economic and inner-party situation, according to a resolution of the Politburo of the CC on 18 September 1923. Trotsky was appointed a member of the commission in early November but forced to withdraw from it by November 14, having been unable to attend any of its sessions because of poor health and an overload of work in other commissions. In his letter explaining his withdrawal from the commission, he noted that it had frequently met at short notice, making it “physically impossible” for him to participate. Active participation in the sessions had previously been made an obligation for its members by the PB. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial’no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI), f. 17, op. 171, delo 33, list 142.

[4] David Ryazanov (1870-1938) was a prominent figure in the Russian Marxist movement. During the civil war, he sympathized with oppositional groupings to the Central Committee and his expulsion from the party was briefly considered. He was assigned the director of the newly formed Institute of Marx and Engels (IME) where he played a leading role in the publications of the Collected Works of Marx and Engels, including many previously unknown and unpublished manuscripts such as Engels’ *Dialectics of Nature* and Marx’s *Economic Manuscripts*. He was arrested in March 1931, and his Institute, which employed many former and active Left Oppositionists, was purged. Ryazanov was murdered during the Great Terror in 1938. On the role of Ryazanov in early Soviet society, also see: Clara Weiss, “*The People Immortal: Soviet writer Vasily Grossman’s first novel about World War II.*” *World Socialist Web Site*, 4 October 2022. URL: <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2022/10/14/auih-o14.html>.

[5] “Fragment zapisok V. I. Lenina o pridanii zakonodatel’nykh funktsii Gosplanu” [Fragment of Lenin’s notes on giving legislative functions to Gosplan], 27 December 1922. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial’no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI), f. 2, op. 1, delo 24050, listy 1-10. URL: <https://www.rgan.ru/dokumenty/fragment-zapisok-vi-lenina-o-pridanii-zakonodatelnyh-funktsiy-gosplanu>

[6] Lenin to Trotsky, copy to M. Frumkin and Stomoniakov, December 13, 1922. Harvard University Houghton Library, Leon Trotsky Soviet Papers, MSS 1830, Box 6, Jan 1965, URL: <https://www.wsws.org/en/special/library/leon-trotsky-1924/00.html>

[7] Vladimir Lenin, “The Question of Nationalities or Autonomy in the USSR,” December 30, 1922. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1922/dec/testamnt/autonomy.htm>.

[8] Lenin to Trotsky, March 5, 1923. Harvard University Houghton Library, Leon Trotsky Soviet Papers, MSS 1830, Box 6, Jan 1965, URL: <https://www.wsws.org/en/special/library/leon-trotsky-1924/00.html>, PSS, vol.54, p.329. L.D.Trotsky cites the text of V.I. Lenin’s letter according to the typewritten copy which he had, and which was verified by V.I. Lenin’s secretary, M.A. Volodicheva. In the *Complete Collected Works*, V.I. Lenin’s letter is printed according to a typewritten copy transmitted to the addressee over the telephone on 5 March 1923. The text cited by L.D. Trotsky is missing the phrase: “and even just the opposite,” which exists in V.I. Lenin’s *Complete Collected Works* after the words: “...I cannot count on their impartiality.” In the next sentence in Lenin’s letter the words “...its defense” appear in another place in L.D. Trotsky’s copy. Both texts differ from the publication of the letter in the book, *Arkhiv Trotskogov. Kommunisticheskaiia oppozitsia v SSSR, 1923-1927* [Trotsky’s Archive. Communist Opposition in the USSR. 1923-1927], compiled by Yuri Felshinsky, vol. 1, M., 1990, p. 34; the differences, however, do not alter the meaning.

[9] The “Council of Elders,” was a body that was created within two days

before the opening of the XIIth Congress of the RCP(B), according to a resolution of the April 1923 Plenum of the party’s CC. *Stenograficheskii otchet 12-ogo s’ezda RKP/b v Moskve*, [The Stenographic Record of the 12th Party Congress of the RCP(b)] Moscow 1968, pp. 768, 821.

[10] Lenin’s letter was first published in the USSR in 1956.

[11] This point from Trotsky’s letter was first published in the journal *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1989, No. 11, pp. 180-181.

[12] Lenin, “Better Fewer But Better,” March 2, 1923, published in <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1923/mar/02.htm>

[13] For the documents connected with the publication of V.I. Lenin’s work, “How we must reorganize Rabkrin (A Proposal to the XIIth Congress of the Party),” see *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1989, #11, pp.179-192. In the first publication of this article in *Pravda* on 25 January 1923, the following underlined words were omitted: “...so that no one’s authority, neither that of the General Secretary, nor any other members of the CC, can interfere with their making this enquiry...” They were first published in Lenin’s *Complete Collected Works*, vol. 45, p. 387.

[14] According to documents in the Central Party Archive, now housed at the RGASPI in Moscow, the following occurred: a session of the Politburo on 16 July 1921 considered V.I. Lenin’s proposal to appoint L.D. Trotsky Narkomprod of the Ukraine. The proposal was accepted, but in view of L.D. Trotsky’s protest, the Politburo agreed to delay implementing this decision until the convening of the Plenum of the CC RCP(b). The Plenum of the CC, which met on 9 August 1921, rescinded the resolution of the Politburo and resolved that “in connection with the sharpening of the international situation, comrade Trotsky will devote more attention to military work.”

[15] Trotsky is referring to the de facto adoption of his perspective of permanent revolution by Lenin upon his return to Russia in April 1917. Lenin’s April Theses provoked bitter opposition among a layer of Old Bolsheviks in the leadership, including Kamenev, Zinoviev and Stalin, who had accommodated themselves to the Mensheviks and insisted on upholding the perspective of the establishment of a “dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry” which, under the given conditions, meant a rejection of the seizure of state power by the working class. This history of the inner-party struggle would become subject to the most flagrant and outrageous falsifications by the Stalin faction especially from 1924 onward. For more on the inner-party struggle in 1917, see: Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd* (Haymarket Books, 2009); Leon Trotsky’s *Lessons of October 1924*. URL: <https://www.wsws.org/en/special/library/lessons-of-october-leon-trotsky-1924/00.html>; and James Cogan, “Lenin’s Return to Russia and the April Theses,” *World Socialist Web Site*, 8 May 2017. URL: <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2017/05/08/jclf-m08.html>.

[16] This was part of the Simbirsk Provincial Party Organization. Trotsky is referring to discontent and unrest among the peasants along the Volga in the spring of 1919.

[17] Quoted in Leon Trotsky, *My Life. An Attempt at an Autobiography*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/MyLife/ch38.htm>

[18] In the lead-up to the XIIth Party Congress, at which Trotsky delivered the speech on the economic situation, there was a heated exchange between the Politburo majority around Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin, and Trotsky. The “triumvirate” accused Trotsky of “underestimating” the role of the peasantry in his theses and forced him to make changes to his report. The exchange is partially documented in: *Stenograficheskii otchet 12-ogo s’ezda RKP/b v Moskve*, [The Stenographic Record of the 12th Party Congress of the RCP(b)] Moscow 1968, pp. 810-820. In English, E.H. Carr wrote about it in his volume *The Interregnum, 1923-1924*, (New York/London: Penguin Books, 1969).

[19] *Stenograficheskii otchet 12-ogo s’ezda RKP/b v Moskve*, [The Stenographic Record of the 12th Party Congress of the RCP(b)] Moscow 1968, pp. 447-448.

[20] Ibid., p. 678.

[21] Ibid., p.678, 679. Cited imprecisely, but without distorting the meaning.

[22] This refers to the memorandum from the British government which was written by Minister of Foreign Affairs G.N. Curzon. It was handed to the Soviet government on 8 May 1923 and contained the demands: About recalling Soviet diplomats from Iran and Afghanistan and apologizing for their allegedly improper actions against the British empire; about reducing the Soviet zone of asylum to three miles along the northern bank of the Kolsky peninsula, etc. The British government threatened to break off the Anglo-Soviet trade agreement of 1921. In reply, on 11 May 1923, the Soviet government rejected these demands, while agreeing at the same time to satisfy several secondary wishes expressed by the British. In June 1923, both sides announced that they considered the conflict to be ended.

[23] Trotsky's article "Is It Possible to Fix a Definite Schedule for a Counter-Revolution or a Revolution?" was published in *Pravda* on 23 September 1923. First the English translation page film 08WidTrotsky.htm

[24] Trotsky is referring to the September uprising in 1923 against the monarcho-fascist government. Those who rose up seized a number of cities, where workers' and peasants' power was declared. The uprising was brutally crushed.

[25] On the differences between Trotsky and the Politburo majority over the German revolution, see: Peter Schwarz, "The German October: The missed revolution of 1923," *World Socialist Web Site*, 30 October 2008. <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2008/10/1923-o30.html>

[26] For some reason the name of comrade Kolegaev is dragged into the question of my pretensions to economic dictatorship. I absolutely fail to understand where this comes from and what it is for.—Leon Trotsky

[27] *Stenograficheskiy otchet 12-ogo s'ezda RKP/b v Moskve*, [The Stenographic Record of the 12th Party Congress of the RCP(b)] Moscow 1968, pp. 198-199.

[28] The Moscow Combined Group was created at the beginning of the NEP to check on economic activity.

[29] Trotsky is referring to his work *Literature and Revolution* which was published partially in English in *Stet* 1924/lit_revo/

[30] By the way, comrade Lenin, with whom I discussed the articles I have mentioned devoted to "Proletarian culture," insisted a year and a half ago that I speed up this work. I was able to finish it only this summer.—Leon Trotsky.

[31] Trotsky is again referring to the political positions of G.E. Zinoviev and L.B. Kamenev on the eve of the October 1917 Revolution when they adamantly opposed the seizure of power.



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