Comrades! The subject of my speech will be comrade Trotsky’s most recent publication which he put out on the eve of the anniversary of the October Revolution, and called by the author ‘The Lessons of October’. Trotsky makes a gift of his booklets to the party quite often. Up to now, however, we have not found it necessary to pay particular attention to these booklets, even though in many of them it is quite easy to detect retreats from Bolshevism, from the official ideology of our party. But this booklet must be given special attention and analysed thoroughly because comrade Trotsky has chosen the lessons of October as the subject of his recent publication.

As our entire party, the entire Comintern, the entire world labour movement, and the entire working youth are learning and will keep learning the lessons of the October Revolution, interpreting these lessons cannot be considered the private matter of this or that author. As ‘The Lessons of October’ is appearing under the auspices of the party, and as it has been written by a member of the cc and Politburo of our party, which, and this is no secret to anyone, is a leader of the Comintern, then clearly there is the danger that these kinds of pronouncements, these kinds of ‘lessons’, might be accepted as a manual not only by the members of our party and by our younger members, but also by the entire Comintern. And, by its form, comrade Trotsky’s work is clearly designed to serve as a manual for the Comintern. Everyone who has read this article can see that it is addressed not only to our party, but to the international proletariat as well, and to the Communist parties of all countries. This is why I said that this is not a private matter, and the conflict over the interpretation, correct or otherwise, of ‘The Lessons of October’ is not a literary conflict, not merely the

1 This is a stylistic reworking of the report I delivered on 18 November at a meeting of the mk with active party members, and repeated on 19 November at a meeting of the fraction of the VTsSPS [All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. F.C.], and on 21 November at a conference of military party workers [original footnote]. [Kamenev, ‘Leninizm ili trotskizm? Doklad tov. L.B. Kameneva’, Prawda, no. 269, 26 November 1924, pp. 3–5; published simultaneously in Izvestiia, no. 270, 26 November 1924, pp. 3–5. Kamenev delivered it a third time to a meeting of military party officials on 21 November].
business of literary people: it is a political conflict, it is the business of the whole party. Should any comrades maintain that the conflict sparked by comrade Trotsky’s booklet is just a conflict between Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Stalin and Kamenev, that it is a conflict among a few literati, then this would show that those comrades do not understand the real interests of the party. Such views can come only from those comrades who would like to use the conflict inside the party to create some kind of a third group, based on the idea that ‘the literati are quarrelling, but this does not concern us’.

No, the conflict over the lessons of October, the conflict over what the international proletariat should take from the October Revolution, is not just a matter for the literati, but for all the party masses.

No one has the right to stand on the sidelines in this conflict. This is the most profound question of our internal life and of the life of the Comintern. Can the party recommend learning from Trotsky, or should it, with all its authority, warn the proletariat against the conclusions comrade Trotsky is drawing in his ‘The Lessons of October’? That is the question.

I do not intend to go into a very detailed analysis of comrade Trotsky’s article here. Comrade Trotsky is a skilful writer, and his gifted pen has served the party repeatedly. But here it is serving elements that are hostile to the party, here it does not serve Bolshevism but rather the business of tearing down and discrediting Bolshevism both as the ideology of the proletarian revolution and as the organisation of the fighting elements of the proletariat. And this is achieved by means of an extremely skilful, but deeply incorrect, depiction of all of the events from February to October. I have no doubt that the party will call on a number of authors, participants in these events, actual warriors from those days, to identify and analyse comrade Trotsky’s various distortions of all the decisive moments of party history in that era: the April demonstration is distorted, the April Party Conference is distorted, the events of June and July are distorted, the events surrounding the activity of the Pre-parliament are distorted, even the course of events in October itself is distorted. I cannot dwell here on the details that are necessary to restore historical truth or to compare comrade Trotsky’s assertions against the documentary evidence. I only want to address the general question of the social and political significance of comrade Trotsky’s pronouncements, the meaning of this publication in light of all of comrade Trotsky’s statements, and the role of comrade Trotsky in our party.

For obvious reasons we have avoided addressing this issue, but we can avoid it no longer because comrade Trotsky, having raised the question of October and the question of the role played by our party and by Lenin in the creation of the ideology of the October overthrow, is forcing us to deal on a broad front with all of his pronouncements over the course of the history of the Bolshevik Party.