‘Trotskyism or Leninism?’

I. Stalin

Speech to the Plenum of the Communist Group in the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions [VTsSPS], November 19, 1924.

Comrades! After Comrade Kamenev’s comprehensive report there is little left for me to say. I shall therefore confine myself to exposing certain legends that are being spread by Comrade Trotsky and his supporters about the October uprising, about Comrade Trotsky’s role in the uprising, about the Party and the preparation for October, and so forth. I shall also touch upon Trotskyism as a unique ideology that is incompatible with Leninism, and upon the Party’s tasks in connection with Comrade Trotsky’s latest literary pronouncements.

The Facts of the October Uprising

First of all about the October uprising. Rumours are being vigorously spread among members of the Party that the Central Committee as a whole was opposed to an uprising in October 1917. The usual story is that on 10 October, when the Central Committee adopted the decision to organise the uprising, the majority of the Central Committee at first spoke against an uprising, but, so the story runs, at that moment a worker burst in on the meeting of the Central Committee and said: ‘You are deciding against an uprising, but I tell you that there will be an uprising all the same, in spite of everything’. And so, after that threat, the story runs, the Central Committee, which is alleged to have become frightened, raised the question of an uprising afresh and adopted a decision to organise it. This is not merely a rumour, comrades. It is related by the well-known John Reed in his book *Ten Days*. Reed was remote from our Party and, of course, could not know the history of our secret meeting on 10 October, and, consequently, he was taken in by the gossip spread by people like Sukhanov. This story was later passed round and repeated in a number

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of pamphlets written by Trotskyists, including one of the latest pamphlets on October written by Comrade Syrkin. These rumours have been strongly supported in Comrade Trotsky’s latest literary pronouncements. It scarcely needs proof that all these and similar ‘Arabian Nights’ fairy tales are not in accordance with the truth, that in fact nothing of the kind happened, nor could have happened, at the meeting of the Central Committee. Consequently, we could ignore these absurd rumours; after all, lots of rumours are fabricated in the office rooms of the oppositionists or those who are remote from the Party. Indeed, we have ignored them till now; for example, we paid no attention to John Reed’s mistakes and did not take the trouble to rectify them. After Comrade Trotsky’s latest pronouncements, however, it is no longer possible to ignore such legends, for attempts are being made now to bring up our young people on them and, unfortunately, some results have already been achieved in this respect. In view of this, I must counter these absurd rumours with the actual facts. I take the minutes of the meeting of the Central Committee of our Party on 10 (23) October 1917. Present: Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin, Trotsky, Sverdlov, Uritskii, Kollontai, Bubnov, Sokol’nikov, [Georgii] Lomov. The question of the current situation and the uprising was discussed. After the discussion, Comrade Lenin’s resolution on the uprising was put to the vote. The resolution was adopted by a majority of 10 against 2. Clear, one would think: by a majority of 10 against 2, the Central Committee decided to proceed with the immediate, practical work of organising the uprising. At this very same meeting the Central Committee elected a political centre to direct the uprising; this centre, called the Political Bureau, consisted of Lenin, Zinoviev, Stalin, Kamenev, Trotsky, Sokol’nikov and Bubnov.

Such are the facts.

These minutes at one stroke destroy several legends. They destroy the legend that the majority on the Central Committee was opposed to an uprising. They also destroy the legend that on the question of the uprising the Central Committee was on the verge of a split. It is clear from the minutes that the opponents of an immediate uprising — Kamenev and Zinoviev — were elected to the body that was to exercise political direction of the uprising on a par with those who were in favour of an uprising. There was no question of a split, nor could there be.

Comrade Trotsky asserts that in October our Party had a right wing in the persons of Kamenev and Zinoviev, who, he says, were almost Social Democrats. What one cannot understand then is how, under those circumstances, it could happen that the Party avoided a split; how it could happen that the disagreements with comrades Kamenev and Zinoviev lasted only a few days; how could it happen that, in spite of those disagreements, the Party appointed these