Two years ago at the plenum of the Moscow Soviet, Vladimir Il’ich said that we had started out on the practical road, that we had started to approach socialism not merely as an image dressed up in festive colours. ‘We need to take the right direction’, he said, ‘we need to see that everything is checked, that the masses, the entire population, check the path we follow and say: “Yes, this is better than the old system”’. This is the task we have set ourselves.

Our party, a small group of people compared with the entire population of the country, embraced this task. From this seed came the task of changing everything, and everything is changing. We have already shown that this is not a utopia, but a cause people live by. We have all seen that this is being done. We have had to do it in such a way that the great majority of the toiling masses, peasants and workers said: ‘It is not you who praise yourselves, but we. We say that you have achieved splendid results, after which no intelligent person will ever dream of returning to the old’ (v. xviii, part 2, p. 107).

The party is working without respite. In 1924, the success of the Lenin Levy showed us that the working masses recognises the party as their own. This means something, this is a serious and real achievement, and no small praise in itself. In the countryside as well, we are starting to get some praise although still very limited. The party has turned its face towards the village, and not only towards the village, but to its poor and middle strata, and is working to improve the grass-roots Soviet apparatus so that it can help the village cells, and hopefully this will achieve a great deal. The party is leading the masses through all kinds of practical work on an enormous scale and guiding the wheel of history along the path that Lenin wanted to take the country.

The party has embarked seriously on a practical path – a very difficult path under our conditions, and for this reason the party is so hostile to any kinds of discussions. This is why comrade Trotsky’s speech on the last barricade seemed

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2 Lenin 1966e, p. 442.
3 Ibid.
so strange to the Thirteenth Congress. And this is why comrade Trotsky’s latest ‘literary’ effort now arouses such indignation.

I do not know whether comrade Trotsky is guilty of all of the mortal sins he has been accused of – the matter is not without polemical passion. Comrade Trotsky does not need to complain about this. He was not born yesterday and he knows that an article written in the tone of *The Lessons of October* was bound to provoke a similar tone in the ensuing polemic. But this is not the issue. The issue is that comrade Trotsky, calling on us to study *The Lessons of October*, does not lay down the correct guidelines to do so. He proposes that we study the role of this or that individual in October, the role of this or that tendency in the CC, etc. But it is not necessary to study that.

The first thing we must study is the international situation as it existed in October, the relations between the class forces in Russia at that time.

Is comrade Trotsky calling on us to do this? No. But without the deepest analysis of the historical moment, without a consideration of the actual forces and their interrelationship, victory would have been impossible. A defining feature of Leninism is the application of the Marxist revolutionary dialectic to the concrete conditions of the current moment, and the evaluation of that moment not just from the standpoint of a given country but on a world scale. The international experience of the past decade has been the best confirmation of the correctness of this approach. This approach must be taught to the Communist Parties of all countries, this approach must be taught to the younger generation that is studying October.

Comrade Trotsky somehow overlooks this question. Speaking of Germany and Bulgaria, he spends little time evaluating the moment. If we look at the events through his eyes – events look like they can be easily channelled. Marxist analysis was never comrade Trotsky’s strong suit.

This is why he underestimates the role of the peasantry. A lot has already been written about this.

Furthermore, we must study the party during October. Comrade Trotsky says a great deal about the party, but for him the party is the corps of leaders, the leading personnel. But whoever wants to study October should study the party as it existed in October. The party was a living organism, in which the CC (the ‘headquarters’) was not cut off from the party masses, the organism in which the members of the CC spoke every day with the members of the grass-roots organisations. Comrades Sverdlov and Stalin knew very well what was going on in every district of Petrograd, what was going on in the provinces, what was going on in the army. Il’ich too knew this, despite the fact that he was living in the underground. He received many letters, letters about everything that was happening in the life of the organisation. And Il’ich knew not only how to listen