‘Letter from Comrade Trotsky to the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)’

L. Trotsky

Dear Comrades!

The first item on the agenda of the forthcoming plenum of the CC is the question of the resolutions from local organisations on Trotsky's 'action'. Due to my health, I will not be able to take part in the work of the plenum, but I think I can contribute the following brief clarifications to any consideration of this question:

1. I have always believed and I still believe that I could bring to the discussion enough substantial objections of principle and fact against the charges being levelled against me that I am trying to 'revise Leninism' and 'minimise' Lenin's role. I refrained however from offering any explanation on that basis not only because of my health but also because, in the context of the present discussion, any statement I make on this subject, regardless of content, character and tone, will serve only to deepen the polemic [polemika] further, to transform it from a one-sided into a two-sided polemic, to give it an ever sharper cast.

And now, looking at the entire course of the discussion, and despite the fact that, throughout it, many untrue and quite monstrous accusations have been made against me, I think that my silence was correct in terms of the general interests of the party.

2. In no way however can I accept the charge that I am pursuing my own special course ('Trotskyism') and that I am endeavouring to revise Leninism. The view, which is being ascribed to me, that I somehow did not come to Bolshevism but that Bolshevism came to me, seems simply monstrous to me. In my introduction to The Lessons of October, I state candidly (p. 62) that Bolshevism prepared for its role in the revolution through an implacable struggle not only against Populism and Menshevism but also against 'conciliationism', i.e.

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1 'Pis’mo tov. Trotskogo plenumu TsK rKp(b)', Pravda, no. 16, 20 January 1925, p. 3, and simultaneously in Izvestiia, no. 16, 20 January 1925, p. 2. This letter was published together with a resolution adopted at the plenum concerning Trotsky's recent actions (see 'Resolution', Document 25).
the tendency to which I belonged. Never in the past eight years has it occurred to me to look at any question from the viewpoint of ‘Trotskyism’ which I considered and still consider to have been politically liquidated long ago. Regardless whether I was right or wrong about any issue facing our party, I always sought to resolve those issues by drawing on the general theoretical and practice experience of our party. Not once in these years did anyone say to me that these or those ideas or proposals revealed a special tendency, ‘Trotskyism’. This word emerged quite unexpectedly for me only during the discussion of my book 1917.

3. The most politically significant issue in this regard has been about the evaluation of the peasantry. I firmly deny that the term ‘permanent revolution’, which applies entirely to the past, in any way caused me to adopt a careless attitude towards the peasantry in the context of the Soviet Revolution. If at any time after October I returned for private reasons to the term ‘permanent revolution’, it was only in reference to party history, i.e. it was a reference to the past, not an explanation of current political tasks. In my view, the effort to construct irreconcilable contradictions on the basis of this issue is not worthy either of the eight years’ of experience of revolution we have gone through together, or of the tasks of the future.

I equally reject the statements and references to my so-called ‘pessimistic’ attitude towards the fate of our task of building socialism in the face of the retarded process of the revolution in the West. Despite all the difficulties caused by capitalist encirclement, the Soviet dictatorship possesses great economic and political resources. I have repeatedly developed and argued this idea at the behest of the party, especially at international congresses, and I think that this idea retains all its force for the present period of historical development as well.

4. As to the controversial questions settled by the Thirteenth Congress of the party, I have not said anything either in the cc or in the Council of Labour and Defence (sto), nor have I made any proposals whatsoever outside of the leading party and Soviet institutions, which would have directly or indirectly raised questions that have already been resolved. After the Thirteenth Congress, new economic, soviet and international tasks arose, or were more clearly defined. It proved to be exceptionally difficult to resolve them. It was completely antithetical to my way of thinking to try to offer up any kind of ‘platform’ to counter the work of the cc of the party in solving these questions. For all those comrades who attended the meetings of the Politburo, the plenum of the cc, sto or rvs sssr, this statement needs no corroboration. The controversial questions settled at the Thirteenth Congress were raised again in the last discussion without any connection to my work, and also, as far as I can judge at the moment, without any connection to the practical questions of party policy.