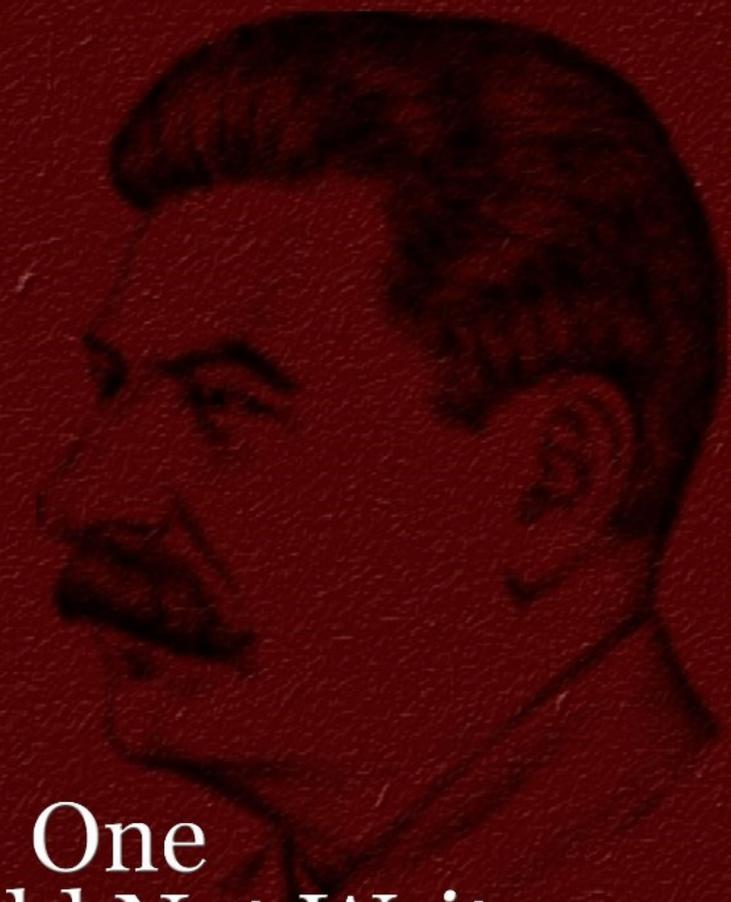


Pravda



How One
Should Not Write
the History of October
(Comrade Trotsky's Book: 1917)



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The 5th World Congress and the 13th Party Conference of the Russian C.P. unanimously condemned the political line of the Russian Opposition, with Comrade Trotsky at the head, as petty bourgeois and opportunist. In spite of this, Comrade Trotsky is carrying on his struggle still further, but in a new form. Under the flag of Leninism, he aims at a revision of Leninism. His book on Lenin was the first attempt of this sort. Many comrades allowed themselves to be dazzled by the literary side of the book, but the scientific organs of the C.P. of Russia and of the C.P. of Germany immediately recognized its tendency and repudiated it with sharp criticisms. There now follows the second attack. Comrade Trotsky has written a preface of about sixty pages; to the recently published third volume of his work 1917. As in their time, those who came after Marx sought, under the flag of Marxism, to revise Marx, so Comrade Trotsky here attempts a revision of Bolshevism in the name of "Leninism". The Pravda, the central organ of the C.P. of Russia, replied to this attempt with the following article which we reprint in full. — Ed.

Comrade Trotsky's recently published book, *1917*, which is devoted to the *Lessons of October*, will soon become the mode. This is not to be wondered at, as it aimed at becoming an inner Party sensation.

After the events of the past year, which have proved the incorrectness of the standpoint of our Party opposition, after the facts, which have again and again proved the correctness of the leadership of our Party, Comrade Trotsky again revives the discussion although with other means. The preface to the book (and it is in this preface, as well as in the annotations, that there lies the "kernel" of the book) is written in a semi-Æsopic language, so that the totally inexperienced reader will fail to observe the hints and allusions with which the preface is interlarded. This peculiar cryptic language, for which Comrade Trotsky, in spite of the fact that he himself demands it "critical clearness", has a strong preference, must be deciphered. For the work of Comrade Trotsky, which claims to be a guide to the "Study of October", threatens to become a guide for "every present and future discussion". It takes upon itself the responsibility to fight against the line of the Party, as well as of the Comintern, in which it in no way bears the character of a theoretical analysis, but more resembles a political platform, upon the basis of which it will be possible to undermine the exact decisions adopted by the respective congresses.

Comrade Trotsky's book is not only written for the Russian reader; this can be recognized without difficulty. It is to a large extent written for the "information" of foreign comrades. Now, when the

problem of “bolshevizing” stands on the order of the day in a whole number of Communist Parties, when the interest for the history of our Party is undoubtedly increasing, the book of Comrade Trotsky can render a great disservice. It is not only not a text book of Bolshevism, but it will much rather become a factor for “debolshevizing” the foreign Communist Parties — so biased, one-sided, and at times exceedingly falsely, does it describe the events, from the analysis of which it seeks to draw conclusions for the present.

This is what renders necessary a critical examination of this new book of Comrade Trotsky. It must not remain unanswered. One can only regret that Comrade Trotsky, who draws conclusions from the “teachings of October” which, it is true, are false, draws no conclusions from the more recent epoch of last year’s discussion. The best test of different points of view is, as Comrade Trotsky himself admits, Experience; Life itself. Life however has shown that the ruling line which is recognized by the Party, has not only not brought the country to “the verge of ruin”, as the last year’s opposition predicted, which prophesied for the country all the plagues of Egypt, but in spite of events, which are independent of every “platform”, as the bad harvest, etc., has brought the country forward.

On the other hand a whole number of new tasks under new conditions have arisen; difficulties which are determined by the process of growth. The whole Party desires, before all, concrete work under a leadership, which has been tried by experience, upon

a “platform” which has withstood this experience. For this reason it was not in the least desirable to reopen the old disputes, even if in another form.

Comrade Trotsky saw fit to do this. Of course, he bears the whole responsibility for it. Willingly or unwillingly, we must reply to this book, as the Party cannot permit a propaganda which is directed against the decisions which the Party adopted with such firmness and unanimity to remain unanswered. We will, therefore, examine the statement which Comrade Trotsky has now submitted to the Party, the “lessons” which he has drawn from October, and is now very kindly communicating to our young and old comrades.

I. The Question of Historical Investigation.

The axle upon which the statements of Comrade Trotsky turn is the estimate of the importance of various periods in the history of our Party. He sees things essentially as follows: the whole period of the development of the Party up to October, 1917 is a thing of very little importance. Not until the moment of seizing power was the question decided, it is this period which stands out before all others, only then have we the possibility of testing classes, Parties, their leading cadres, and individuals.

“It would mean a piece of barren scholasticism, but in no way a Marxian political analysis, were we at the present time to occupy ourselves with an analysis of the different viewpoints of revolution in general, and of the Russian in particular, and thereby to overlook the experiences of 1917. It would be as if we were to indulge in disputes over the advantages of various methods of swimming, but obstinately refuse to turn our eyes to the river, where these methods are being applied by bathers. There is no better test for a point of view over revolution than its application in revolution itself, precisely as a method of swimming can best be proved when the swimmer springs into the water. (p. XVI)

“What is the meaning of bolshevizing the Communist Parties? It means such an education of these Parties, such a selection of the leading persons,

that they will not run off the track at the moment of their October. Herein lies Hegel, the book wisdom and the essence of all philosophies...” (p. 65.)

These sentences only contain half the truth, and one can, therefore (as Comrade Trotsky does) draw totally false conclusions from them.

Comrade Trotsky says to the Communist Parties: Study October in order to be victorious! One must not overlook October.

Certainly one must not do that. Just as one must neither forget the year 1905, nor the very instructive years of reaction. Who, and where and when, has recommended such a monstrous thing? Who, and where and when, has even ventured to advocate such an absurdity?

No one has recommended it. But precisely in order to understand the pre-conditions of the October victory, one must at all costs look beyond the immediate preparations of the revolt. But in no event must one be separated from the other. In no circumstances must one estimate groups, persons and tendencies by disconnecting them from that period of preparation which Comrade Trotsky compares to disputes over “the best method of swimming”. Of course, in the “critical period”, when it is a question of a decisive struggle, all questions are faced in all their acuteness, and all shades, tendencies and groups tend to express on this occasion their most characteristic, inner, essential qualities. On the other hand, the explanation for the fact that they play a positive role during the flood-

time of revolution, does not always lie in the correctness of their “standpoint”.

“It is not difficult to be a revolutionary when revolution has already broken out, when everything is in flames”, — thus Comrade Lenin formulated this aspect of the question. (Collected Works, vol. xvii., p. 183, Russian Edition). In another passage he says: “The revolutionary is not he who becomes a revolutionary on the outbreak of revolution, but he who defends the principles and slogans of the revolution at the time of the most furious reaction”. (Ibid, Vol. VII:2, p. 151).

That is not the same thing as Trotsky says.

Let us dot the i's. What determined the attitude of the Party of the Bolsheviks in October? It was determined by the whole previous history of the Party, by its struggle against all opportunist deviations, from the extreme Menshevists up to the Trotskyites (for example, the “August” Bloc). Can one, however, perchance, say that the correct standpoint of Comrade Trotsky (because it coincided with the Bolshevik standpoint) in the October days, resulted from his attitude in the preparatory period? Obviously one cannot say that. On the contrary, had a historical miracle occurred at that time, and had the Bolshevik workers followed that which Comrade Trotsky proclaimed (unity with the liquidators, fight against the “sectarianism” of Lenin, Menshevist political platform, during the war fight against the Zimmerwald Left, etc.), then there would have been no October victory. Comrade Trotsky, however,

entirely avoids dealing with this period, although it would be his duty to impart just these “lessons” to the Party.

Let us quote another example. There fought side by side with us on the October barricades many left social revolutionaries. In the decisive moment of October they contributed their share to the cause of victory. Did that mean, however, that they had been “tried” once and for all by October? Unfortunately this was by no means the case as the post-October experience has shown, which to a considerable extent confirmed the estimate given of these petty bourgeois revolutionaries before October.

October isolated, therefore, in no way suffices for the “test”. It is rather the second moment which is of more importance, the moment which Comrade Lenin so categorically pointed out.

The statement of Comrade Trotsky, that the “bolshevizing” of the Communist Parties consists in such an education and such a selection of a body of “leaders” that they shall not run off the track at the moment of their October, is, therefore, correct, in as far as it also includes the appropriation of the experiences of the “preparatory period”. For even the immediate experiences of the Russian October can neither be understood nor made use of if we do not take to heart the teachings of this preparatory period. Comrade Trotsky, who regards the matter in such a way that the Bolshevik Party in its actual essence only began to exist after the October days, does not see the uninterrupted connection of the line of the

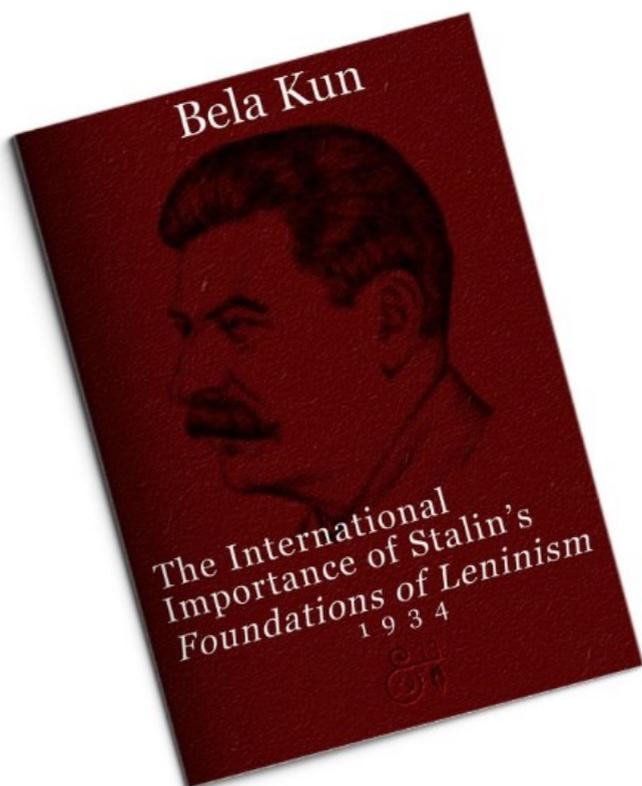
Party in its entirety up to “the present moment”.

And just in the same way he fails to see that after the seizure of power, even after the end of the civil war, history is by no means at an end. In the same way the history of our Party is also not at an end, the history which is likewise a “testing of the Party policy”, for it not only contains discussions regarding the one or the other standpoint, but also the experiences of practical policy.

One had to take care not “to leave the track” in October, but the same applies to the time of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (when, as Trotsky admits, the “head”, that means the life and death, of the Soviet power was at stake). One had also to take care not to leave the track in the discussion of 1921, for without the Lenin policy we would have endangered everything. It would also have been out of place to leave the track in the last year, for without the money reform, without the economic policy, etc., conducted by the Party, we should have likewise arrived at a desperate situation. In all these critical situations, however, Comrade Trotsky has left the track, and in the same manner as in the pre-February period of his political existence, when he had not broken with the open opponents of Bolshevism.

“The tradition of a revolutionary party”, writes Comrade Trotsky (p. 62), “will not be created through maintaining silence, but out of critical clearness”. Very true. The demand for “critical clearness” however, must not be raised only in regard

to the actions which took place in October, but also in relation to the preceding and the succeeding period of development. Only in this manner is an actual test possible; for the Party of the proletariat acts constantly and passes through more than one "critical" period.



II. The Lessons of the Revolution of the Year 1917 and the Struggle within the Party.

Shall silence be maintained regarding October and its prologue, the February Revolution? Certainly not. That would show either a lack of conscientiousness or stupidity. But, quite in vain, Comrade Trotsky, with his hints and allusions as well as with open appeals, wishes to create the impression that the history of October is being dealt with in a “step-motherly” fashion, because in this respect some sort of mental reservations (a false, “half conscious estimate”) play a role. Such statements as, “Still more inadmissible... would it be to maintain silence, out of considerations of a personal character, which are of quite secondary importance, regarding extremely important problems of the October upheaval, which have international significance” (p. XII.), are scarcely in place.

This statement is certainly correct.

But in the first place, Comrade Trotsky conceals the fact that no less has been written over October than over any other period. Lenin’s writings contain a brilliant estimate of this period, from which the Party will be able for a long time to draw all the essential teachings of October.

Secondly, Comrade Trotsky fails to mention that the persons in question have repeatedly admitted their errors, as is well-known to the whole Party.

Comrade Zinoviev, in his *History of the Russian Communist Party* and in earlier publications, has spoken with all clearness regarding them, and has declared the same before the Party and before the Communist International; Comrade Lenin also spoke concerning this, but at no time did he connect this error with the later, after October, activity of these comrades who took the wrong course in October. (It is necessary in this connection to refer to certain facts. In spite of differences of opinion, Kamenev, on the proposal of Lenin, was elected at the April Conference to the Central Committee of the Party, and in the moment of the insurrection, on behalf of the Central Committee, took the chair at the Second Soviet Congress. Already in November, 1917, Zinoviev, whose disagreements with the Central Committee only lasted a few days, on behalf of the Central Committee of the Party delivered a report to the All-Russian Central Executive Committee advocating the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. At the Seventh Party Conference (beginning of March, 1918), Zinoviev, on behalf of the Central Committee, spoke for the Lenin policy against Trotsky and the "Lefts". From this it is to be seen that the whole Party regarded the October errors of these comrades as nothing else than a temporary difference of opinion. On the contrary, they entrusted them with tasks of the greatest importance, in spite of the fact that they did not for a moment approve of the errors of these comrades.)

Comrade Trotsky now seeks to make use of these errors in order to revise the whole Party police and to

“correctly expound” the whole history of the Party. Therein lies the kernel of the statements of Comrade Trotsky. The whole analysis of the events from April to October is so stated as if the differences of opinion, which “tore the Party to pieces”, had become more and more acute until they finally broke out into a conflict which almost led to collapse, and that the revolution was only saved, thanks to the efforts of Comrade Lenin who had the courage to oppose the Central Committee and who was supported by Comrade Trotsky, who, so to speak, “anticipated” the fundamental idea of Lenin.

This analysis hardly contains anything which is in accordance with the facts.

In the first place, Comrade Trotsky totally ignores the Party. It does not exist, its mood not to be perceived, it has vanished. There stands only Comrade Trotsky, Lenin is visible in the distance, and we see a slow-witted, nameless Central Committee. The Petrograd organisation, which was the real collective organizer of the workers’ insurrection, is altogether absent. Comrade Trotsky’s whole treatment of history revolves exclusively round “the highest pinnacles” of the Party structure. With regard to the whole Party structure we look in vain in the artistically-painted picture puzzle of Comrade Trotsky. “Where is the Party?” Is it permissible for Marxists to write history in such a manner? That is a caricature of Marxism. To write the history of October and to overlook the Party means to stand with both feet on an individualistic standpoint, upon the standpoint of heroes and

masses. Such a standpoint is not suitable for the education of the Party membership. But also from the point of view of an analysis of the leading figures, the chronicle of Comrade Trotsky cannot be approved, for it distorts the facts. Let us see how Comrade Trotsky describes the course of events:

“The decisions of the April Conference gave the Party a correct attitude. The differences of opinion of the leaders of the Party were not liquidated thereby. On the contrary. In the course of events they assumed a more concrete form, and they reached their acutest point at the most decisive moment of the revolution, in the October days”. (p. XXXI.)

After the July days:

“The mobilising of the right elements of the Party increased. Their criticism became more determined. (p. XXXII.)

And finally before October:

“An extraordinary Party Congress proved to be unnecessary. The pressure of Lenin secured the necessary turn to the left of the forces, both in the Central Committee and in the parliamentary fraction”. (p. XXXVI.)

All this is extremely — “incorrect”. For already at the time of the Sixth Party Congress there had taken place a complete ideological consolidation of the Party. The Central Committee elected at the Sixth Party Congress stood unconditionally on the platform of the revolt. Lenin exercised an enormous influence upon the Central Committee, for Lenin

himself was a leading member of the CC as is known to everybody. But to represent the matter as if the majority of the CC were, so to speak, almost against the revolt, means not to know either the Party or the Central Committee, and means to sin against the truth. Was not the revolt decided upon on the 10th of October with an overwhelming majority of the Central Committee? The tremendous energy, the truly tremendous revolutionary passion, the ingenious analysis of events and the powerful magnetic power of Comrade Lenin gave a firm stamp to the opinion of the overwhelming majority of the CC Comrade Trotsky, however, wants at all costs to separate Lenin from the CC, to oppose them to each other and to tear asunder the indivisible band which in reality was not loosened for a moment. History must not be distorted in this manner. Were it not so, if that which Comrade Trotsky writes were correct, then it would be quite unintelligible, 1. Why the Party was not split for the conflict; 2. how it was able to triumph; 3. how the conflict (the resignation of some leading members of the CC) could be liquidated within a few days by the return of these comrades to their posts. This “miracle” (a miracle from the standpoint of the assumptions of Comrade Trotsky) as is known, was accomplished, and without much difficulty. It is true that one can hint here that after the victory there are many who are prepared to join the victors, as one does “sit in judgment” against victors.

But it must not be forgotten that the victory in Petrograd and in Moscow was merely the beginning

of the struggle, the beginning of enormous difficulties, which was perfectly clear to every Party member. These considerations do not help in any way to explain what is to be explained.

All this, however, becomes perfectly understandable if we do not consider the events from such an egocentric point of view as does Comrade Trotsky. In this case we get the following picture. From April to October there gradually disappear the remnants of vacillation in the Party; in October they have been reduced to a minimum; the Party is proceeding with firm ranks into the fight. Above there remain some comrades who are not in agreement with the general line of the Party. But precisely because the Party (that is no little thing, Comrade Trotsky) was united, precisely because the overwhelming majority of the CC went with Lenin, these comrades were also carried along by the general stream of the Party and class, and immediately returned to their posts. They have been far more thoroughly “proved” than merely through the October days.

III. War, Revolution and the Standpoint of Comrade Trotsky.

The “Chronicle” of Comrade Trotsky, as well as his annotations to the same, not only incorrectly describe the relations within the Party, but also the preparation of the “bolshevizing” of Comrade Trotsky himself. (We are solely interested here in his political attitude.) We learn from the annotations of Comrade Trotsky’s book, for example, that in the articles written by L. D. Trotsky in America there was also completely anticipated (!) the later political tactics of the revolutionary Social-Democrats. The fundamental conclusions of these articles agree in almost every detail (!) with the political perspectives, which Comrade Lenin developed in his famous “*Letters from Afar*”. (p. 370.)

We learn here that in the “course of time the differences of opinion between the standpoint of Nashe Slovo (“Our Word”, at one time the organ of Trotsky. — Ed.) and Lenin became continually less”. (p. 377.) On the other hand, we learn a whop number of details regarding the errors of the Pravda, of a number of Bolsheviks, etc.

But after perusing the book we are little informed in what these differences of opinion, which grew continually less, consisted. And we are decidedly misled if we take it as correct that Comrade Trotsky had already anticipated the Leninist policy, as stated

by that terrible busybody, Comrade Lenzner, who was entrusted with the perusal of the book and with adding the notes. (Lenin did not know that he, according to Comrade Trotsky, had committed a plagiarism.) The question of the attitude during the war, however, gives the key to a number of other questions and leads us to the laboratory where the slogans were drawn up, which soon were to play such an extraordinary important, one might rightly say, world-historical role.

We will attempt to call to mind several things in this respect.

1. "Peace" or "Civil War". This is the first difference of opinion, one which involves a considerable measure of principle, for precisely here is to be seen, who and how has anticipated the events, as well as the tactics, of the revolutionary social democracy. The slogan of the civil war which was issued by Lenin and the Bolshevik CC right at the beginning of the war was a special Bolshevik slogan, a slogan, which drew a line of demarcation between true revolutionaries and, not only all shades of Chauvinists, but also of the internationalists of a petty bourgeois, pacifist, "humanitarian" color who sought to approach the centrist elements. Only by bluntly raising the question of civil war was there created the possibility to select the cadre of those revolutionaries who afterwards formed the kernel of the Communist Party.

Comrade Trotsky was most decidedly opposed to this slogan, which he considered as a narrow slogan,

unsuited for mass propaganda. Is that perchance an “anticipation” of the Leninist standpoint?

2. Defeatism and the Fight against it. The second distinguishing criterion of the Bolsheviks attitude was the slogan that the revolutionary Social-Democrats (we would now say Communists must, in the imperialist war, before all desire the defeat of their own government. Comrade Trotsky characterized this attitude as an inverted nationalism, or nationalism with a minus sign. Now, however, the deep meaning of this Leninist attitude, whose roots form the chief source of the Bolshevik idea, is now perfectly clear. Yes, the chief source. One only needs to read, for example, the recently published polemic between Lenin and Plekhanov over the draft programme of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Lenin’s Collected Works, No. 2) in order to perceive this. In this polemic with Plekhanov, Lenin finds fault with the Plekhanov draft on the ground that this is a textbook and not a declaration of war; there we read about capitalism in general, whilst we require war against Russian capitalism—that is, the essence of this polemic on the part of Lenin. Why did Lenin insist upon this? Precisely because he was a fighter and not a disclaimer. The slogan of the defeat of one’s own government was a declaration of war on every form of pacifism, even when it was hidden under the feather bed of noble phrases, on every one who advocated the defense of the fatherland, even when it was hidden under the cleverest mask. This was the most decided break. A real severance of all

connections with one's own bourgeois state. It was precisely such an attitude, which determined in reality, in actual practice, the international standpoint of Bolshevism. This was the second difference of principle between Trotsky and the Bolsheviks.

3. Unity with the Menshevist Fraction of Tcheidse. Even during the war Comrade Trotsky still advocated unity with such elements as the Tcheidse fraction, and he did not have the courage to declare for a definite organisatory break which was the necessary preliminary to a correct policy. It was not without reason that Lenin greatly feared that many comrades would be misled by Trotskyism. It is interesting to note that Trotsky, even in May, 1917, did not perceive his earlier errors. Thus we read on page 380 of the book in question:

“On the 7th of May, 1917, there was opened the city conference of the United Social-Democrats (Bolsheviks and Internationalists). The Conference greeted Comrade Trotsky, who was present as guest. In reply to this greeting Comrade Trotsky declared that for him, who always stood for the unity of the Social-Democratic forces (*italics by the Pravda*) unity is not an end in itself, that this formula must be given a revolutionary content, etc.” (p. 380). (This refers to the so-called “Meshrajonzy”, who existed side by side with the Bolsheviks and at this time stood for unity with the “left” Mensheviks. After the July days they, along with Comrade Trotsky, joined the Bolshevik Party.)

From this it is perfectly clear that Comrade Trotsky does not only not condemn his fight for the unity of the liquidators, but makes this tremendous fatal error almost the basis, so to speak, of unity with the Bolsheviks, this time fortunately being prepared to give the formula a revolutionary content.

Unfortunately the same faulty estimation of his own mistakes in the organisatory question is also observed at present, it was clearly revealed by Comrade Trotsky in the last year's discussion. Comrade Trotsky justifies himself with regard to the accusations on the part of "some one of the deep thinking sextons of the type of Comrade Sorin" on account of his fight against the Bolshevik sectarianism, by a more than strange method.

"My objection to the article was the following Sectarianism still exists as a heritage of the past. But in order to reduce it the 'Meshrajonzy' must cease their separate existence" (p. 66).

Comrade Trotsky already, therefore, when he advocated uniting with the Bolsheviks, condemned. Bolshevik sectarianism as a bad inheritance of the wicked past.

But do we repudiate this heritage? Not in the least, for this so-called sectarianism was, as a matter of fact, the method of the creation of our Party, that is the organisatory basic principle of Bolshevism. And when Comrade Trotsky writes on page 65 of his *Preface* that he has recognized his "great organisatory" mistakes, and on page 66 justifies the charge of sectarianism directed against pre-

revolutionary Bolshevism, this means that he has not yet drawn all the consequences and all the teachings from the history of our Party. He can, however, not do this if he considers the birthday of the Party to be the day of its union with the “Meshraionzy” or even the glorious October days, in which Comrade Trotsky, not without birth pangs, was himself born a Bolshevik.

4. Fight against the Zimmerwald Left. Finally, there must be mentioned the attitude of Comrade Trotsky on a “world scale”. Comrade Trotsky who conducted the fight against Chauvinists, social-patriots, etc., was scornful towards the Zimmerwald Left. He regarded them likewise as sectarians, as a Bolshevik whim, quite unadapted for the conditions abroad. Already in America, where, as Comrade Lenzner assures us, Comrade Trotsky anticipated the later standpoint of Comrade Lenin, he conducted an active fight against solidarizing with the Zimmerwald Left. Trotsky could not approve this “split” from the Zimmerwald centrists. The comrades who were entrusted with the editing of *1917* did not take any trouble to illuminate for the international proletariat this part of our Party history, which is quite as important for the International as the question of civil war, of defeatism, etc., for here there is no less at stake than the choice between the Second and the Third International.

5. The Conception of “Permanent” Revolution. Comrade Trotsky has, as is proved, not only “anticipated” Lenin’s later standpoint, but he proved himself to be right in one of the most essential points

of our revolutionary theory and at the same time of our revolutionary strategy, and that is, in the question of “permanent” revolution. Comrade Trotsky writes concerning this as follows:

“Lenin, immediately before 1905, gave expression to the unique character of the Russian revolution in the formula of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat, and the peasantry. This formula, as the later development showed, could merely be of importance as a stage to the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat, supported by the peasantry” (p. XVII.)

What can be the meaning of that? In 1905 there was a fight of the Bolsheviks, who issued the slogan “dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry”, on the one hand, and the Trotsky-Parvus group, whose slogan was, “Down with the Tsar and up with a Labour government!” on the other hand and finally, with the Poles, at the head of whom stood Rosa Luxemburg, who issued the formula: “the proletariat supported by the peasantry”.

Whose standpoint proved to be correct?

Comrade Trotsky evades giving a definite and detailed reply to this question. Indirectly, however, he finds the correctness of his formula confirmed. The formula of Lenin could “merely” be a stage to the formula of Trotsky. But to say that the standpoint of Trotsky proved to be correct is false. It proved to be incorrect, and the further development has proved its incorrectness. The peculiarity of Comrade Trotsky’s

attitude consists precisely in the fact that he wished to skip a stage which could not be skipped. (He forgot one trifle, the peasantry.)

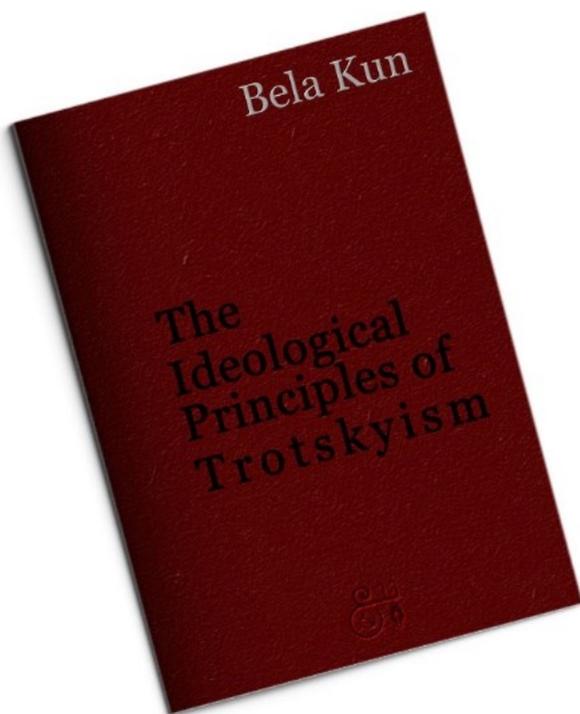
“It is not sufficient to be a revolutionary and a follower of socialism or a Communist in general” wrote Comrade Lenin. “One must understand how to find at any moment the particular link in the chain which one must seize with all his force in order to hold the entire chain and to prepare a sure transition to the following link”. (Collected Works, Vol. 15, p. 223.)

It is precisely this which the slogan of Comrade Trotsky failed to give. He has “disregarded” that special link of the chain which should have been grasped with all force, he has under-estimated the role of the peasantry and thereby practically isolated himself from the workers.

“Magnificent, catching, intoxicating slogans, which have no basis—that is the nature of the revolutionary phrase”. (Lenin, Vol. XV, p. 100.)

It does not follow from the fact that after many years, and after we have passed over a certain stage, the socialist revolution has set in, that Comrade Trotsky is right. Such an assertion would contradict the facts and would be based upon a misunderstanding of the nature of the tactics of Bolshevism, of its, if one may so say, political methodology, which unites a persistent march forward to the great aim with an austere soberness, which rejects all prejudices and all superficiality in its estimate of every concrete situation. Here, also

Comrade Trotsky is in the wrong. Here also his book entirely misleads the reader. Not to mention the fact that Comrade Trotsky rains silent as to how his “permanent” ultra-left phrase was wedded to an extremely right policy and a bitter struggle against the Bolshevik Party.



IV. The Lessons of October and the Communist International.

One of the practical foundations upon which the *Preface* of Trotsky is based is the endeavor, *Preface* put it mildly, to “dispute” the policy of the ECCI He sets out to take revenge for the discussion he lost in 1923 and thereby to oppose, not only the line of the CC, but also the policy of the Comintern as a whole. For this purpose he has distorted the meaning of the most important epochs of the class struggle of the proletariat in Germany and in Bulgaria. In this, he hints that the mistakes of several comrades in 1917 caused the failure of the Communists in Germany, and in Bulgaria in 1923. The structure of this idea is very simple when we strip off the husk of words. XYZ erred in the Russian October, XYZ now lead the Communist International. The Comintern has lost the battles, a, b, c. It follows that XYZ are responsible for this, as they are carrying on their traditions of the Russian October. Briefly stated that is the meaning of the long effusion.

The frame of this completely ridiculous syllogism has a concrete content. It is, therefore, necessary critically to illuminate this content, where upon the whole complicated construction of Comrade Trotsky will collapse.

Point 1. Bulgaria

Comrade Trotsky writes:

“In the past year, we had two severe defeats in Bulgaria. First, the Party, owing to doctrinaire and fatalistic considerations, missed a most extraordinary favorable moment for revolutionary action (the peasants’ revolt after the Zankov patch). Afterwards the Party, in order to make good its mistakes, plunged into the September revolt without having prepared the political and organisatory pre-conditions therefor”. (XII.)

As the reader will easily see, the reason for the defeat is here considered to be, first Menshevik fatalism, and secondly unlimited optimism (no preparation, etc.). These two features are also mentioned in characterizing the types of October opportunism. The connection between the Russian October and the present Comintern leadership is, therefore, completely set up.

Let us, however, examine the facts a little more closely. The first defeat was the result of the fact that the Bulgarian Party had dealt with the peasantry quite incorrectly, and did not know how to estimate their movement or the role of the Peasants’ League as a whole, or its left-wing. They rather adopted the standpoint, “Down with the king, up with a workers’ government”. At the decisive moment, when it was necessary to take the leadership into their hands, and to mount up on the crest of a powerful peasants’ wave, the Party declared itself neutral claiming that the fight was between the town and the rural bourgeoisie which was no concern of the proletariat. These were the “considerations” of the C.P. of Bulgaria. They have been committed to writing, and

can be now proved by documents. If we wish to have an analogy with our October (we should, by the way, be more cautious with analogies), it would be much more apt to take the Kornilov days, (Kerensky-Stambuliksi, Kornilov-Zankov). Here according to the statement of Comrade Trotsky himself, too much support was given to Kerensky, and the distinction between the fight against Kornilov and the defence of Kerensky was not under. stood. In Bulgaria, however, the exact opposite committed.

Wherein, therefore, lies the “Lessons of October”?

Apart from this, the comrades who are at present members of the ECCI adopted during the Kornilov days a thoroughly correct attitude, and the whole ECCI exercised a thoroughly correct criticism of the CP of Bulgaria and urged theca on.

The second defeat in Bulgaria is a fact, and Comrade Trotsky describes the conditions under which it took place. Will you be so good, Comrade Trotsky, to say, whether in this case you support the old formula of Plekhanov during the time of the Menshevist decay, “one should not have taken up arms?” Was it necessary or not for the Bulgarian Communists to take up arms?

Yes or no?

Comrade Trotsky does not reply to this. According to our opinion it was necessary to take up arms, as only by this means was it possible to maintain contact with the peasantry who were entering the struggle with elementary force. But there was no time for preparation. That is the true picture of the events.

The “Lessons” of Comrade Trotsky have nothing in the least to do with it.

Point 2. Germany

Still more interesting is the question of the defeat of the German proletariat in October last year.

“We have seen there in the second half of the past year a classical (*italics by the Pravda*) demonstration of the fact that a most extraordinary favorable revolutionary situation of world historical importance can be missed”. (XII.)

According to the opinion of Comrade Trotsky, therefore, the failure here consisted in the fact that a “classical” moment was missed. It was necessary at all costs to take up the decisive struggle and the victory would have been ours. Here Comrade Trotsky draws a complete analogy with the October revolution in Russia. There as here, we were pushed forward. In Russia, under the pressure of Lenin, we decided upon action and were victorious — in Germany, without the pressure of Lenin, no decision was made and the appropriate moment was lost. Now, however, under the influence of the Russian October revolution, it is declared that the forces for the decisive struggle were not sufficient. That is the meaning of the “German events” according to Comrade Trotsky.

But here we have before us mere schematizing and grey abstraction. Comrade Trotsky elaborate how history would have been written if the opponents of the revolt had been in the majority in the Russian CC:

it would then have been said that the forces were too limited, that the enemy was fearfully strong, etc.

All this is only outwardly convincing; yes, it is probable that history would have been written in this manner. But that is in no way a proof that the forces of the German revolution in October, 1923, were not over-estimated.

It is false to say, the moment was a “classical” one. For the Social-Democrats proved themselves to be far stronger than we thought. An analogy with the Russian October is quite out of place here. In Germany there were no armed soldiers who were for the revolution. We could not issue the slogan of peace. There was no peasant agrarian movement. There was no such party as ours. But apart from all that it proved that social-democracy has not yet outlived itself. These concrete facts had, therefore, to be dealt with. At the time of the decisive events the ECCI declared itself in favor of the October policy. Now as, owing to the objective conditions this suffered a defeat, and as, thanks to the right leaders, this defeat was “greater than necessary”, Comrade Trotsky, who has in fact always supported the right opportunist wing which is inclined to capitulation and opposed to the left, now gives a “profound” theoretical basis of his conception, and thereby launches a blow against the leading circles of the Comintern. Such lessons must not be drawn either from the Russian or the German October.

It is also quite inadmissible to cling to many errors to which Comrade Trotsky still clings.

One of the lessons (the actual lessons) of the German October is that before it the most far-reaching mobilisation of the masses is necessary. This work has been greatly neglected. In Hamburg, for example, during the revolt there were no workers' councils and our Party organisation was not capable of drawing the ten thousands of strikers into the struggle. Throughout the whole of Germany there were no soviets; according to Comrade Trotsky's opinion that was right, as the soviets were substituted by the factory councils. As a matter of fact, these factory councils could not replace the soviets, as they did not comprise the whole population, including the most backward and indifferent, as the soviets do in the critical and tense moment of the class struggle.

The book of Comrade Trotsky calls for a study of October. This slogan does not contain anything new. It is appropriate for the members of our Party as well as for our foreign comrades. Comrade Trotsky's book, or to be more correct, his preface, claims to be a guide in this study. To this we must say, in the most definite manner; it cannot fulfil this role. It will, however, mislead the comrades, who, behind the exterior fine style, will not observe the complete lack of proportion, the distortion of the true Party history. That is no mirror of the Party, but a caricature.

The publication of this "caricature" is by no means a chance event. After what we have said above it is not difficult to perceive to what the cone elusions indicated by Comrade Trotsky lead.

In fact: if, as Comrade Trotsky falsely states, in October, 1917, something correct could be carried through only against the CC is it not possible that such a situation may arise again? What guarantee is there that the leadership will be the right one? And whether it is correct at the present time? The sole “test” is October, 1917. Can one trust those who have not stood this test? And did not the Comintern suffer a defeat in Bulgaria and in Germany in consequence of these leaders? Is it not necessary to study the October in such a way that just these problems are more closely investigated?

That is the essence of those problems which Comrade Trotsky, after the failure of his frontal attack in the past year, brings forward for the attention of his readers. Comrade Trotsky can, however, be quite convinced that the Party will understand how to judge rightly and in good time this quiet undermining work. The Party wants work and no fresh discussion. The Party desires true Bolshevik unity.

