

Leon Trotsky

On the Suppressed

Testament of Lenin

(December 1932)

The full text of Lenin's testament was first published in English in the **New York Times** of October 18, 1926. Subsequently it was included by the publishers (Harcourt Brace and Co., 1928) as a supplement to **The Real Situation in Russia** by Leon Trotsky. In 1935 Pioneer Publishers printed the full text in the pamphlet **The Suppressed Testament of Lenin**, together with Leon Trotsky's article *On Lenin's Testament*, which had first appeared in the [July](#) and [August](#), 1934, issues of **New International**. The pamphlet has long been out of print.

Foreword

The document later known as Lenin's Testament was, as Trotsky says in his biography of Stalin, "Lenin's last advice on how to organize the party leadership." A year before his death Lenin, with his unerring political insight, saw in Stalin's policies the beginnings of what Lenin himself called "bureaucratism not only in the Soviet institutions but also in the party." It was against this danger that he dictated a confidential letter giving his estimate of the leaders in the Central Committee and, ten days later, added a postscript in which he proposed to remove Stalin from his post as General Secretary of the party.

A detailed account of the political background and the circumstances surrounding Lenin's testament is given by Leon Trotsky in his article On Lenin's Testament – written ten years later in Turkey, where Trotsky had been driven into exile by Stalin.

*The authenticity of the testament is unquestioned. After Lenin's death the document became known to so many party leaders that – although it was of course suppressed – to deny its existence would have been impossible. As late as 1927 Stalin himself, in the **International Press Correspondence** of November 17, 1927, openly accepted the authenticity of Lenin's testament, writing about it as follows:*

It is said that in the Testament in question Lenin suggested to the party Congress that it should deliberate on the question of replacing Stalin and appointing another comrade in his place as General Secretary of the party. This is perfectly true.

It was not long, however, before the Stalinists, even in face of the incontrovertible evidence and their own admissions, began to deny the very existence of such a document. They have of course expunged from their official literature every reference to it. But their machine of repression and falsification has not been able to bury this last advice of Lenin to the party.

*Trotsky wrote about the last period of Lenin's life and the origins of the "legend of Trotskyism" on a number of other occasions. The reader is referred especially to [My Life](#), chapters 28 and 38-40; and the [Letter to the Bureau of Party History](#) in **The Stalin School of Falsification**.*

The Testament of Lenin

By the stability of the Central Committee, of which I spoke before, I mean measures to prevent a split, so far as such measures can be taken. For, of course, the White Guard in **Russkaya Mysl** (I think it was S.E. Oldenburg) was right when, in the first place, in his play against Soviet Russia he banked on the hope of a split in our party, and when, in the second place, he banked for that split on serious disagreements in our party.

Our party rests upon two classes, and for that reason its instability is possible, and if there cannot exist an agreement between those classes its fall is inevitable. In such an event it would be useless to take any measures or in general to discuss the stability of our Central Committee. In such an event no measures would prove capable of preventing a split. But I trust that is too remote a future, and too improbable an event, to talk about.

I have in mind stability as a guarantee against a split in the near future, and I intend to examine here a series of considerations of a purely personal character.

I think that the fundamental factor in the matter of stability – from this point of view – is such members of the Central Committee as Stalin and Trotsky. The relation between them constitutes, in my opinion, a big half of the danger of that split, which might be avoided, and the avoidance of which might be promoted, in my opinion, by raising the number of members of the Central Committee to fifty or one hundred.

Comrade Stalin, having become General Secretary, has concentrated an enormous power in his hands; and I am not sure that he always knows how to use that power with sufficient caution. On the other hand, Comrade Trotsky, as was proved by his struggle against the Central Committee in connection with the question of the People's Commissariat of Ways and Communications, is distinguished not only by his exceptional abilities – personally he is, to be sure, the most able man in the present Central Committee – but also by his too far-reaching self-confidence and a disposition to be too much attracted by the purely administrative side of affairs.

These two qualities of the two most able leaders of the present Central Committee might, quite innocently, lead to a split; if our party does not take measures to prevent it, a split might arise unexpectedly.

I will not further characterize the other members of the Central Committee as to their personal qualities. I will only remind you that the October episode of Zinoviev and Kamenev was not, of course, accidental, but that it ought as little to be used against them personally as the non-Bolshevism of Trotsky.

Of the younger members of the Central Committee, I want to say a few words about Bukharin and Pyatakov. They are, in my opinion, the most able forces (among the youngest) and in regard to them it is necessary to bear in mind the following: Bukharin is not only the most valuable and

biggest theoretician of the party, but also may legitimately be considered the favorite of the whole party; but his theoretical views can only with the very greatest doubt be regarded as fully Marxist, for there is something scholastic in him (he never has learned, and I think never has fully understood, the dialectic).

And then Pyatakov – a man undoubtedly distinguished in will and ability, but too much given over to administration and the administrative side of things to be relied on in a serious political question.

Of course, both these remarks are made by me merely with a view to the present time, or supposing that these two able and loyal workers may not find an occasion to supplement their knowledge and correct their one-sidedness.

December 25, 1922

Postscript: Stalin is too rude, and this fault, entirely supportable in relations among us Communists, becomes insupportable in the office of General Secretary. Therefore, I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin from that position and appoint to it another man who in all respects differs from Stalin only in superiority – namely, more patient, more loyal, more polite and more attentive to comrades, less capricious, etc. This circumstance may seem an insignificant trifle, but I think that from the point of view of preventing a split and from the point of view of the relation between Stalin and Trotsky which I discussed above, it is not a trifle, or it is such a trifle as may acquire a decisive significance.

LENIN

January 4, 1923