

December 1922

## Lenin's Testament

I would urge strongly that at this congress a number of changes be made in our political structure. I want to tell you of the considerations to which I attach most importance.

At the head of the list I set an increase in the number of Central Committee members to a few dozen or even a hundred. It is my opinion that without this reform our Central Committee would be in great danger if the course of events were not quite favourable for us (and that is something we cannot count upon).

Then, I intend to propose to the congress that we should on certain conditions invest the decisions of the State Planning Commission with legislative force, meeting in this respect the wishes of Comrade Trotsky - to a certain extent and on certain conditions<sup>1</sup>.

As for the first point, i.e., increasing the number of CC members, I think it must be done in order to raise the prestige of the CC, to do a thorough job of improving our administrative machinery, and it will prevent conflicts between small sections of the CC from acquiring excessive importance for the future of the party.

It seems to me that our party has every right to demand from the working class fifty to one hundred CC members, and that it could get them from it without unduly taxing the resources of that class.

Such a reform would considerably increase the stability of our party and ease its struggle in the encirclement of hostile states, which, in my opinion, is likely to and must become much more acute in the next few years. I think that the stability of our party would gain a thousandfold by such a measure...

I have in mind stability as a guarantee against a split in the immediate future, and I intend to deal here with a few ideas concerning personal qualities.

I think that from this standpoint the prime factor in the question of stability are such members of the CC as Stalin and Trotsky. I think relations between them make up the greater part of the danger of a split, which could be avoided, and this purpose, in my opinion, would be served, among other things, by increasing the number of CC members to fifty or one hundred.

Comrade Stalin, having become general secretary, has unlimited authority concentrated in his hands, and I am not sure whether he will always be capable of using that authority with sufficient caution. Comrade Trotsky, on the other hand, as his struggle against the CC on the question of the People's Commissariat has already proved, is distinguished not only by outstanding ability. He is personally perhaps the most capable man in the present CC, but he has displayed excessive self-assurance and shown preoccupation with the purely administrative side of the work.

These two qualities of the two outstanding leaders of the present CC can inadvertently lead to a split, and if our party does not take steps to avert this, the split may come unexpectedly.

I shall not give any further appraisals of the personal qualities of other members of the CC. I shall just recall that the October episode<sup>2</sup> with Zinoviev and Kamenev was, of course, no accident, but neither can the blame for it be laid upon them personally, any more than non-Bolshevism can upon Trotsky<sup>3</sup>.

Speaking of the young CC members, I wish to say a few words about Bukharin and Pyatakov. They are, in my opinion, the most outstanding figures (among the youngest ones), and the following must be

<sup>1</sup> This was Lenin's way of repaying Trotsky for supporting him against Stalin.

<sup>2</sup> The "October episode" in question involved Zinoviev's and Kamenev's behavior in October 1917. As did a number of Bolsheviks in the Party's right wing, they objected to the idea of an immediate armed insurrection against the Provisional Government.

<sup>3</sup> Lenin is alluding to the fact that Trotsky was a Menshevik before discovering Bolshevism.

borne in mind about them: **Bukharin** is not only a most valuable and major theorist of the party; he is also rightly considered the favourite of the whole party, but his theoretical views can be classified as fully Marxist only with great reserve, for there is something scholastic about him (he has never made a study of dialectics and, I think, never fully understood it).

As for **Pyatakov**<sup>4</sup>, he is unquestionably a man of outstanding ability, but shows too much zeal for administrating and the administrative side of the work to be relied upon in a serious political matter.

Both of these remarks, of course, are made only for the present, on the assumption that both these outstanding and devoted party workers fail to find an occasion to enhance their knowledge and amend their one-sidedness.

Lenin,  
December 29, 1922.

[Stalin found out about the Testament from his girlfriend, who working as one of Lenin's secretaries. Stalin rang Lenin's wife demanding a meeting with Lenin; when this was refused he hurled abuse at her down the phone. At this point, Lenin added the following paragraph to his original Testament]:

Stalin is too rude and this defect, although quite tolerable in our midst and in dealings among us Communists, becomes intolerable in a general secretary. That is why I suggest that the comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that post and appointing another man in his stead who in all other respects differs from Comrade Stalin in having only one advantage, namely, that of being more tolerant, more loyal, less capricious, etc. This circumstance may appear to be a negligible detail. But I think that from the standpoint of safeguards against a split and from the standpoint of what I wrote above about the relationship between Stalin and Trotsky it is not a detail, or it is a detail which can assume decisive importance.

[At the same time, Lenin sent the following letter to Stalin]

**To Comrade Stalin**  
**Copy to Comrades Kamenev and Zinoviev**  
**Dear Comrade Stalin:**

You have been so rude as to summon my wife to the telephone and use bad language. Although she had told you that she was prepared to forget this, the fact nevertheless became known through her to Zinoviev and Kamenev. I have no intention of forgetting so easily what has been done against me, and it goes without saying that what has been done against my wife I consider having been done against me as well. I ask you, therefore, to think it over whether you are prepared to withdraw what you have said and to make your apologies, or whether you prefer that relations between us should be broken off.

**Respectfully yours,**  
**Lenin,**  
**March 5, 1923.**

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<sup>4</sup> G. (Yuri) L. Piatakov (1890-1937), a Bolshevik from 1912, headed the Temporary Revolutionary Government of Ukraine in 1918. He was a member of the Party Central Committee from 1923-27 and again from 1930-36. As was standard practice at the time, he moved in and out of a number of different administrative posts within his area of expertise. Piatakov normally worked in industry, planning, finance, and/or foreign trade. He was shot in 1937.