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L. D. Trotsky's "The Lessons of October" and the Struggles at the Highest Level: Viewpoint of the Population in 1920s

Abstract

The article analyses the aftermath of the publication of Trotsky's "The Lessons of October" in autumn of 1924, which produced much controversy in the camp of his opponents. Kamenev, Stalin, and his others smote Trotsky and posed the question "Leninism or Trotskyism?" to antithesize Lenin and Trotsky. The controversy was in the focus of attention of Soviet citizens, who showed "great interest" in this "literary discussion." The issue remained center-stage in late 1924 - early 1925. The analysis of information materials demonstrates controversial attitudes of the population to the struggle. Many championed Trotsky. Having no way to find out more about

Trotsky's views and mistrusting official publications, people often gave preference to rumors, which reflected not facts, but their wishes. Many saw in Trotsky their defender from the arbitrary rule, who acted in the interest of the people and suffered for his views. Many, party members also, demanded to allow Trotsky to express his opinions outside the framework of propaganda. At the same time, the "The Lessons of October" fed the negative image of Trotsky, already in formation. Quite noticeable role was played by the official propaganda trying to paint Trotsky as a traitor to the interests of the Soviet state. Not understanding the mechanism of the internal conflicts which after Lenin's death were tearing the RCP(B) apart, the population was swept by the Central Committee propaganda. Party propagandists cast Trotsky as a detractor of the party and Lenin himself. The campaign launched against Trotsky and his "The Lessons of October" bore its fruit. The authorities presented Trotsky as a Menshevik and unscrupulous enemy of the Soviet power. Information materials of early 1925 show not only a slump in Trotsky's popularity, but also a growing bias against him.

Keywords

Historical sources, L. D. Trotsky, "Lessons of October," information materials, struggle, power, Trotskyism, Leninism.

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