

The Zinoviev Controversy Resolved

John Symons



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1

This Book

THIS SHORT BOOK turns on its head the history of the Zinoviev letter of October 1924 and of all that year's melancholy legacy.

It shows that Grigory Zinoviev, chairman of the Soviet-controlled Comintern and a member with Trotsky and Stalin of the Bolshevik Politburo of the Soviet Union, wrote the letter to the British Communist Party, telling them to manipulate the Labour Party, which was hostile to Communist aims, so as to move the Labour Party to a revolutionary position.

It shows that Zinoviev's letter was not a fabrication by White Russians or by British elements hostile to Mr MacDonal'd's Labour

Government, as has been widely believed for almost a hundred years.

This is a work of history, and the facts are here for all to see. It also offers, by revealing the truth, healing for the wounds caused by those events in our country's life, a way to put to rest a national tragedy after a century.

2

Introduction

IN HIS INTRODUCTION to a translation of the Greek text of Athanasius' *On the Incarnation*, C.S. Lewis wrote to encourage all students and would-be scholars to read original books and documents rather than commentaries on them.¹

Unhappily, this vital piece of advice cannot be followed in the case of Zinoviev's letter of the autumn of 1924 because the original has disappeared. Its disappearance is, indeed, one of the mysteries that all inquirers about it have had to tackle. All that we can read is an alleged copy of the letter, in English, set out in chapter

¹ The essay has happily been reprinted many times, under the title *On the Reading of Old Books*.

three, and a copy of the alleged original, in Russian. The authenticity of both is disputed.

With her Foreign and Commonwealth Office Report² and her magisterial book on the Zinoviev Letter,³ Gill Bennett, one time Chief Historian at the F.C.O., knows more than anyone in the West still alive about this ‘mysterious business’. Perhaps only a fool would venture onto her territory, but I hope here to add something new and of interest. In doing so, I express my profound respect for her, especially as I give reasons for rejecting her fundamental conclusion.

I hope to show that an ‘old book’, never referred to in discussion of the letter, as far as I know, is the key to its understanding and unlocks the mystery.

2 The Report was published in February 1999, under the title, *A most extraordinary and mysterious business: The Zinoviev Letter of 1924*.

3 *The Zinoviev Letter: The Conspiracy that Never Dies*, Oxford University Press, 2018.

3

The Letter

THIS CHAPTER sets out the English text of Zinoviev's letter as it was received in London by the headquarters of the British Secret Intelligence Service, S.I.S., also known as M.I.6, on the 8th of October 1924. It had been sent from the S.I.S. office in Latvia on the 2nd of October. S.I.S. also received a text of the letter in Russian on the 12th of December, marked (in Russian) 'Copy' in its top right hand corner.

The text of the English letter given here includes insertions at the relevant points of this author's translations of the Russian text where its meaning differs, even slightly, from the English: these translations are indicated by these [square brackets].