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International scientific conference: The History of the Comintern in the light of new documents. Moscow, October 20-23, 1994 Reconstructions of the Comintern organisational structure.

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In a quarter of a century of the existence of the Communist International its structure went through a number of reconstructions. These structural reorganisations were predetermined first of all by considerable changes in international situation, by the political situation in the USSR. Thus if in the first years of its existence the Comintern structure was subordinated to the achievement of the main strategic goal - the preparation of world revolution, then later with the change of historic situation the reorganisation took the direction of greater centralisation, the swelling of the apparatus and concentration of great power in the hands of this apparatus and also in the direction of an increased dependence of Comintern and its bodies on Stalins dictat, on Soviet foreign policy. The translation especially that of the organizational „Termini" is not definite (the editor).

The given report deals mainly with the *two major* reconstructions of the organisational structure of the Comintern.

The first major organisational reconstruction of the Comintern in the mid-twenties

The first major organisational reconstruction of the Comintern took place in the mid-twenties. It lasted several years. It was begun at the V Congress (June, 17 - July, 8 1924). The Congress unwillingly, as if in a half whisper, recognised the beginning of the stabilisation of capitalism. However, this recognition was expressed in a rather original way; the initial "democratic-pacifist period" in the the development of capitalist countries was declared a form of disguising the aggravation of "the world bourgeois reaction" and the "last stage of capitalism" Such an approach lead the Comintern to the development of new tasks: strengthening the communist parties, taking care of their ideological, political and organisational growth, turning the communist parties into mass organisations capable of influencing decisively the way of development

of the revolutionary movement and capable of leading the struggle of working people for power. The main organisational directive of the V Congress consisted in the "bolshevisation" of communist parties - their reconstruction by the model of the Russian bolshevik party - and turning the Comintern into a united world communist party, strictly centralised and with iron discipline. The process of "bolshevisation" first of all presupposed their organisational reconstruction on the basis of industrial cells (at an enterprise, at a building site, in an institution, etc). Thus the territorial form of party organisation was considered of secondary importance. The rigid directive at the "bolshevisation" of communist parties meant further centralisation of leadership in the communist movement. In this respect the changes introduced by the V Congress to the Comintern Rules are characteristic. Here are some new regulations of the Rules: The Comintern is the unification of communist parties of different countries into a single proletarian party (and not an international association of workers "for organising joint actions of the working people of different countries"); "Each country can have only one communist party which is a member of the Comintern"; A member of a communist party and the Comintern can be any person who recognises the rules of the party of the respective country and the Comintern Rules, who is member of a basic local party organisation, taking active part in its work, who obeys all decisions of the party and the Comintern and who pays party fees regularly; The basis of a party organisation is its cell at an enterprise (a plant, a factory, a mine, an office, a shop, a farm, etc.). The Comintern and its communist parties are built on the basis of democratic centralism"; Party problems can be debated by party members and

party organisations only before the decision is taken by the corresponding bodies³³ The borrowing from the rules of the bolshevik party are quite evident here. So, the changes in the Rules of the Comintern were directed at the prevention of attempts of opposition of any kind in the communist movement to set up - contrary to the leadership of the Comintern - an organisation with the rights of a communist party, it was also aimed at considerable limitation of discussions.

The authority of the Comintern was considerably increased. It was given the right to cancel and change the decisions of both central bodies and also the decisions of congresses and sections and adopt decisions obligatory to central organs. The central organs of the Comintern sections were now subordinated both to their congresses and to the ECCI; the ECCI was granted the right to confirm the program documents of the Comintern sections. According to the new Rules world congresses were to be convened not less frequently than once in two years; this increased the influence of the Presidium, Orgbureau and the ECCI Secretariate. The number of the ECCI members and candidates increased by 37 people and now reached the number of 72 people.

In the new Rules the V Congress defined also the tasks of the International Control Commission. They consisted in checking the complaints at actions of the ECCI departments, in making suggestions to the ECCI with the aim of correcting drawbacks, in considering the complaints of separate persons and whole organisations, and controlling the finances of the ECCI and the Comintern communist parties. But the International Control Commission did not have the right to interfere in political affairs and administrative-organisational conflicts both inside separate

33 The Fifth Congress of the Comintern. M.-L., 1925[^].948; Part 2, p. 89; RTxKHdNl. f 492, op. 1, d. 199, p. 5-6.

parties and also between parties and the ECCI.³⁴

The process of communist parties bolshevisation was very slow. This was pointed out by some participants of the VI Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI (February 17 - March 15, 1926). For instance, Bordiga in his speech spoke in essence against "bolshevisation", against factory-plant cells as a basis of a party organisation, against extreme centralisation of the Comintern leadership and restricting inner-party democracy, against the abolition of the experience of bolshevism and the domination of the "Russian party" in the Comintern.³⁵

However, as before, the Moscow point of view prevailed. Under the conditions of a "not durable", "temporary" stabilisation of capitalism, with the absence of "an immediate revolutionary situation" the main direction of the Communist International at "the world proletarian revolution" remained, at the estimate of the VI Enlarged ECCI Plenum, unshakable.³⁶ Besides it was considered necessary, under the new conditions, "to change some methods of work, but the aim and the basis of the Comintern activities remained the same" The Plenum formulated the tasks of the communist parties in the following way: to penetrate still more into every day struggle and life of widest masses of the working people, to win to the side of the Comintern the majority of workers, using all possible ways to become if not the main, then at least a most influential party of workers in the country.³⁷ The second organisational meeting of the ECCI which took place on February 10-17, 1926 confirmed

the course at the reorganisation of parties on the basis of industrial cells, on the concentration of their main efforts in industrial regions. The most important point of the reorganisation was seen in the fact the cells guaranteed the support of the Comintern policy.³⁸

The VI ECCI Plenum in The Resolutions on the Problem of the Reorganisation of the Work of the Comintern Executive Committee" stressed the necessity of attaching "the planned and systematic character" to the whole work of the ECCI, of electing the new Presidium, Orgbureau, Secretariate and the budget commission of the ECCI, of attracting the strongest sections of the Comintern to the immediate guidance of the Comintern activities in a greater extent than before.³⁹

It was in the organisational structure and functions of the ECCI Secretariate that the greatest changes took place. The ECCI Secretariate was enlarged and the basis of its organisation became sectional (regional) secretariates the problem of which was discussed in March 1926 at the sittings of the ECCI and the ECCI Presidium. They were engaged in studying and discussing the political and economic situation in the countries and the activities of respective communist parties forming a part of this or that sectional secretariate; in making preliminary studies of problems for all leading ECCI bodies; in ensuring the fulfilment of the ECCI decisions and the control over the fulfilment of these decisions by the Comintern sections.⁴⁰ In March 1926 11 sectional secretariates were formed which existed up to September 1928.

34 The Fifth Congress, part 2, p. 92

35 The Sixth Enlarged Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. Stenographic report. M.-L, 1927. p.109-121.

36 Ibid. p. 616.

37 Ibid. p. 629.

38 Ibid. p. 472.

39 Ibid. p. 653-654.

40 RTsKhIDNI f. 485, op. 2, d. 64, p.214.

In 1926 at the decision of the ECCI Secretariate the Standing Commission was formed which had the functions of an auxiliary body of the ECCI Politsecretariate. In 1931 it was entrusted with the problems connected with the ECCI apparatus reorganisation.⁴¹ In 1929 with the aim of solving important political problems the Political Commission of the Politsecretariate was elected from the ECCI Politsecretariate members, it was subordinated to the ECCI Politsecretariate.⁴²

The VII Enlarged ECCI Plenum (November 22 - December 16, 1926) carried out the following organisational innovations. It abolished the institution of the Comintern chairman "already at present" and substituted it for "a collective body" - the Political Secretariate.⁴³ It was substituted by the necessity of establishing "collective leadership" within the ECCI and attracting to the leadership representatives of different communist parties. However, in our view, this was mainly carried out because of the consideration that it was necessary to prevent the repetition of a situation when the ECCI - chairman (in the given case - Gregori Zinoviev) was one of the leaders of the opposition in the CPSU(b) and the Comintern simultaneously.

After the VI Comintern Congress, at the decision of the ECCI Politsecretariate on September 28, 1928 a reorganisation of sectional secretariates was carried out which were then called regional secretariates. Instead of 11 only 8 secretariates remained:

The Middle-European (Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, Holland)

The Balkan (Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Romania, Greece, Albania, Cyprus)

The British-American (Great Britain, Ireland, South America, Australia, New Zealand, The USA, Canada, Philippines)
The Scandinavian (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland)

The Romanian (France, Italy, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Luxemburg)

The Latin-American (Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguau, Colombia, etc)

The Polish-Baltic (Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland)

The Eastern (Turkey, Palestine, Persia, Egypt, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, China, Japan, Mongolia, Korea, India, Indonesia, Indo-China, Afghanistan)⁴⁴

Moreover, the VII Plenum resolved to abolish the ECCI Organisational Bureau and to transfer its functions to the Presidium and the ECCI Politsecretariate. In such a way it solved the problem of ensuring "the close coordination" of the Comintern solving organisational and political problems. The Politsecretariate was granted much more rights and functions than the former ECCI Secretariate. It directed the work of regional secretariates, the ECCI departments and the work of communist fractions in international mass organisations. At the decision of the ECCI Presidium a minor commission of the ECCI Politsecretariate was elected from the members of the Politsecretariate with the aim of considering conspiratorial and important administrative questions.⁴⁵ The major organisational reconstruction of the Comintern apparatus was concluded, at the decision of the IX Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI (February 5-25, 1928), by the establishment of the West-European Bureau of the ECCI, and in 1931 the Caribbean Bureau was established.

41 Ibid, op 7, d. 16, p. 1,11, 12.

42 Ibid. op. 3, d. 153, p. 259.

43 The ways of World Revolution. The Seventh Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI. Stenographic report. Volume 2. M.-L. 1927, p. 468.

44 RTskhIDNI. f. 495, op. 3, d. 79, p. 430-431.

45 Ibid, d, 25, p. 67-68.

The major organisational changes carried out in the mid-twenties were confirmed by the new Rules of the Comintern adopted by the VI Congress (July 17-September 1, 1928). Some of its paragraphs stressed the necessity of obligatory observing strict party discipline and immediate carrying out the Comintern decisions. The Rules included an extended (as compared to the former version) point on the rights of the ECCI authorised representatives in separate sections. In particular it was stated that these representatives who were responsible for their actions before the ECCI and its Presidium at congresses, conferences and meeting of sections don't come out against the Central Committee of the given section if it acted "contrary to the line and directives of the ECCI".⁴⁶ Greater independence was given to the International Control Commission. A part of the rights and functions which formerly belonged to the ECCI were transferred to the Presidium: the right to set up standing bureaus of the ECCI, departments of the ECCI, standing commissions, send authorised representatives and instructors of the ECCI to sections, to elect the Politsecretariate, to form the editorial boards of periodical and other publications of the Comintern.⁴⁷ In the Rules adopted by the VI Congress there happened to be no paragraph on the enlarged plenums of the ECCI. It was considered reasonable to hold usual plenums without inviting non-members and non-alternate members of the ECCI.

The following reorganizations of the Comintern-Structure in the Thirties

In later years the reorganisation was going on inside the ECCI apparatus itself. At the decision of the Politcomission of the Politsecretariate of September 15, 1933 the

department of agitation and propaganda was liquidated and the functions were transferred to regional secretariates. The Organisational Department was transformed into the department of party build-up.⁴⁸

The purge of the Comintern from the so-called "left", "right" and "reconciliators" which was going for more than 10 years lead to the expulsion from the Comintern leading bodies of a considerable part of representatives of many communist parties.

The development of "a new strategic orientation" begun by the Comintern in 1934 which was in essence of a tactical character was accompanied by a search for new methods of work and guidance of the Comintern. The suggestions of G.Dimitrov (October, 1934) approved by Stalin on the methods of the Comintern activities, the structure and the personnel of the ECCI bodies constituted the foundation of "The Directives of the Politbureau of the CPSU(b) Delegation in the Comintern". It was stated in this document that it was necessary to use the great experience of the work of the CPSU(b) and popularise it among the communist parties at the same time "avoiding a mechanical transfer of methods of the work of the CPSU(b) to communist parties of capitalist countries working under completely different conditions and being on a different level of development"⁴⁹ The decisive role of leading cadres, their capability of independent orientation and taking responsibility for the necessary decisions was especially stressed.

The VII Comintern Congress took the decision: to transfer the emphasis in the activities of "the world communist party" to working out the major political and

46 Ibid. op. 26, d. 9, p. 18-19.

47 The VI Congress of the Comintern. Stenographic report. Issue 6. Theses, resolutions, decisions, appeals. M.-L. 1929. p. 164-166.

48 RTsKhIDNI. f. 495, op. 4, d. 261, p. 110-111.

49 Ibid. op. 73, d. 1, p. 1-3,9.

tactical directives of the international working movement; in the process of taking decisions on all questions to proceed from concrete conditions and peculiarities of every country and avoid "as a rule" direct interference in the inner-organisational affairs of communist parties.⁵⁰

The new tasks put forward by the VII Congress preconditioned the organisational reconstruction of the ECCI apparatus in September-December 1935. A commission headed by P. Togliatti was engaged in working out suggestions on the ECCI reorganisation during September. On October 13 after numerous discussions in commissions and the Secretariate the ECCI Presidium adopted the final decision on the reorganisation of the ECCI. As tactical questions were now decided by communist parties themselves the Politsecretariate and its commissions, regional secretariates, the institution of permanent representatives of the ECCI and instructors of the ECCI in communist parties were abolished. Instead of the Politsecretariate the ECCI Secretariate with its own apparatus was set up, it was considered that the parties had acquired considerable experience, could solve many problems independently and thus they did not need minor guardianship.

Later some former departments and commissions of the ECCI were liquidated, namely: the department of work in rural areas, the department of work among women, the cooperative department, the department of party build-up, the standing commissions (or struggle against war, fascism and social-democracy, of popularising the socialist construction in the USSR).⁵¹ The functions of the given departments were distributed among ECCI secretaries. In such a way a less graded and not so cumbersome as before structu-

re of the ECCI was formed. The Executive Committee apparatus was headed by the ECCI General Secretary Georgi Dimitrov who prepared political issues for further consideration by the leading ECCI bodies, determined the agenda of the ECCI Secretariate meeting, signed the 9 secretariates of the ECCI secretaries - were to substitute the abolished regional secretariates as they began monitoring these or those parties. Thus the Dimitrov secretariate was directly responsible for the ties with the Communist Party of China and for the decisions of questions of the CPC; the secretariate of the deputy of the ECCI General Secretary Ercoli (P. Togliatti) was responsible for ties with the communist parties of Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, Holland, Indonesia; the secretariate of D. Manuilsky - with the communist parties of France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Portugal, Luxemburg and the colonies of France; the secretariate of W. Pieck - with the communist parties of Turkey, Persia, Romania, Yugoslavia, Greece, Albania; the secretariate of O. Kususinen - with the communist parties of Japan, India, Korea, Syam; the secretariate of A. Marty - with the communist parties of Great Britain, the USA, Canada, South Africa, Ireland, Philippines, New Zealand, the colonies of Great Britain; the secretariate of M. Moskvin - with the communist parties of Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania (after the arrest of M. Moskvin by the NKVD bodies the functions of this secretariate were transferred to the secretariate of Gottwald); the secretariate of V. Florin - with the communist parties of Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland; the secretariate of Van Min - with the communist parties of Argentina, Bolivia, Brasil, Haiti, Guatemala, Honduras, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Puerto-

50 The VII Congress of the Communist International and the Struggle against Fascism and War. Collected Documents. M. 1975, p. 361-362.

51 RTsKhDNI. f. 495, op. 18, d. 1051, p. 133.

Rico, Salvador, Uruguay, Chile (after the departure of Van Min to China this secretariate was headed by Dolores Ibarruri). All the given secretariates included representatives from a number of parties being "monitored". Besides Manuilsky was made responsible for the work of the ECCI personnel department, Kuusinen - for the work of the Young Communist International, Marty - for the work of the communist fraction of the MOPR, Moskvina for the ECCI finances, for the work of the OMS and the administration, Gottwald - for the direction over the editorial board of the magazine "Communist International" and the propaganda department.⁵² The Three of Dimitrov, Togliatti and Pieck were entrusted with the leadership over the communist fraction of the Profintern.

Out of the ECCI departments the primary importance was attributed to the personnel department (created in 1932 on the basis of the personnel sector of the ECCI Orgdepartment). The department was engaged in rendering assistance to the communist parties in the course of preparation of leading party cadres, in the course of checking and registering the cadre composition of the sections and also of the ECCI apparatus itself and international revolutionary organisations, in preparation of the transfer of foreign communist to the CPSU(b). The personnel department was given the right to prepare the cadre issues of the sections for further discussion by the ECCI Secretariate with obligatory participation of a representative of the given party. On February 11, 1936 the ECCI Secretariate made the personnel department responsible (in addition to the functions it already had) for the direction of the work of international schools, the control over the composition of their apparatus, and the organisation of recruitment into

these schools, for the analysis of the experience of communist parties in defending and guarding their organisations from failures and repressions, in preparing corresponding recommendations and suggestions on ensuring secrets of illegal communist parties.⁵³ On July 11, 1936 at the decision of the ECCI Secretariate the Department of the Press and Propaganda was established instead of the Department of Propaganda in Mass Organisations (from November 11 1939 - the Department of Propaganda).⁵⁴ The Department of International Ties was renamed into the Service of the ECCI Connections.

The last reorganisation of the structure of the ECCI apparatus took place on the day of the unexpected attack of Hitler Germany on the Soviet Union - on June 22, 1941. On that day the ECCI Secretariate established "the three" of Dimitrov, Manuilsky and Togliatti with the aim of direct everyday leadership over the work of the ECCI. In October 1941 because of the approach of the front to Moscow the ECCI apparatus was evacuated to Ufa (Dimitrov was at that time in Kujbishev). The following organisation structures functioned there: The ECCI Secretariate, the apparatus of the ECCI Secretariate (political assistants of the ECCI secretaries, political advisers and consultants), the missions of the communist parties of Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Spain, Italy, Turkey, France, Czechoslovakia, the personnel department, the department of the press and propaganda, radio editorial boards, the department established by means of combining the service of international ties and the department of the ECCI affairs management.

52 Ibid. p.179-186.

53 Ibid. d. 1073, p. 17-20.

54 Ibid. d. 1099, p. 35,105,106; d. 1297, p. 13-17.

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Researchers who are acquainted with documents from the Comintern archives know that from the moment of the establishment and to the time of the dissolution of this international organisation its major decisions were as a rule worked out at the Politbureau of the RCP(b)-CPSU(b), after that they were considered by the Russian delegation at the ECCI and then they were introduced to the ECCI.

In the first years of its activity the leadership of the Comintern was composed of authoritative leaders of the bolshevik party. That is why nobody doubted the legitimacy of the adopted decisions which were suggested mainly by representatives of the most experienced communist party - the only ruling communist party. However, in the mid-twenties the domination of the bolshevik party in the Comintern evoked first concealed but later open discontent among representatives of some sections (for instance, at the VI Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI). This and a number of other circumstances made the CPSU(b) leadership taking into account these sentiments somewhat formalise the process of taking the Comintern decisions, made this process more logical. Thus, right after the VI ECCI Plenum on March 22, 1926 the bureau of the CPSU(b) delegation to the ECCI adopted the decision of three points approved by the Politbureau of the CPSU(b) CC: 1) before a sitting of the ECCI Presidium to gather the members of the CPSU(b) Presidium, namely: Zinoviev, Stalin, Bucharin, Manuilsky and the secretary of the delegation Piatnitsky; 2) before a sitting of the Comintern Executive Committee to gather the members and the alternate members of the whole delegation irrespective of whether it was a sitting of the Presidium or the Executive Committee. This way of taking decisions was in force for several years till Zinoviev and Bukharin were relieved of their posts in the Comintern. After that especially in the mid-thirties with Stalin becoming the dictator

the process of taking decisions in the Comintern was extremely simplified. This was made legitimate by the reorganisation of the ECCI in late 1935 as a result of which a number of important functions of the ECCI were transferred to its Presidium and Secretariate. Instead of regional secretariates 9 secretariates of the ECCI secretariates were set up. Through them it was possible to take any decision favoured by Stalin much quicker and practically without any obstacles (for instance, to dissolve not only the central committees of communist parties but also whole communist parties, to ban antifascist propaganda after the Non-Aggression Pact between the USSR and Germany was signed).