

Appendix A

Report on the Organization Question

by Wilhelm Koenen

Including Discussion on the Report

From the stenographic record of the 22nd session of the
Third Congress of the Communist International

10 July 1921, 7 pm.

KOENEN: Comrades, first of all a little apology. The report on the organization of the parties, the methods and content of their work, was assigned to me only in the course of the last week; consequently there was a certain delay in dealing with it, and it was also not possible to finish revising the Theses in an entirely regular way. You must also pardon me if—since this assignment was given only last week—I could not carry it out comprehensively or thoroughly. The report I have to give is, by virtue of its subject, very extensive. I am to discuss not just the organizational tasks, but also the methods and content of work, and likewise the organizational structure of the Communist International and its relationship to the different parties—a complex of questions which would demand a very comprehensive exposition. I want to say in advance that because of the breadth of the subject I must completely dispense with any historical introduction on the development of the various parties or of the concept of the Communist Party. Insofar as it is necessary to go into the economic preconditions for the parties, the methods of work of the parties, I will have to do it at particular points in the course of the report.

It is already common knowledge in all the parties that, for a Communist Party, organization is not an end in itself; rather organization, particularly the organizational apparatus, is only a means to the higher aim of furthering the revolutionary cause, of driving the revolution forward, of erecting a communist society—our goal. Karl Marx, in the first General Statutes of the First International Workingmen's Association, had already formulated the idea that the economic emancipation of the working class is the great end to which every movement must be subordinated as a means. And in line with the spirit of those statutes, an organization will work most effectively for the solution of the social question when it achieves the theoretical and practical collaboration of the most advanced groups. In the modern working-class movement the organizational apparatus must be structured to guarantee that the proletarians in

their struggles will at every given moment receive the greatest possible assistance from similarly organized proletarian groups.

In the present turbulent period of latent civil war it is self-evident that the Communist International seeks to bring about a mutual strengthening of the organizational and active forces by means of strict centralization. The goal of organization is clear. The immediate goal of organization is to achieve the conquest of political power for the proletariat. A combat leadership which aims to achieve this end must be able to act within the communist organizations according to a definite plan, with forces that can be relied on. The struggle demands concentrated preparation through education and persuasive agitation, by means of which the total attention of the struggling proletariat is at every moment directed at the great goal shared by the entire class, the goal which actually unites all forces which in any way want to take up the struggle. The organization must therefore be tied together centrally, as a union of forces; it must be held together as a union not only of the consciously revolutionary workers, but of those with genuinely revolutionary impulses as well.

In his remarks on the organizational lessons of the March Action comrade Béla Kun, who originally was supposed to give this report, was quite right to formulate the idea that in the last analysis the question of revolution is not an organizational question. We must keep in mind that, in dealing with this question—in solving this problem—we must perform an important revolutionary task.

If we look at the organizational forms in the various countries, we must admit that the International still constitutes a very colorful jumble of the most diverse organizational forms. And we should not believe that in this respect the Second Congress has already effected a decisive change; we should not hope that even the Third Congress can and will bring about this change. But although we recognize this multiplicity of organi-

zational forms, we must nonetheless work insistently toward standardizing our organizational forms because we are well aware that despite the varying circumstances in the different countries, despite the fact that they condition the various forms of organization in various countries, nonetheless we must achieve a certain identity of methods, of content, since the goal—the conquest of power—is the same. In addition the enemy, namely the bourgeoisie, is the same everywhere and employs the same forms of struggle against us. This compels us to press for a certain homogeneity in the methods of struggle and in the content of the work of Communist Parties.

Some parties still contain all the weaknesses of the old bureaucratic centralization, of the old social-democratic parties. They are still dragging this old tradition around because they have a very brief communist past. In fact one can say that the large mass parties are still dragging along remnants of this old social-democratic bureaucracy. Other parties came into being through a rebellion initiated against this bureaucratic centralism, against this bureaucratic sort of party structure. This was, for example, the case with one wing from which the German Party emerged. The USPD was typically a party which arose from the rebellion of the active elements against the passive center. In the old Social Democracy during the war this passive center necessarily of itself provoked a rebellion by the active elements, and eventually the rebelling individual districts joined together and a certain federalistic basis for the party then arose. These elements were dragging the remnants of federalism around with them and they had to break the independence of the individual districts, and to insist that only this federalism has a right to independence, and the passive center no longer has a say.¹

These federalist symptoms must be combatted just as energetically as the centralist heritage of the old social-democratic party.

The parties must increasingly become the center of action, of activation. We are faced with the task of structuring the bodies of the party to accord with the goals set for us in the *Communist Manifesto*. To begin with then, our first task is to secure a firm leadership at the head of a centralist organization. It is unfortunately still necessary to insist on this firm leadership—indeed, any leadership which occupies a pre-eminent position—because certain tendencies opposed even to this can still be observed in the KAP.² Unified, strict leadership must be expressly insisted on in opposition

to these tendencies. A broader justification is surely unnecessary at this Congress. I need only state that we consider this clear, centralist leadership necessary. But equally necessary for the party bodies to accomplish their work is that this leadership have good ties with the masses. Thus, in concrete terms, the task posed is that along with centralist, strict, unified, clear, firm leadership we must establish good, well-developed ties with the masses which extend even to details.

The ties between the leadership and the masses should be created by constructing the party on the basis of democratic centralism, in accordance with the decisions of the Second Congress. This democratic centralism is not an empty bureaucratic formula but rather may be defined in other words as centralization of activity, concentration for the party of the results of its work and struggle. This is the only way to conceive of centralization. We considered it necessary, in the course of the most recent revision of our Theses, to express this idea even more explicitly. Points two and six contain an easily misunderstood formulation, which we have deleted and replaced with new language intended to express the concept of democratic centralism even more explicitly and clearly. Our proposed new version reads:

Democratic centralism in the communist party organization must be a real synthesis, a fusion of centralism and proletarian democracy. This fusion can be attained only on the basis of the ongoing common activity, the ongoing common struggle of the entire party organization.

Centralization in the communist party organization does not mean a formal and mechanical centralization but rather a centralization of communist activity, i.e., building a leadership which is strong, quick to react and at the same time flexible.

Formal or mechanical centralization would be centralization in order to dominate the rest of the membership or the masses of the revolutionary proletariat outside the party. But only the enemies of communism can assert that the Communist Party wants to dominate through its leadership of the proletarian class struggles and through the centralization of this communist leadership of the revolutionary proletariat. That is a lie; and equally incompatible with the fundamental principles of democratic centralism adopted by the Communist International is a power struggle or a fight for domination within the party.³

To underline this briefly once more: what we are saying here is that no leadership clique should form in the party, a leadership clique which for instance believes that because it has been handed the leadership of a central apparatus it is therefore justified in using this central apparatus to work against the express will of the majority of the party—that it, as a narrow leadership clique, can turn the central apparatus into a mechanism to impose its rule. Dangers of this sort have often been pointed out. Here it must be stated that allowing this kind of leadership domination to develop does not correspond to the will of the International. It is solely our work and the direction of this work which are to be centralist. This way we shall be able to begin our work, our struggles, and lead them in a really centralistic fashion. The road to the actual development of this democratic centralization is long. The Guidelines adopted at the Second Congress already stated that the introduction of such democratic centralization was not going to be the work of a short time or of just one year.

It was emphasized that to crystallize out the concentration and centralization of the real leadership of the party is a lengthy and difficult process. And in the Guidelines we stress that, through improvements and diligent testing of their apparatus, the parties must make sure they really have a centralization of their work and not bureaucratic centralism, so that they can achieve a real concentration of the leadership of this work.

The best insurance against bureaucratization of the apparatus is extremely active ties between the party leadership and all party bodies. These active ties also have to bring the masses of members—through constant contact with the central leadership—to realize and understand that such centralization constitutes an objectively justified strengthening and development of their collective work and struggles. The members must feel and experience for themselves that this genuinely means not an alien leadership, but rather a strengthening of their own fighting power. If centralism comes alive in this way, if it does not remain a formality but pulses with life, we will have the best protection against the danger of bureaucratism and the ossification of the apparatus. What comrade Béla Kun says in his article must be granted: namely that, aside from the Russian and this or that small party, there is scarcely any party which has yet attained the necessary living centralism; that instead centralism is still being applied much too mechanically; that we cannot yet speak of its being politically applied.

How do we arrive at a truly political application of this concept? To achieve this we inserted a section on the obligation to do work right after the section on democratic centralism. When all members are drawn into the work, they themselves are brought into very intensive contact with the leadership. And if this obligation to do work, complemented by communists' obligation to fight, is implemented we can be assured that bureaucratism cannot hold sway. If we want to arrive at living centralism, if we want a concentration of forces which pulses with life, then we must strongly insist on the obligation to do work. Up until now it has not been possible for the great majority of our parties to activate the party's total forces for one goal, one movement, one struggle. This must be the aim of the leaderships in the Communist Parties. They must strive zealously to integrate the entire party membership not only into the party's work but also into its campaigns.

In the Guidelines we have given a number of instructions on this. The section is so long in order to make this clear in detail. It would not be sufficient for the Congress to pass a resolution on the obligation to do work—then nothing would change. The point is to give concrete advice on how it should be implemented. We have regarded organizational instructions for the party leaderships as necessary: how the integration, the organizing, the division of labor is to take place, how the groups and cells are to work. And we have said that the party leaderships themselves should personally take on the task of organizing such working groups and getting them going. This is absolutely necessary, for we know that working groups have still hardly gotten a foothold in the International.

In a number of parties there no doubt exist on paper such ostensible cells in the plants and trade unions, and such commissions and boards or committees, which ostensibly have particular work assignments. But I maintain that they exist only on paper. This, however, is of no use to the communist movement; rather, the point is to translate these paper creations into sober reality and to make the whole party into a working body. This comment applies particularly to legal parties. To be sure, you cannot make a fundamental distinction between legal and illegal parties, but in fact they are still very different. In an illegal party only those members who really work belong to the party, since anyone who did not work would attract attention and make himself suspect. In an illegal party do-nothing members cannot be tolerated. To this extent legal and illegal

parties do differ, but this difference must be overcome by giving every individual member of a legal party an assignment. Only then will we overcome the difference between these parties and really create a precise form of party organization. We considered it necessary to give these instructions.

But there are still certain differences—which, I believe, still cannot be definitively resolved at this Congress—over whether from now on the organizations can finally be built on cells in the factories, as the basis of the organizations. The tendency established at the Second Congress was that cells in the factories should be the basis of the organizations. From reports which we have received we also know that a number of organizations, a number of illegal organizations, really do regard these cells as the basis of their organizations. But for the broad mass parties this is not at all the case. I shall have more to say about this later in connection with the section on the party organism.

Because this concept of factory cells does not yet form the basis of the party as a whole, we have so far not talked about the working groups. Working groups are instruments for parties which are still built on the basis of residential districts: even if they have such a district organization, from now on they must be required to mobilize the party forces in their residential districts. They should divide up their groups so that every group has its own work. There is a system of tens, where comrades are organized into groups of 10 to 20 in order to give them specific assignments. It is absolutely not necessary to do this so mechanically; rather, the point is to make these assignments concretely, to actually bring all members into the work. There are numerous such opportunities for work. A number of such tasks are mentioned: agitation for the press, door-to-door agitation, trade-union work, work among women, agitation among youth and much more. Working groups for all these various tasks should simply be established in the organization, and they must be put on their feet by the party leadership if they are going to function at all.

It would be wrong for a party to come here, for us to divide everything up on paper and send this schema out into the world, and then for the party to expect its individual districts to divide up their members just as schematically—and just leave it at that. Such a schematic division would be bureaucratic centralism. Instead, only a few groups and cells should be gotten into shape at first; but we must really get these cells working, in order to set into motion additional working groups in

turn. A great deal of perseverance, a great deal of energy, a great deal of vitality, a great deal of time will be required to mobilize the working groups, and the parties will have to demonstrate in the course of the year whether they have grasped the essence of centralism by actually setting about the task of organizing working groups. Only in this way will we get capable parties. In addition, it is necessary to assist these working groups in the type of work they are doing, to give them a whole series of specific instructions, so that they draw the necessary conclusions from their work.

The lessons and conclusions which will result from this practical work amount to the lesson of specialization. We will see a number of specialists grow out of the working groups. This specialization is an absolute necessity. We must have trained forces with various skills corresponding to various arenas of struggle. Without this specialization, the coming struggles will not succeed; we will be unable to win the allegiance of the proletariat if we do not undertake the training of specialists. Such specialization must be cultivated, but in speaking of specialization one must warn against overdoing it. If pulsating life is withdrawn from the party, then we will have a party consisting only of specialists, where no one knows anything of the other. And that makes no sense. So it will be necessary for precisely that comrade who develops into a specialist in one group to be transferred into another group, so that he gets to know the life and efforts of other groups as well. This should by no means involve continual turnover and making a mess out of the assignments. The training of certain specialists is necessary, but a change of assignments is also useful to give an inner balance to the personnel. In this way they will embody the actual working life of the party.

While stressing that this specialization should not be overdone, I also consider it necessary to strongly emphasize the need for such a working and fighting organization to institute the practice of making regular reports. Reporting occurs automatically in the case of a number of organizations which are geared toward coming struggles—the courier system, intelligence-gathering, procuring safe houses and clandestine print shops, etc. In the case of this work the practice of making reports is fairly obvious, but unfortunately it is not obvious in a number of other kinds of activity. For example, it can happen that groups in charge of finding rooms for meetings and making preparations for meetings become ingrown, so that only this one group

knows where these rooms are. That is a great error, and it runs the risk that if such teams break up then the whole apparatus is crippled. It is therefore absolutely necessary for these groups to make reports.

The Theses put explicit emphasis on making such reports, and we believe it will become an established practice in all groups, so that in this way the party will be informed of everything and will really be able to put the experiences of this or that group to use. These reports will also be very successful for training new groups in other cities. The ability of the party to act will also be increased a great deal by such reporting. For only when the party center receives a flow of reports on their activity from the widest variety of working groups will the party leadership be able to draw real conclusions concerning the extent to which the party's activity can be increased. If no reports are received from a particular area, changes must be made there. A real activization of the party will be able to proceed through this interaction.

I will now proceed to the section "Propaganda and Action" ["On Propaganda and Agitation," Section IV]. First I should say, by way of introduction, that because the first sentence was being incorrectly interpreted we have come up with a correction for it. The sentence now reads: Prior to the open revolutionary uprising our most general task is revolutionary propaganda and agitation. Revolutionary propaganda and agitation is described as a general preparatory task. The section dealing with struggle got short shrift in the report. A section on the organization of political struggle, which I intend to report on later, is to be added to this section on organization and propaganda.

The section on agitation and propaganda was made so detailed because there are a number of smaller parties, such as the English and American, which still think they have to apply special principles in these areas; because there are still certain syndicalist remnants in our party which continue to think only of vanguard troops in combat, believing it is not necessary to have propaganda which runs parallel to our other struggles. It must be said that agitation and propaganda cannot cease even after the revolution. The revolution does not put an end to propaganda and agitation. On the contrary, we know that in Russia after the revolution, after the conquest of political power, in the phase of highest revolutionary activity, agitation and propaganda have been intensified to the highest degree. Nowhere has more widespread agitation, more comprehensive propaganda been con-

ducted than in Russia after the conquest of political power. The need for revolutionary propaganda has to be emphasized as strongly as possible precisely because in various places activity in the form of isolated struggles has become too much the focus of attention. Various methods of such agitation are described in the report, and I think I need not waste any more words on them now.

Direct ties with all movements which break out in the International are essential to propaganda. It should be linked to actual circumstances. Where the proletariat is in combat, where the workers are fighting to eliminate social need, we should approach them with our propaganda. And propaganda should be conducted not just with words, but also with deeds. Example is the best propaganda. If we prove ourselves as comrades-in-arms, then people will have the greatest trust in our words, in our ideas. If we prove ourselves as good leaders, good strategists, people will have the deepest trust in all our newspaper articles, our theoretical debates. Thus propaganda must be conducted not merely in words but must be united with the deed as well, to real involvement in all, even the smallest, movements of the workers. We have cited a number of very simple examples for this as well, to show quite clearly that no struggle is too small for the communists to take part in. And every issue for which the workers are really ready to struggle must become the work of the communists. We will best carry out our propaganda and agitation by linking ourselves in this way to all these movements. Propaganda and agitation tied to work, to deeds, to struggle, are things which can really advance the Communist Party. We must emphatically insist on the extreme closeness of these ties.

The point is not merely to carry our propaganda into these small-scale struggles but also to capitalize on this as well by gaining the leadership. We are firmly determined to gain this leadership, and we can do so only by leading the small struggles as well, by marching at the forefront of every struggle, of every movement, by systematically utilizing each and every movement. The Theses cite examples of this, and everyone must read them and take them not as empty words but rather as urgent commandments for every communist. In particular, the kind of struggle that should be waged in the unions is also described in detail there, so that everyone can find practical suggestions for defeating the trade-union bureaucracy and overcoming the present form of the trade unions. These offensives which

should be undertaken to defeat the trade-union bureaucracy, to remove the present leading layer—this is the goal of our propaganda and agitation. These offensives must be planned and conducted very systematically, not with an occasional isolated offensive designed, so to speak, to annoy them, to harass them, to drive them to wits' end.

Only when such appropriate means have been consistently developed will we be able to pass over from propaganda to the real leadership of the proletariat. It must also be stressed that in some countries, especially in areas where the party has to operate illegally, it is appropriate to create organizations, so-called sympathizing organizations, which allow us to extend the scope of the propaganda and agitation of the Communist Party. Such organizations exist in various countries. Where they do not, we should try to form such bodies, under more or less communist leadership, from the ranks of those in other organizations or the unorganized. These bodies will give us the possibility of gaining real access to the broader masses with our organization. This proposal will create a real possibility of ties with the broader masses for organizations which until now have only been able to work underground.

We urgently call the organization's attention to its specific task: finding ties with the masses at any cost. To draw close to the masses, every organizational means, every variety of propaganda among these masses, is justified. The women's and youth organizations, since they sometimes make it possible to fulfill a specific task apart from the actual legal organizations, have a very valuable service to render in this connection. We already have a whole series of such examples of how the youth organization has acted as an advance guard for the party—wherever, in a situation of illegality, we want to create broader possibilities and to really utilize these possibilities organizationally and propagandistically.

But our propaganda must also be carried into the circles of semi-proletarian layers, into the circles of peasants, the middle classes, white collar workers, etc. Propaganda among these layers is so important because even though we cannot yet count on winning them as core units for the conquest of political power, we can rid them of their fear of communism. We can destroy the terrible spectre of communism which exists in the minds of these middle layers. Our propaganda must be sharply focused on this aim. When we have freed them from this bogeyman, neutralized them to a certain de-

gree, then in critical situations it will be much easier to wage our great decisive battles without having to pay particular attention to resistance by these circles, or even to worry about them at all.

We find these semi-proletarian layers especially in the countryside. Several speakers have already mentioned the need to neutralize the rural population and to a certain degree win their confidence. I need only remind you that the organizations should carry their propaganda systematically into these circles. The organizations must address the agricultural workers, but also the small peasants, so as to make them at least receptive to the ideas of communism. But we must also do what is necessary organizationally in order to approach them. It is not enough to have a paper that is just left lying around the Organizational Bureau, the paper must also be actually brought into the homes of the rural population. This rural agitation is very tiring and under certain circumstances also dangerous. The Junkers are past masters at inciting the rural population against us. Despite this danger we have to approach these layers, because we must not meet with their conscious opposition in the period of the seizure of power and after the seizure of power. We must have breached their resistance before that.

An organization must therefore exist to bring propaganda into these rural towns and villages. One way of doing this is to assign municipal districts with surplus forces to bring leaflets, etc. put out by the Communist Party into particular villages. Or it can be done by using the organizations which we already have in the countryside to work neighboring villages as well. We can also involve cycling or sport groups and youth associations in this propaganda work, and can see to it that the communist spirit is carried into the rural communities, preventing an ignorant barrier against communism from being erected there. Destroying this barrier is one of the most important tasks prior to the conquest of political power, so that we do not end up with a Vendée outside the gates of all the large cities, from which the troops of the counterrevolution can be recruited.

Propaganda in the armed forces, especially where there are still standing armies, is an equally important area. It is hardly appropriate to go into this in detail. It is absolutely necessary to set up in the particular countries special information centers whose job is to work out with the utmost clarity and care whatever is apt to open the minds of the soldiers. To stereotype this work

or point to general methods is not useful; it depends on the particular circumstances of each individual country. But I still must mention one general point. We must point out the difference, the division, between officers and ranks in the armed forces. We must make clear to the ranks how the officers are set above them, not merely through external signs of rank but also through their economic position. How on the one hand the life of the officers is brilliant and secure, how on the other hand the future of the common soldier is absolutely hopeless. That after his discharge from the military he will of necessity do nothing but labor for others, and there is no prospect of overcoming this class division. Stressing over and over the class division in militarism—this is the best way to undermine the military class. This class division must be carried into the ranks of the military where at all possible. I also believe this is possible in the armed gangs, the irregulars, because it is impossible to check corruption in these gangs of armed volunteers in the capitalist epoch; one must always emphasize the contradiction and introduce the process of disintegration. I just wanted to briefly underline these general principles.

I turn now to the section on the party press. I believe I need to say very little about this. The section is exhaustive and the subject was treated in great detail from very specific standpoints because the leading comrades in Russia are convinced that the press is the best means of organizing broad masses of the population for communism. And this section was worked out in the clearest possible fashion, down to the last detail, in order to push propaganda for the press to the forefront. Next year no party should be able to complain that it has a low subscription base, that it didn't know how to build up a newspaper. By the next Congress there will be no such excuses, no party will be able to say that it did not know how to get its papers to the masses. How the press becomes an organ of struggle, how the regular collaboration of individuals truly develops the press into a living organism in the framework of the party, is described exhaustively. I emphasize this as strongly as possible, and note that these sections were written to deprive comrades of any and all excuses for the undeveloped state of the press in their countries. The comrades should not allow themselves to be guilty of any sins of omission in this most important area.

I come now to the topic of the general structure of the party organism. No, rather at this point, since I have dealt with agitation and propaganda, I must go on to

the section which we want to add—the section on political struggles. We considered it necessary to insert this section because it is possible to establish certain guidelines on organizing movements, on the smallest and largest campaigns. Despite the differences in situations, certain general instructions are still necessary.

In connection with the obligation to do work, we introduce the presentation on the organization of political struggles as follows: For the Communist Party there is no time when great movements are not possible. No matter what the situation, there are various methods of going into action politically. The point is to increase our ability to exploit economic and political situations so that it develops into an art of strategy and tactics. The methods and means will vary according to the objective possibilities. One must be smart in choosing among them. But where there is determination to engage in living activity, and the party proceeds thoughtfully and is both smart and cautious, it will be possible to figure out suitable means for our campaigns. It is important that every section of the International carefully observe what is going on in neighboring countries so it learns from the campaigns of the other sections, in order to effectively utilize collective experience for activating its own campaigns. So far next to nothing has been done in this area.

Weak parties which do not yet have a sufficient corps of functionaries can use economic and political events as a link to develop revolutionary propaganda which makes the communists' general slogans comprehensible to the workers. To do this they must utilize the ties that they have formed in the plants and the unions through the cells, through working groups. Wherever major centers of the movement emerge and we have such cells, we have to intervene with meetings to inject the party's slogans into the masses. Where it is not possible to call our own meetings, it is helpful to make use of opponents' meetings. These interventions must also be organized so that the result is not a disgrace but a credit to our propaganda.

When there is a prospect of winning the masses to our slogans through such radical propaganda, we should skillfully summarize our slogans and aim at getting slogans which conform to ours—at least in their general thrust—put forward and adopted at a large number of meetings, or at least win over large minorities to them. This will really give expression to the influence of the party's ideas on the masses. We will be able to make use of this rising influence to strengthen our own

ranks as well, and will have an impact on the proletarian layers as they sense a commonality. They will see the new leadership in this idea. They understand that here is something that wants to fight for them, and this will reinforce their fighting will and fighting spirit.

In general the groups that prepare these meetings and actively intervene in them must meet afterward to draw the lessons. Reports to the party committee in charge of the work should also be made, so that the general lessons can be drawn. Since such propaganda actions are supported by posters, leaflets, etc., it is important for teams to be organized that know how to carry out this work—leafletting should take place in front of plants, train stations, employment offices.

In some districts it has proved successful to find comrades who know how to combine leafletting with rapid-fire discussion: the discussions are then continued among the masses of workers streaming forward, and in this way our propaganda is automatically carried into the plants. This intensified propaganda must naturally parallel correspondingly intensified work in trade-union and plant meetings. When necessary, the comrades must also organize such meetings in the plants and unions and make sure that speakers are available to support their activity. Our party newspapers must repeatedly propagate the ideas of the particular campaigns day-in, day-out; they must place their best arguments and the greater part of their space at the disposal of such campaigns, just as the entire organizational apparatus must help advance this general idea which the party is striving to get across. The point is that the parties learn how to keep an idea which is being carried into the masses really alive for a longer time—for weeks, if necessary for months—so that the proletariat is truly inspired by this propaganda and grasps the main issue.

Small parties can also have other opportunities for activity if they are able to truly grasp their historic mission. Their immediate goal should of course be for the party to succeed in conquering the leading role in the proletariat. They must therefore consider whether or not the time has come to go over from the phase of propaganda to demonstration campaigns. Such demonstration campaigns can be carried out by both legal and illegal parties. We need only recall the shining example of the Spartakusbund and of the left USPD, which despite the most profound dangers led actions in Germany during the war under the slogan: Down With the War! Down With the Government! We need only recall Rosa

Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, who became casualties of this propaganda. Another example is the work of the small socialist group in England, which showed in the “Hands Off Russia” movement that demonstrating for an idea over and over again can ultimately arouse general interest in it. Similarly, during the last Polish-Russian war the Polish Communist Party sought to keep the Soviet idea and the idea of peace with Russia constantly on the agenda for weeks and months through a comprehensive propaganda campaign, to make sure this idea finally came to the fore.

We can note critically that this opportunity would also have existed for the French party if the whole party had been concentrated on these actions. It would have had such an opportunity in the case of the mobilization directed against Germany. It was just one opportunity where there weren't sufficient preparations, where the demonstrations began too late and consequently did not attain full effectiveness. As recent reports from Italy indicate, anti-fascist sentiment has now become so broad that our party, in conjunction with other parties, can begin very active work through demonstrations. Gigantic demonstrations have already taken place. The time seems to have come when the fascist mind-set clashes so violently with the active thinking of the workers that the workers are now rebelling and turning against the fascist currents in mass actions. I believe that the Italian party is faced with the kind of movement which, if utilized, will provide it with the opportunity of taking over the leading role and advancing the proletariat very far.

Even the countries where the results of a campaign have gone to the right can also teach us some useful things about demonstration campaigns. First of all, demonstration campaigns require one thing: a very flexible and dedicated leadership. If in such a movement a leadership exists that really knows how to keep the limited aim of this campaign, of this demonstration, clearly in mind, a leadership that is capable of maintaining an overview of the changing situation at every moment, then it is necessary to be completely clear about the forms of this movement, to examine every situation closely to see whether the movement can be intensified through these demonstrations, and then to consider whether the time has come when this demonstration campaign can be expanded into large-scale actions. The peace demonstrations during the war clearly showed that the suppression of such demonstrations is not at all inevitable, that the sup-

pression of such actions by no means necessarily leads to the collapse of the whole demonstration campaign. Even if such demonstrations lead to casualties, there can and will be situations where calling a halt is impermissible. Even where there is the danger of such casualties, such rallies must be repeated again and again; good organizational preparation will not only heighten their effectiveness but will also minimize the number of casualties.

We regard good organization and really disciplined execution of a demonstration, along with the

(Continued)

¹This sentence is garbled in the German original, but Koenen seems to be making a point that he made at the 1920 founding conference of the VKPD in his report on “The Organization of the Party”:

Historically, this federalism is understandable. For at the time the Independent Social Democratic Party was founded in Gotha this federalism was justified: at that time the rebellion of the individual districts and locals against the inactive and passive center in Berlin was necessary.

Bericht über die Verhandlungen des Vereinigungsparteitages der U.S.P.D. (Linke) und der KPD (Spartakusbund) (Berlin: Frankes Verlag, G.m.b.H., 1921), 110. Translation by PRL.

²Koenen is referring to the Communist Workers Party of Germany (Kommunistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands), an ultra-left party formed after a split at the Second Congress of the KPD in October 1919. A delegation from the KAPD attended the Comintern’s Third Congress, but it refused to abide by the decision of the Congress and merge with the VKPD. The Comintern soon broke off relations with the KAPD, and it degenerated into a small sect.

³This wording differs slightly from the final version adopted by the Congress. See Guidelines (point 6).