

Appendix B

Report of the Commission on Organization

by Wilhelm Koenen

Including Discussion on the Report and Voting on the Organizational Resolutions

From the stenographic record of the 24th session of the
Third Congress of the Communist International

12 July 1921, 9 pm.

KOENEN: Comrades! The Organization Commission has had extensive meetings in two sub-commissions and gone over the entire draft. A whole series of minor changes have been made, which were all accepted unanimously by the Commission. In addition a number of cuts have been made, which were also accepted unanimously by the Organization Commission. And then a number of motions for additions have been drawn up, which I will announce.

First, an essential change and addition to the section on democratic centralism has been proposed. This amendment has already been submitted to you in the proofs in all languages, and I do not need to go through it. This proposed change was also accepted unanimously. It makes the concept of democratic centralism somewhat clearer and more comprehensible.

The next important addition concerns agitation and propaganda among national minorities. A specific injunction has been inserted on carrying out this agitation and propaganda quite vigorously, and wherever possible in the language of these minorities. The formulation of the trade-union question, the treatment of wage agreements, has been framed more clearly so that no principled disputes over wage agreements can arise.

The paragraph on "Propaganda in the Army and Navy" was reformulated, and in particular the point was added that, in countries where a standing army still exists, agitation must take into account that in the future the rank and file will be extremely closely bound to the fate of the exploited class. Finally, a specific proposal on the way to deal with troops composed of officers and the student corps was adopted.

The addition on the organization of political struggles that I proposed to you in my report and which during my presentation I read to you almost in its entirety, was accepted in its essentials. Only a few deletions were made, owing to the fact that these ideas essentially were already contained in the Theses on Tactics.

Another point on the participation of the press in carrying out political campaigns was added, and particularly on how editors are to be brought into closer contact with the entire activity of the party and how uniformity is to be introduced into the party press for its revolutionary work, as well as a proposed amendment dealing with the journals, pamphlets and other theoretical and propagandistic publications of the party. All these things are to be included in a centralized manner, consistent with the campaigns of the party.

There was an addition made concerning the social-democratic and independent-socialist press, saying how to conduct subscription work in opposition to it. Here too there was unanimity in the Commission that such an amendment should be made.

Regarding the election of central leaderships in the section on the "Structure of the Party Organism," there was a dispute as to whether the party leadership should be responsible only to the party congress or to the International Executive Committee as well. The latter proposal was unanimously accepted by the Commission.

The proposals that the leadership, including the narrower leading body, be elected only by the party congress were revised, and it was decided that it should be optional whether the election of the narrower leading body should take place directly at the party congress or should be done by the elected central committees, or else by the *Beirat* or Central *Ausschuß*. The changes were accepted unanimously.

In various places insertions were made on the necessity of creating special working groups, and under some circumstances special leadership bodies, for agitation among women and in rural areas. The same thing was also decided for the Red Aid. The assumption is that special departments for aiding the victims of white terror are to be created by the individual parties.

With regard to the subordination of the various party bodies, the Theses were lacking a clear expression of

the fact that the parliamentary deputies are also subordinate to the central party leadership. An insertion was made to take care of this. Acting on a suggestion, we added a recommendation that all parties have a special audit commission, charged with inspecting the treasury and books and reporting regularly to the expanded *Ausschuß, Beirat*, etc. on its work and findings.

Some comrades on the Commission wished at least to define freedom of criticism in the Theses, with some limitations. The Commission acceded to this wish and found a formulation which I would like to read because of the general interest:

In order, however, that every party decision be carried out energetically by all party organizations and members, the broadest mass of the party must whenever possible be involved in examining and deciding every question. Party organizations and party authorities also have the duty of deciding whether questions should be discussed publicly (press, pamphlets) by individual comrades, and if so, in what form and scope.¹

There was unanimous agreement on this suggestion. We also changed the sentence that said one is just a bad communist when he forgets himself and attacks the Communist Party in public.

The section on “Illegal and Legal Work” is now called “On the Combination of Legal and Illegal Work.” What we are saying here is that there is no contradiction between legal and illegal work, but rather that the two must overlap. A number of points in this section were formulated more cautiously, some deletions were made, so that bourgeois governments would not be able to make too much out of it. It was also considered necessary to insert some formulations warning of the need for caution in accepting new members. Penetration by unreliable members should be prevented by drawing up candidacy lists. However, for the time being it is left up to individual comrades to implement this regulation in their own sections in whatever way is possible. To prevent spies and provocateurs from penetrating our illegal work it is suggested that comrades who want to do illegal work be specially tested in legal activity first. Finally, to note that there were objections to the phrase “before the revolution”; it has been replaced throughout by the expression “before the open revolutionary uprising.”

So those are the essential changes to the present draft on the organization of the party that we are proposing to you. The title will then read: “Guidelines on the Or-

ganizational Structure of the Communist Party, on the Methods and Content of Its Work.”

I come now to the section dealing with the Resolution on the Organization of the Communist International. The resolution has been changed in a few places. In the introduction a few deletions were made that did not affect the essentials. This is on the premise that what has been deleted had already been said in earlier resolutions. Similarly, in the first paragraph of point 2, the sentence that the sections of the International should maintain the closest contact with one another was deleted; instead we immediately say how they should do this. Essential changes were actually made only in the last point. It now reads as follows:

V. To be able to take on this extraordinarily increased activity, the Executive must be considerably expanded. Those sections which were granted 40 votes by the Congress shall each have 2 votes in the Executive, as shall the Executive of the Communist Youth International; those sections which have 30 and 20 votes at the Congress, one vote each. The Communist Party of Russia shall have five votes, as in the past. The representatives of the remaining sections shall have consultative votes. The president of the Executive shall be elected by the Congress. The Executive is instructed to appoint three secretaries, to be drawn from different sections if possible. In addition to them, the members of the Executive sent by the sections are obligated to take part in carrying out the ongoing work through their particular national departments or by taking over the handling of entire specialized fields as rapporteurs. The members of the administrative Smaller Bureau are elected specially by the Executive.²

There were some differences over this point; votes were taken to determine which sections should receive 2 votes. However, the proposal presented to you here was accepted by a large majority.

There was also a dispute on whether the members of the administrative Smaller Bureau should be elected by the Executive from among its own members or whether the Executive should also be entitled to take into the Smaller Bureau comrades who happen not to belong to the Executive. It was finally decided to formulate the sentence in such a way that the Executive has freedom in this regard. However, opinion still remains divided on this point, and we still need to arrive at an agreement on this.

Finally, the Commission which dealt with international questions also went over a number of other requests. These requests, which do not absolutely need to be discussed in a general session, were for the most part referred to the new Executive for consideration. It was proposed that a control commission be created for the activity of the Executive, specifically for what the Executive is to undertake with the parties in particular countries and what the sections are to do. It was not possible to present a finished plan for this. However, the Commission considered this question so important that it did not want to leave it unresolved until the next Congress but thought that we have to find a solution now. The Commission unanimously proposes to first adopt a provisional arrangement, to set up a provisional control commission, so that the new Executive reaches full agreement with the first voting group, that is, with the leaderships of the largest delegations. If agreement is reached between the first voting group and the Executive, then this provisional control commission is to function for this year. As to these two groups and the Executive, the delimitation of their activities should also be done on a provisional basis. However the Commission proposes unanimously that we stipulate now that in general this commission should not have greater rights than the control commissions of the individual national organizations and that in general it is not to decide political matters. This is the proposal we present to the Congress in this matter. We ask everyone to adopt these proposals without extensive dispute in so far as possible. (*Vigorous agreement*)

There is a proposal that the Executive be enlarged by one representative, giving a representative with decisive vote to the Indian communist movement; he previously could take part in the proceedings only with consultative vote. The Presidium has no objection to this. We believe this is a supportable proposal.

In addition, an amendment has been put forward to elect the members of the Smaller Bureau solely from among the members of the Executive. Does someone want to speak to this?

SOUVARINE demands a roll-call vote of the delegations be taken here in the plenum.

RADEK: Comrades! In the name of the Russian delegation I oppose this motion, for the following reasons. All political decisions are made by the Executive. The primary task of the Small Bureau is to lead illegal work based on the political decisions of the Executive.

In various situations we may need comrades for this work who at the given moment—largely for reasons of chance, because they were not at the Congress—were not elected to the Executive, could not have been elected.

Likewise, when we send a representative abroad, we have not been able to limit ourselves to members of the Executive in selecting representatives, but have also had to send responsible comrades from outside the Executive to do this work. We have always done this. The Executive must also have the possibility of agreeing to have comrades who are not members of the Executive serve on the Small Bureau. It is purely formal schematic thinking that speaks against this; the experience of our movement speaks for it. Taking care of illegal matters demands much greater elasticity. It is characteristic that this motion was made by representatives of organizations which have not had to do any extensive illegal work. (*Objection*) I ask you to reject the motion. It is no great question of principle. If the Congress decides otherwise, we will have to work accordingly. But such a decision would make our work more difficult.

KOENEN: Does anyone want the floor?

KORITSCHONER: We ask you to vote for comrade Souvarine's motion. It will not do for comrades who are not sent by the delegation of their country to get onto the Smaller Bureau of the Executive. The Smaller Bureau is a committee of the Executive and as such it must have an analogous composition and develop organically out of it. Everywhere else people are always for organic development. I would like to point out that achieving organizational clarity is an indispensable necessity, and this is the only way to do it. At the same time we must state that the motion has also been signed by delegations that have repeatedly been compelled to carry out illegal work.

WALECKI: Comrades, I must speak against the proposed improvement introduced by a group of delegations, for the following reason: up until now we have had an Executive that was not adequate either in number or in other respects to provide candidates for the Smaller Bureau. At this Congress we have decided to strengthen the Executive and to call upon the parties of the other countries to send their best people as delegates to Moscow. But at this moment we cannot yet predict the extent to which the parties will respond to this call. We cannot yet tell whether it might not still

be necessary in the future to look outside the Executive Committee for personnel capable of exercising all the functions of members of the Smaller Bureau. We cannot tie the hands of the Executive Committee in this respect. The responsibility of selection must be left to it. This kind of representation is also permissible from a formal standpoint. Thus comrades who are not directly members of their party leadership are delegated to the Executive by various parties. As a rule the Executive will certainly elect its own members to the Smaller Bureau. But one must not forbid it in advance to draw in one or two persons in exceptional cases who at the given moment are not members of the Executive.

[**VAILLANT-COUTURIER:**³ The French delegation defends the amendment proposed to you. Comrade Radek, who spoke very energetically against it, has just stated that this is not a question of principle. Nevertheless, it would be useful to make sure that the Small Bureau, which has special significance and is in permanent session, must consist of accountable members. We consider that the objection made by comrade Radek concerning the special tasks of the Small Bureau and the need to include members tested in illegal work is insufficient for rejecting the amendment. We think that the members of the Executive who constitute the Small Bureau can in case of need create for themselves a technical auxiliary apparatus for specific individual cases. Finally, comrade Walecki explained that it is difficult to find the seven people necessary for the Small Bureau among the thirty members of the expanded Executive. This explanation gives an unflattering assessment of the clandestine abilities of our comrades. On this basis, the French delegation requests a vote on the proposed amendment, believing that it very much simplifies the task of the International. The delegation thinks that with its adoption more convenient and productive work will prove possible. The delegation affirms that this is in no way a manifestation of distrust, since the debate exclusively concerns the method of work necessary for the International to seriously take up its affairs and fulfill to the end its revolutionary duty.]

KOENEN: There are no further requests for the floor. Therefore we must take a vote on the motion.

RADEK: If a motion is signed by a number of delegations—Australia, Austria, etc.—it is necessary to ask whether other delegations support this motion, since the matter is not settled by raising voting cards.

KOENEN (Chair): We now come to the vote by delegations. The delegations which are for having only

members of the Executive be members of the Smaller Bureau should vote yes. Those for adopting the original text as I presented it for the Commission vote no, thus rejecting the amendment.

POGANY: The question is incorrectly posed. The yes vote has to be those who accept the Commission's proposal.

KOENEN (Chair): To make the matter even clearer it should be stated: for the Souvarine amendment or for the proposal of the Commission. Then I think there can be no more confusion.

SOUVARINE: This way of posing the question is unacceptable to us. In fact we are not touching the Commission text at all. The vote should be for or against the amendment.

VAILLANT-COUTURIER: I request that all the countries that have co-signed the amendment be read out.

RADEK: Comrades, comrade Souvarine is playing hide-and-seek. It is a fact that the motion was voted down twice in the Commission. So the motion is counterposed to the Commission's motion. The Commission's motion grants the Executive the right to draw in comrades from outside the Executive for the necessary work. The French comrades reject this. Their amendment is therefore a countermotion. For this reason the vote must be: for the Commission or for the Souvarine motion.

KOENEN (Chair): The Presidium will no longer grant the floor to anyone else but will take the vote. The vote will be taken as follows: whoever is for the Commission's motion must state that he is voting for the motion of the Commission. Whoever is for the amendment must state: for Souvarine's amendment. I will comply with the request to read off the delegations that signed the amendment: the French, Spanish, Swiss, Yugoslav, Austrian and Australian delegations.

We come now to the voting. I ask the delegations for which motion they are voting. Russia: for the Commission. Germany: Commission. France: against the Commission. Italy: Commission. Czechoslovakia: 30 for Souvarine, 10 for the Commission. Youth group: against the motion of the Commission. Poland: for the Commission. Ukraine: Commission. Bulgaria: amendment. Yugoslavia: amendment. Norway: Commission. England: Commission. America: Commission. Spain: amendment. Finland: Commission. Holland: Commission. Belgium: amendment. Rumania: 5 for the Commission, 15 amendment. Latvia: Commission. Switz-

erland: amendment. Hungary: 10 for the Commission, 10 for the amendment. Sweden: already left. Austria: amendment. Azerbaijan: Commission. Georgia: Commission. Lithuania: Commission. Luxembourg: amendment. Turkey: not present. Estonia: absent. Denmark: Commission. Greece: amendment. South Africa: Commission. Iceland: Commission. Korea: absent. Mexico: absent. Armenia: Commission. Argentina: Commission. Australia: Commission. New Zealand: absent. Dutch Indies: absent.

The voting is concluded.

Comrades, although the exact count of the results is not yet known, we do know that a large majority is for the motion of the Commission. (*Applause*) Taking an average, the majority amounts to approximately 150 votes.

Following the vote comrade Zinoviev now has the floor.

ZINOVIEV: Comrades, this is the only roll-call vote during the entire Congress, and it really concerns only a very minor matter. For this reason I believe we should try to find a formula that we can perhaps all agree on. I propose that, despite this glorious victory (*Laughter*), we make a concession to those who proposed the motion, namely by saying that the members of the Smaller Bureau should as a rule consist only of members of the Executive and that a different procedure can be followed only as an exception. For we are really dealing only with an exceptional case. Obviously, as a rule it should and will only be members of the Executive. The only thing demanded by the exigencies of the work is that the members of the Executive not be tied down. It is obviously not a matter of distrust on the part of those who proposed the amendment but of the method of work. And since we have the experience of the Executive over the past two years, we do ask you to recognize that it will be more useful to allow such an exception, and as a rule it ought to be as the comrades of the French delegation request. I believe that in a vote along these lines—several comrades have promised this—we will receive a compact majority.

KOENEN (Chair): So the formulation is now as follows: the members of the administrative Small Bureau are specially elected by the Executive. As a rule they should be drawn from the members of the Executive. A different procedure can be followed in exceptional cases. That is comrade Zinoviev's proposal.

There is no opposition to this formulation. Therefore we will take another vote, superseding the previous vote. All those in favor of this amendment, please raise their green cards. (*This is done.*) Adopted with one vote against.

After this vote I can now assume that the entire draft of the Organization Commission on the methods of work, as well as the resolution on international organization has been accepted. All who wish to express this, please raise their cards. (*This is done.*) Adopted unanimously.

¹This wording differs slightly from the final version adopted by the Congress. See Guidelines (point 51).

²This is not the final text as adopted by the Congress. See Resolution (point 5).

³This speech was not recorded in the German *Protokoll*. We have translated it from the Russian stenographic report, *Tretii vsemirnyi kongress Kommunisticheskogo Internatsionala; stenograficheskii otchet* (Petrograd: Gos. izd-vo, 1922), 485.