

## A Note on the Translation

In the introduction to his bibliography, *The Communist International and Its Front Organizations*, Witold S. Sworakowski succinctly notes the problems faced by anyone seeking the documentary record of the Communist International:

The user of Comintern publications must be aware of the fact that the same item when published in Russian, English, German, French, or any other language, although seemingly identical with its counterparts, is not necessarily so in its content.... In most cases it is practically impossible to establish which item is in the original language and which is a translation. Texts of the same item, e.g., of the same speech, report, or resolution, may differ in editions in different languages.<sup>1</sup>

Sworakowski further explains why this should be so:

The congresses and plenums of the Executive Committee of the Communist International were multinational gatherings of people with at least forty languages as their native tongues. After some attempts at restrictions in the beginning, delegates were permitted to use at the meetings any language they chose. Their speeches were translated into Russian, German, French, and English, or digests in these languages were read to the congresses immediately following the speech in another language. Whether a speech was translated verbatim or digested to longer or shorter versions depended upon the importance of the speaker. Only by realizing these time-consuming translating and digesting procedures does it become understandable why some congresses lasted as long as forty-five days.<sup>2</sup>

In the case of “Guidelines on the Organizational Structure of Communist Parties, on the Methods and Content of Their Work,” however, we have been very lucky since it is clear the original draft was written in German. Lenin’s letters to Kuusinen and Koenen, including his suggestions and addenda for the draft, were in German, indicating that Lenin worked with a German rather than a Russian text.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Zinoviev’s remarks in the discussion at the 22nd session, referring to the “German wording worked out by our internationally motley crew” (see Appendix A, “Report on the Organization Question”), clearly indicate that the Congress worked with the German text.

We have translated from the German text of the The-

ses and Resolutions of the Third Congress published by the Communist International’s publishing house in Hamburg in 1921.<sup>4</sup> This version conforms in all details to the amendments mentioned in Koenen’s Reports and includes point 45, which was omitted (apparently inadvertently) from the German text published in Moscow.<sup>5</sup> This Hamburg-published version also corrects various grammatical errors of the Moscow-published German text. The published Russian-language versions of the Organizational Resolution suffer from misplaced and omitted text, garbling the meaning of the Resolution in places.<sup>6</sup> French-language versions of the Organizational Resolution have followed the German, not the Russian, as regards text sequence and numbering.<sup>7</sup>

The English translations of the Organizational Resolution published in the 1920s garble the text in places. Moreover these translations omit many of the revisions adopted by the Congress at its final session.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, a new English version published in 1980 as part of a collection of Comintern documents is based on the Russian text and suffers from all its textual omissions, made worse by the ignorant interpolations and carelessness of the translators.<sup>9</sup> The English translation we publish here is, to our knowledge, the first complete one ever based on the final German text. We have followed the German text as regards paragraph breaks, word emphasis and the capitalization or non-capitalization of “communist party.”

Appendices A and B are translated from the German-language stenographic report of the Congress.<sup>10</sup> Since Koenen spoke in German, this can be presumed to be more accurate than the Russian stenographic report.<sup>11</sup> We have compared the German to the Russian report and found only one substantive difference: a speech by the French delegate Vaillant-Couturier is omitted from the German report of the discussion on the Organizational Resolution at the 24th session of the Congress. We have translated this speech from the Russian and included it in our translation in brackets (see Appendix B, “Report of the Commission on Organization”). As for the rest of our translation, we have faithfully rendered certain terminological and stylistic inconsistencies unfortunately endemic to what appears to be an unedited text, footnoting only the most glaring of these. In the interest of readability we have, however, added a number of paragraph breaks to the translation in Appendix A and we have provided a few minimal explanatory footnotes in both Appendices.

In two cases it was impossible to convey succinctly in English the full range of meaning of the German text. The Resolution and Appendices contain frequent references to *Betriebsvertrauensleute*, which can mean both shop stewards and equally people in charge of the (party's) work in the plants (something roughly akin to the French *responsable*). Obviously both meanings can be present simultaneously. It is clear from Koenen's Report to the 22nd session of the Congress (see Appendix A) that for the most part it is the loosely organized network of syndicalist workers usually referred to as the *Revolutionäre Obleute* or *Vertrauensmänner* which is meant. *Betriebsvertrauensleute* is therefore mostly translated as "shop stewards" though in a few places "party cadres with authority in the plants" more closely conveys the meaning of the German text.

The other difficulty was the German *Aktion*. Koenen uses the word frequently in his 10 July Report to the Congress, and he clearly means it to reverberate favorably with the 1921 *Märzaktion* (March Action). As used here the German term *Aktion* can encompass the single-event sense of the English word "action," as well as convey a sense of an ongoing series of activities better rendered in English by the word "campaign." We have chosen whichever word fits better in context, unfortunately sometimes losing Koenen's clear resonance with the "March Action." In this regard it is significant that, in contrast to Koenen's 10 July Report, the text of the final Resolution often uses the French-derived *Kampagne* instead of the German *Aktion*.

We have not translated the German words *Ausschuß* and *Beirat*—essentially synonyms for "committee" used in Section VII of the Resolution—because to do so would obscure the meaning of the text. At the time of the Third Congress these terms had concrete meaning in the German workers movement: the leading committee of the VKPD was the *Zentralausschuß*, based on regional representation; in the USPD a *Beirat*, also regionally representative, made major decisions in conjunction with a *Zentralkomitee*. To our knowledge these bodies have had no analog in the English-speaking workers movement and their use in the Resolution underlines its attempt to explain the organizational forms developed by the Bolsheviks in terms of the relevant practice in other countries, particularly Germany.

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The translations, notes and introduction presented here in *Prometheus Research Series 1* were prepared

centrally through the efforts of the following individuals: Marianne Clemens, Jon Lawrence, Fred Purdy, Emily P. Turnbull and Vladimir Zelinski.

<sup>1</sup>Witold S. Sworakowski, *The Communist International and Its Front Organizations* (Stanford, Cal.: The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, 1965), 39-40.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>3</sup>V.I. Lenin, *CW* vol. 42, 316-319.

<sup>4</sup>*Thesen und Resolutionen des III. Weltkongresses der Kommunistischen Internationale (Moskau, 22. Juni bis 12. Juli 1921)* (Hamburg: Verlag der Kommunistischen Internationale, 1921), 105-146. The version of the Organizational Resolution contained in this collection was also published as a separate pamphlet.

<sup>5</sup>*Thesen und Resolutionen. Angenommen auf dem III. Kongreß der Kommunistischen Internationale (Moscow: Presse-Büro der Kommunistischen Internationale, 1921)*, 35-57.

<sup>6</sup>*Tezisy i rezoliutsii III Kongressa Kommunisticheskogo Internatsionala.* (Moscow: Otdel pechati Kominterna, 1921), 35-56. Also *Kommunisticheskii International v dokumentakh; resheniia, tezisy i vozzvaniia kongressov Kominterny i plenumov IKKI, 1919-1932* (Moscow: Partiinoe izd-vo, 1933), 201-225. This latter collection was edited by Béla Kun.

<sup>7</sup>There exist two separate editions of *Thèses et Résolutions adoptées au IIIème Congrès de l'Internationale Communiste* (Moscow: Section de la Presse de l'Internationale Communiste, 1921). The editions vary on details of translation. See also *Thèses, manifestes et résolutions adoptées par les Ier, Iie, IIIe et IVe Congrès de l'Internationale communiste (1919-1923)* (Paris: Bibliothèque Communiste, 1934), 109-123. None of these editions includes Zinoviev's compromise amendment to the Resolution on the Organization of the Communist International.

<sup>8</sup>See *Theses and Resolutions adopted at the Third World Congress of the Communist International (June 22nd-July 12th, 1921)* (New York: The Contemporary Publishing Association, 1921), 75-117 and also *Decisions of the Third Congress of the Communist International. Held at Moscow, July, 1921* (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1922), 29-59 and 133-134. Excerpts from the Organizational Resolution and the Resolution on the Organization of the Communist

International were also published in Degras, ed., *The Communist International*, vol. I, 256-273.

<sup>9</sup>*Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, ed. Alan Adler and trans. Alix Holt and Barbara Holland (London: Ink Links, 1980), 234-261.

<sup>10</sup>*Protokoll des III. Kongresses der Kommunistischen Internationale (Moskau, 22. Juni bis 12. Juli 1921)* (Hamburg: Verlag der Kommunistischen Internationale, 1921), 956-993 and 1036-1049. This stenographic record was printed earlier in the *Bulletin des III. Kongresses der Kommunistischen Internationale* (Moscow: Pressbüreau des III. Kongresses der Kommunistischen Internationale, 1921), nos. 22 and 24 (dated 18 July and 20 July respectively). The *Bulletin* version varies only in minor detail from that eventually published in the *Protokoll*.

The abbreviated English-language stenographic report published as *Third Congress of the Communist International, Report of Meetings held at Moscow June 22nd-July 12th 1921* (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, n.d.) is so truncated as to be virtually useless as a record of the 22nd and 24th sessions.

<sup>11</sup>*Tretii vsemirnyi kongress Kommunisticheskogo Internatsionala; stenograficheskii otchet* (Petrograd: Gos. izd-vo, 1922), 445-461 and 481-494.