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Organisation Conference of the C. I.

First Session, Moscow, March 15th, 1925.

Comrade Piatnitzky opened the first meeting of the Organisation Conference. In honour of the victims in Halle, those present rose from their seats. Before proceeding to the agenda, Comrade Piatnitzky moved that a Presidium be elected to consist of Comrades Miłskievitch (Organisation Department of the ECCI); Suzanne (France); Winterich (Germany); Dorsey (America); Viola (Italy); Zapotocky (Czechoslovakia); Gypfner (Youth); Brown (Great Britain); Piatnitzky (Russia). When this motion had been unanimously accepted, Comrade Miłskievitch took the chair and announced the following points for discussion:

1. Information on the activity of the Organisation Department of the ECCI.
2. Report of the delegates on the status of work.
3. The experiences of nucleus activity.
4. Fractions.

5. Development of the local party organisation.
 6. Model statutes.
 7. Contact between nuclei of various countries.
 8. Factory papers.
 9. The organisation of campaigns.
- To facilitate the work, the following Commissions have been appointed:

For the development of the Party organisation, for the model statutes, for contact between the nuclei, for factory newspapers, for the organisation of campaigns.

The experiences of nucleus work and fractions will be dealt with at the Plenum and a commission will be appointed there.

On point I of the agenda, Comrade Piatnitzky made the following report:

Information on the Activity of the Organisation Department of the ECCI.

If I make certain criticisms here, I do it for the purpose of clearing up various questions of organisation. Certain comrades think the "Bolshevisation" of a Party is only an organisational question. That is wrong. A Party which has a good organisation will be able to follow good tactics, but if these tactics are not Bolshevik, then it will not sweep the masses with it and lead them into the fight. A good policy of the Party, which leads the masses, together with a good organisation — that is Bolshevisation!

The Party organisation in Russia was built up under circumstances different from those abroad. We had no opportunity of building up a legal party organisation, to hold meetings, to issue papers, etc. We were compelled to seek other forms in order to come in contact with the masses and that was only possible in factories. With us the Party organisation developed first and the trade unions were organised later. Thus the Party was compelled at first to deal with the petty every-day questions of the workers until it created the trade unions. This is how the close connection between trade unions and the Party came about. In the other countries, as a rule, the trade unions were organised first and then the Parties, which divided the work between

them. The trade unions concerned themselves with the economic questions and the Party with politics.

Now the question arose whether the foreign Parties could reach their goal with the old forms of organisation, or whether our form of organisation could not also be applied to them. Certain comrades claimed that the old form of organisation was standing the test and that the Russian form of organisation, which can be traced back to special circumstances, could not be applied abroad. Reports which came to us, however, prove the contrary. In the French Party the formation of nuclei was started with great enthusiasm, and the contact of the Party with the masses became much closer. This was clearly evident on the occasion of the funeral demonstration of Jaures, when we succeeded in getting 70,000 workers out of the factories into the streets, in spite of a parallel demonstration organised by the Left Bloc and the Social Democrats.

It is reported that in the Berlin-Brandenburg District the Party succeeded in getting a considerable proportion of sympathisers to take part in the last Lenin-Liebkecht-Luxemburg demonstration in those municipal districts where reorganisation had already been completed, whereas in the

other districts, where the reorganisation had not yet been begun, only the registered Party members appeared.

From those countries where our Parties work illegally, as in Bulgaria and Roumania, favourable reports have also been received. The Parties have become more proletarian and more active, and have also gained followers in the country. All this proves that the Russian form of Party organisation can be successfully applied abroad.

In the organisation of the nuclei we also observed great faults. Nuclei were organised and then their development was neglected; they were left without instructions. Now and then meetings were called, petty factory matters were discussed, but nothing more. The nucleus was not what it should have been — a means of contact between the Party and the masses in the factories. Naturally workers would sometimes say: "What do we need these new organisations for which accomplish nothing and because of which we might lose our jobs?" Such nuclei are worse than none at all.

The nucleus must meet at least once a week and discuss all those political and economic party questions which closely affect the workers. Under normal conditions the Party should never initiate measures which have not been first discussed in the nuclei. For instance, the Czechish Party started a campaign on prices without its having been previously discussed in the nuclei. In Czechoslovakia elections took place to factory councils without the participation of the nuclei; that was left to the trade unions.

It is not sufficient for the nuclei to meet only once a month particularly in order to discuss the current tasks in the factory, which is stated, if I am not mistaken, in a communication from the Berlin-Brandenburg District. (Geschke: You are mistaken!). For such a purpose no nuclei are necessary. The nuclei must meet at least once a week, in order to discuss all questions.

The Relation of the Factory Nuclei to the Local Organisations is an Important Question.

The reorganisation has often been misunderstood and it was believed that the reorganisation of the Party on the basis of factory nuclei would destroy all organisations and that nothing but isolated nuclei would exist. But it must be clearly stated that the nuclei are only a part of the organisation. The local group will continue to exist as a co-ordination of all the nuclei of the locality.

Certain comrades think that the nuclei are good only to bring the masses into demonstrations, whereas other work (for instance, election campaigns) can be done only by the residential organisations. That is absolutely wrong, since our electors are workers and must be influenced in the factories through the nucleus. The nucleus gives the members the opportunity of talking over all questions with their colleagues at the place of work, an opportunity which was never offered by the residential organisations of groups of ten.

France demonstrated to us that by the organisation of nuclei and the dissolution of the old residential organisations, the best results have been obtained. The Party did not become weaker by this reorganisation and did not lose any members. I do not want to go so far as to state the reorganisation in Germany and in Czechoslovakia can be done equally rapidly. In these countries there have been socialdemocratic organisations for many years with practically thirty years of experience and customs, whereas in France no such deeply rooted organisations existed. Therefore it was easier in France to dissolve the old forms of organisation and build up new ones. The main thing is that enthusiasm for the reorganisation should exist, then all difficulties can be overcome. If, in the larger Parties, the officials would go at the work of reorganisation according to a fixed plan and with determination, then we would obtain the best results. But both forms of organisation are allowed to exist and the work is done incompletely by both.

Comrade **Ruth Fischer** believes that the reorganisation must be so conducted that not one member is lost. That is correct. If, however, as has already happened, that an official of our Party runs away to the social democratic camp simply because we criticised Ebert when he was dead — when he was alive we were allowed to criticise him — that shows that the workers in our Party are not yet mature. But the nuclei are the best means of maturing them.

German comrades believe that many members will be lost in the process of reorganisation — this is stated in

a report from the Berlin-Brandenburg District — and they would consider it a serious mistake to drive away, or lose the passive members. Certainly, we do not want to lose any members, but the attempt must be made to work on these passive comrades, to enlighten them, and that can be done only through the nuclei.

A combination between the two organisations is impossible. This has been proved by experience. Correspondence from proletarian circles shows us how correct we were in this reorganisation work. "Rudé Právo" received several such letters from workers. In one of them it says: "The work in the nuclei has the advantage that the work is not concentrated on one or two comrades, but that practically every member of the nucleus is working, which is of great importance."

Another letter (also from the "Rudé Právo") states: "We consider the reorganisation as really practical. The work is much easier than in the old organisations, and we can mobilise the members of our nucleus in the factory at a half hours' notice."

If workers are writing in this vein, of what use then to maintain the two forms of organisation?

Factory Newspapers.

There are factory papers already in many countries. Germany has more than 1,000; France has about 350; and several exist in Czechoslovakia. In Italy small leaflets are distributed in place of factory newspapers. Since most of these leaflets are issued from a central point they have the disadvantage of not being adapted directly to the conditions and events in every single factory. Unfortunately the factory papers are not yet entirely fulfilling their purpose. Many of them discuss only factory affairs and nothing more.

That serves no purpose. Factory affairs must be so used that they are immediately linked up with the tactics of the Party and show that only the CP. has the possibility of liberating the working class. The paper must speak to the workers wherever Communists cannot appear openly. The comrades must be careful that the editors are not discovered and that the nucleus is not imperilled.

Structure of our Party Organisations

should not be dealt with. Many of our Parties have large local organisations in which no comrade supervises the work constantly. There are committees, it is true, who do their party work after their work in the factory. But that is not sufficient. In such cases someone must be on the job all day long. When the members see that something is being done, then they will also find the means of paying this comrade. In such cases where the committees tend to Party work, it often happens that the work is not divided according to department and that the instructions of the Central Committee are not carried out. Such examples as the following were given from Czechoslovakia; the leaders ignore the factory nuclei, the district secretaries are typical office people who sit in their offices and write petitions for the workers, etc. This might be exaggerated but there is probably some truth in it.

Can such leadership actually conduct a campaign? It is our task to obtain such a leadership that is capable of leading the workers in every connection.

The Institution of Functionaries and Officials

is another important point requiring our attention. This method was taken over by our Parties from the old Social Democratic parties. These functionaries, who are not elected by the members or authorised to make decisions, but are, so to speak, appointed by the executive, naturally also accomplish good party work and we are not in favour of removing them. Nevertheless, they ought to function only as advisory bodies and not be allowed to adopt decisions which are contrary to the opinions of the members, such as we have seen in Czechoslovakia in the present party crisis. The German comrades will remember that in Berlin a similar case occurred in the trade union question. The functionaries may discuss and give their opinion, but the decisions should be made by the nuclei. A Party can be really active and lead the masses only when the nuclei are up to date on all questions. We do not want such a situation where the functionaries do all the work of the Party Conference and of the membership, but that they work together with the Party.

No matter how good the functionaries might be, they can never replace the Party itself, which still often happens in Czechoslovakia and Germany.

The Question of Fractions

is an important question with which we must deal. Very little has been done here so far. To choose the best from a bad case — the Reichstag, Landtag and trade union fractions, which can be most easily directed by the executive — certain things happened even here which are absolutely inadmissible. What ought we to say when for instance the Czechish parliamentary fraction debates for three days whether or not a decision of the CC. should be carried out? I am very glad, of course, that the Czechish parliamentary fraction has finally come to the decision that it is only an auxiliary organ of the Party and of the revolutionary labour movement and not an independent political factor.

Things are still worse with our fractions in the non-party mass organisations. In the Czechish gymnastic

societies, for instance, we have practically no fractions and in the reformist and Christian trade unions, things are still worse. How can the Party have any influence on the workers in these organisations, when we have no fractions there? It should never occur that the Party removes its members from such organisations, as, for instance, our French Party did in 1923 in the reformist trade unions.

On the actual work of the Organisation Department I must report that we were compelled to conduct it under very difficult circumstances. Very incomplete reports came in from the Parties. We are compelled to collect all our information laboriously from the newspapers and to ask the representatives for everything we needed. We must set ourselves the task to organise better connections with the Organisation Departments of the various Parties. We must have the opportunity of sending instructors to the Parties who can send us regular detailed reports on the state of the organisations.

After Comrade Piatnitzky's report the Conference was adjourned until the next day.