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Projecting Bolshevik Unity, Ritualizing Party Debate: The Thirteenth Party Congress, 1924

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The Thirteenth Congress of the Bolshevik Party – the first Party congress since V. I. Lenin's death – was convened in Moscow in May 1924, thirteen months after the Twelfth Congress.[1] The Congress promoted an atmosphere of mourning by adorning the auditorium of the Bol'shoi Palace in the Kremlin (the venue of the plenary session) with portraits of Lenin. The accompanying publicity emphasized how the great Party leader had uncompromisingly worked for the Soviet state throughout his life.[2] In preparing the Congress reports, party officials scrutinized Lenin's writings and speeches, and the Central Committee reports constantly referred to "what Lenin said" in order to represent itself as the legitimate heir of Leninism.[3] Nearly all speakers representing the central Party institutions mentioned Lenin's name in their reports. Grigorii Zinoviev said in his opening speech that the Party ought to be united, and should be "based on Leninism."[4]

However, the Thirteenth Congress was not merely one of grief and condolence. The Bolshevik leadership orchestrated the Congress to project Party unity, to propagate the achievements and the glorious future of the Soviet government, and to mobilize Soviet citizens into Bolshevik state-building. There were few attempts to inject this kind of drama before 1924 when the Party congress instead acted as a genuine debating forum with little propaganda.[5] The Thirteenth Congress hence represented a new departure in terms of the structure, function and significance in the history of the congress during the early Soviet era. It also served as a harbinger of political and cultural practices, which the congress of the late 1920s and 1930s developed further.

To date, many historians have focused on the political struggle among the Bolshevik leaders in 1923–1924, inter alia between the troika (Iosif Stalin, Lev Kamenev and Zinoviev) and Leon Trotskii.[6] Recent historiography pays sig-

1 I use the term Party congress (lower case) when it refers to the congress as an institution. However, I have used capital letters when discussing an individual congress, thus the Thirteenth Congress, etc.

2 Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (hereafter, RGASPI), f. 52, op. 1, d. 1, l. 39; and d. 44, l. 5.

3 A. A. Andreev, *Vospominaniia, pis'ma* (Moscow, 1985), p. 147.

4 *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd RKP(b), mai 1924 goda: stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1963), p. 108.

5 See Junya Takiguchi, "The Bolshevik Party Congress, 1903–1927: Orchestration, Debate and Experiences," (Ph.D. diss., University of Manchester, 2009), pp. 87–131.

6 To name but a few, E. H. Carr, *The Interregnum, 1923–1924* (London, 1954); Robert V. Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, MA, 1960).

nificant attention to the conflict at local and regional levels and ordinary Party members' reaction to the debate.[7] However, in spite of individual and inter-fractional conflicts among the Party leaders, they agreed that the Party ought not to expose any conflict to the public immediately after Lenin's death.

The Thirteenth Congress was witness to few stirring debates on its floor, which led to some monographs interpreting it as a "model of unanimity."[8] All the same, we are now able to cast further light on this important Party congress by employing newly available materials and a fresh approach. Previous studies on the Thirteenth Congress have rarely considered the organizational and administrative devices by which freedom of discussion was circumvented before and during the Congress. At the same time, the Thirteenth Congress also adopted and elaborated various means to enable the participants to experience symbolic representations of "Party unity" at a distinct level from the plenary session, to which no scholarly attention has so far been paid. The Thirteenth Congress attempted to consolidate the sense of Party unity through extra-curricular activities. Several special propaganda exhibitions and mass spectacles were accordingly arranged exclusively for the delegates. These extra-curricular activities were aimed at imbuing delegates with the "correct Party line" on imperative issues and, as Zinoviev said in his opening speech, to consolidate the sense of "Party unity based on Leninism."[9]

Moreover, there was noticeable progress in terms of the quality of hospitality for delegates. The Party newly established multiple means of treatments for delegates, intending to relieve them of their physical discomforts which had hitherto accompanied their participation in the Party congress.

Furthermore, from the Thirteenth Congress onwards, the Bolshevik Party congress became an event not just exclusively for Bolshevik members but also for wider Soviet citizens. It comprised several arrangements and programs focusing on the non-Bolshevik public and in which they could become actively involved. The Party drew non-Party members into the Bolshevik congress in order to represent *smychka* (the union) and the unity of the Soviet Union.

The archival materials on the Thirteenth Congress (especially materials in RGASPI, fond 52: the Thirteenth Party Congress) enable us to shed light on these important but hitherto neglected aspects and to ascertain much more complex Bolshevik practices than have hitherto been claimed.

The fading of freedom of discussion at the plenary session and the remarkable development in propaganda and hospitality were closely related. On

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7 Kevin Murphy, *Revolution and Counterrevolution: Class Struggle in a Moscow Metal Factory* (New York, 2005); S. A. Pavliuchenkov, *"Orden mechenostsev": partiia i vlast' posle revoliutsii, 1917–1929 gg.* (Moscow, 2008); Aleksandr Reznik, *Trotskizm i levaia oppozitsiia v RKP(b) v 1923–1924* (Moscow, 2010).

8 Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (London, 1970), p. 287. See also, Carr, *Interregnum, 1923–1924*; Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution*.

9 *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, p. 108

the one hand, Party debate was intended to demonstrate the Party line and the achievements of the Soviet state, and, on the other, the cultural programs were designed to instill these in all participants. They sought to project an image of a brighter future under the Bolshevik government by employing the available human, material and technological resources.

The Thirteenth Party Congress represented a congress in transition. Unlike the previous congresses, the Thirteenth Congress no longer acted as a forum for Party debate. The business of the congress was institutionalized under the tight control of the central leaders. It became a showcase for projecting and inculcating Party unity.

Pre-Congress Debate and the Election of Delegates

The political structure inside the Party had undergone a crucial change in the early 1920s. As many historians have argued, executive authority at the center was concentrated in the Politburo over the Central Committee as well as Sovnarkom in the early 1920s, and the Politburo became the main decision-making body by 1924.[10] Amid the fear of increasing criticism, Stalin argued that the Politburo no longer had a monopoly of authority. Instead, in his words, the decision-making of the Party was transferred from the Politburo to the Central Committee plenum. Stalin also emphasized how this shift enabled the Party to foster "leaders of the working class, political leaders of the working class."[11]

A closer look at the debates prior to the Thirteenth Congress, however, suggests that this was not the case. The Politburo largely controlled and supervised the preparatory work for the Thirteenth Congress. Politburo sessions discussed and decided most issues on the Thirteenth Congress in advance of other Party institutions, and Politburo decisions were subsequently passed to Central Committee plenums, which rarely reversed them. The Central Committee plenum then sent the decision back to the Politburo again for further examination and a final verdict.

The Central Committee plenum on February 3 resolved to convene the Thirteenth Congress in mid-May. *Pravda* published this decision at the end of February, prompting local Party committees to begin preparatory work immediately. But the notice in *Pravda* did not provide specific details, such as the exact date of the Congress, the agenda and the terms under which delegates were to be chosen and mandated to attend.[12] An Odessa Party official complained that the lack of detail created confusion among his committee.[13] The detailed program of the Thirteenth Congress still awaited confirmation by the

10 Graeme Gill, *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 67–68; and T. H. Rigby, *Lenin's Government: Sovnarkom, 1917–1922* (Cambridge, 1979).

11 *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, p. 121.

12 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 11–16.

13 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 1, l. 13.

Politburo. The Politburo discussed the agenda of the Congress in March, the resolution of which meeting was subsequently confirmed at the Central Committee plenum on April 2. At this plenum, the Central Committee entrusted the Politburo with the appointment of speakers to each item on the agenda in order to represent the Central Committee. The Politburo meeting some days later named all speakers, with the exception of the Central Revision Commission report, the nomination of whose rapporteur was left to the Central Revision Commission itself.[14]

The Politburo was also empowered to supervise almost all preliminary works for the Thirteenth Congress, including establishing individual commissions working on a particular issue, such as the youth program. The Politburo then examined and discussed these theses before the Congress opened; only a draft thesis approved by the Politburo could be presented to the plenary session of the Thirteenth Congress on behalf of the Central Committee.

The Politburo on the eve of the Thirteenth Congress comprised of six leading Party members – Kamenev, Alexei Rykov, Stalin, Mikhail Tomskii, Trotskii and Zinoviev – and three candidate members – Nikolai Bukharin, Mikhail Kalinin, and Viacheslav Molotov. In terms of planning the Party congress, Stalin, Kamenev and Zinoviev (or the troika) dominated the Politburo and thus they acquired exclusive weight over orchestrating Party debate at the Thirteenth Congress. The Politburo meeting on April 10 ordered Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev to examine the preparatory theses for the Congress. This meeting also made a significant resolution that once the troika agreed on each draft thesis presented by a speaker, it would be published in the name of the Central Committee. However, if there was any disagreement among the troika, the thesis would be returned to the Politburo for further discussion.[15] Although their alliance was nothing more than provisional and formed as a pragmatic counter to Trotskii, the troika operated as the actual executive body in formulating Party debate at the Thirteenth Congress.[16]

In terms of the center-local relationship, Moscow extended its intervention into local Party conferences where pre-Congress discussions took place and where the election of delegates was being debated. In the first place, the date of convening each local conference needed to be sanctioned by the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission. The Central Committee then appointed the members of the Central Control Commission to supervise particular local Party conferences.[17] The Politburo also drew up the contours of pre-Congress discussion for local and lower Party committees. Debates that might disturb Party unity were not permitted even at the regional level.[18]

14 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 1, l. 33.

15 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 1, l. 34.

16 *RKP(b): vnutripartiinaia bor'ba v dvadtsatye gody: dokumenty i materialy 1923 g.* (Moscow, 2004), pp. 128–131.

17 RGASPI, f. 17, op. 34, d. 241, ll. 133–134, and l. 175.

18 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 18–19; ll. 23–25; l. 27; and l. 30.

At the same time, the mounting central intervention was not only propelled "from above," but local officials also invited the direct involvement of Moscow in their conferences. The Central Committee ordered regional Party organizations to fix the date of their conferences immediately. In response to this, the Tambov *guberniia* (province) Committee asked Moscow to send a Central Committee member to the Tambov conference to speak on the international situation.[19] Similar requests flooded into the Central Committee on the eve of every local Party conference.[20] A request by the Donetsk Party Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party adopted a strident tone:

> Dear Comrades,
> The plenum of *Gubkom* (provincial committee) KPU decided to put "the report of the Central Committee of the RKP" and the speech on the "economic situation of the country and industry of Donbass" on the agenda of the Donetsk *Gubernii* Conference of KPU (May 6).
> On the second issue, we ask to send (Feliks) Dzherzhinskii to the Conference as the speaker (who represents VSNKh) [...].
> We also ask to send a Central Committee member for the report of the Central Committee of the RKP; we think that the Donetsk organization numbering up to 30,000 members deserves to hear this report.
> If the Central Committee cannot send two speakers to us, Dzherzhinskii would perhaps take both reports.[21]

The South-East bureau (Anastas Mikoian was in charge of the secretariat) stipulated that a Politburo member or a Politburo candidate be dispatched to its Conference for the report on the Central Committee of the Party.[22]

For local Party leaders, the presence of a senior Party member at local Party conferences helped galvanize local Party members into accepting the position of the Central Committee. For the troika and the Central Committee, on the other hand, intervention in local conferences was an essential means of controlling the composition of the delegates at the forthcoming Congress. The Central Committee considered the domination of the delegates who were obedient to the center as a bulwark against oppositionists' attempts to bring any dispute before the Congress session. Displaying discord at the Congress was regarded as something to be averted; the unity of the Party was to be prioritized over everything else.[23]

During the first months of 1924, an extensive anti-opposition campaign was underway, which labeled the opposition as the "liquidatorship (*likvida-*

19 RGASPI, f. 17, op. 34, d. 241, l. 194.

20 For example, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 34, d. 241, ll. 178–179.

21 RGASPI, f. 17, op. 34, d. 241, l. 169.

22 RGASPI, f. 17, op. 34, d. 241, l. 206.

23 Moscow also recognised that the lack of influence in the countryside was hardly remedied until then. Roger Pethybridge, *One Step Backwards Two Steps Forward: Soviet Society and Politics in the New Economic Policy* (Oxford, 1990), p. 290.

torstvo)" intending to disrupt the unity and exacerbate inner-Party struggles.[24] Although there was still strong support for Trotskii and the opposition, especially among the urban working class and university students in the Party discussions of 1923–1924, voices in support of the position of Trotskii and the opposition were restricted to factory and cell levels, and rarely represented at regional level discussions.[25]

By means of intervention from Moscow, local Party officials who supported the Central Committee became entrenched.[26] In the pre-Congress debate, most regional Party conferences approved draft resolutions and lists of candidate delegates, proposed by regional Party officials. Additional proposals were likely to be declined even without discussion, or sometimes by a majority of votes. At the Arkhangelsk Party Conference in mid-May, the chair of the meeting introduced three communists (Ia. Ia. Shigov, N. K. Kozlov and I. P. Solov'ev) as the candidates delegating Arkhangelsk at the Thirteenth Congress. The Arkhangelsk committee was entitled to send three delegates with a deciding vote to the Thirteenth Congress, and the Presidium of the Arkhangelsk Conference apparently presumed that the three people they nominated would be elected without any objection. However, a Conference participant proposed adding a certain Shilovoi to the candidate list and proceeded to take a vote on the delegates' selection. The result of the vote nevertheless confirmed how only a small number of oppositionists managed to attend the Conference in Arkhangelsk. Each of the three candidates proposed by the Presidium obtained more than 100 votes, whereas Shilovoi gained only ten votes with eighty seven votes against and twelve abstentions.[27]

Trotskii explained dwindling internal Party discussions in Party cells and the local organizations in his speech at the Congress. Trotskii described the Party discussions and the conduct of elections in the regional Party meetings as a "mockery of elections." He also said that Party meetings of higher organs adopted virtually the same rule: everything – the members of the presidium, the agenda, the resolutions and delegates to the congress – was adopted without any particular objection.[28]

Not only Trotskii but also many Party officials acknowledged that such procedures and practices in local Party organs restricted freedom of discussion and promoted discontent among ordinary Party members. However, the "mockery of elections" was fully utilized in the course of the pre-Thirteenth Congress elections. Only a few delegates from the opposition could eventually

24 *Bol'shevik* 3–4 (1924), pp. 12–14; "The Resolution of the Politburo," on December 17, 1923, published in *Pravda*, December 18, 1923, and reprinted in *RKP(b)*, pp. 347–348.

25 Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), pp. 209–220; Murphy, *Revolution and Counterrevolution*, pp. 164–167.

26 See the "Platform of 46" penned by the oppositionists in mid-October in 1923. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS* 6 (1990), pp. 186–193.

27 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 48, l. 1.

28 *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, pp. 147–148.

attend the Thirteenth Congress with a deciding vote, while an overwhelming majority of the delegates with a deciding vote supported the Politburo and the Central Committee. Trotskii, E. A. Preobrazhenskii and several members of the "Platform of 46" had only a consulting voice at this Congress.[29]

Party officials also developed institutional arrangements as an additional safeguard to dominate the delegates of the Thirteenth Congress. The Mandate Commission of the Party congress was entitled to supervise delegate selections and to identify "deficiencies" and "irregularities" in that procedure. The Mandate Commission was empowered to downgrade those "deficient" delegates from having a deciding vote to having only a consulting voice. It was even authorized to prohibit them from attending the Party congress altogether.[30] Furthermore, the Mandate Commission played an active role in selecting and supervising the delegates with a consultative voice. The Commission scrutinized the political reliability of each proposed delegate in advance, and only those who were given a guarantee by the Commission received a mandate.[31]

Ultimately, a total of 1,164 delegates registered, 748 of them having a deciding vote and 416 with a consulting vote. In comparison with the previous congresses, a substantial increase took place in the number of delegates who attended the Thirteenth Congress. The norm of representation (one delegate with a deciding vote per 1,000 Party members) was unchanged, but the Lenin Levy, which recruited approximately 240,000 new members contributed to the expansion in the total number of delegates.[32]

A notable change in the composition of the delegates was, in the first place, the fall in delegates younger than age thirty. Whereas young delegates consisted of a majority in the Party congress in the early 1920s (approximately 60 percent at the Tenth Congress) the proportion dropped to 27.4 percent (from 34.6 percent at the Twelfth Congress) among delegates with a deciding vote and to 29.7 percent among those with a consulting vote.[33] On the other hand, full-time Party workers dominated the Thirteenth Congress comprising 65.3 percent of the delegates with a deciding vote (an increase from 55 percent at the Twelfth Congress). However, of the delegates with a deciding vote, those with elementary education comprised around two-thirds, or 66.8 percent, while 17.9 percent and only 5.5 percent had a middle and higher education qualification, respectively. The dominance of Russian delegates (65.3 percent of the delegates with a deciding vote) and a paucity of female delegates (fifty one delegates, or

29 *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, pp. 713–766.

30 *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd RKP (b), 17–25 aprelia 1923 goda: stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1968), p. 768.

31 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 45, ll. 3–9.

32 It was reported that, by May 1, 1924, the precise number of new enrolments during the Lenin Levy was 241,591. RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 75, l. 1.

33 Takiguchi, "The Bolshevik Party Congress, 1903–1927," p. 89.

4 percent of the total) continued the pattern set at previous congresses.[34] These figures suggest that the Thirteenth Congress had more mature delegates, most of them engaged in Party work. Yet it largely consisted of those having a modest educational level with a continued preponderance of male delegates.

With these delegates, the main organizers of the Thirteenth Congress sought to transform the Party congress from an ad hoc affair with uncertain conclusions into a more institutionalized event. Haphazard alterations to the proceedings, which were not unusual in the early years of the decade, now became almost non-existent. The Thirteenth Congress barely tolerated individual and institutional requests concerning the proceedings of the plenary session. The Central Committee of the South-East bureau (under the tutelage of Grigorii Ordzhonikidze) made a request to the Politburo to include the nationality question on the agenda. It argued that the nationality question deserved to be discussed at the Congress in accordance with the wishes of the Party members. However, the Politburo declined to do so. The nationality question, which was one of the most important issues at the Twelfth Congress, was thereby excluded from the agenda of the Thirteenth Congress.[35] Bela Kun's insistent appeal to add a report from the Komsomol was also rejected.[36]

These measures enabled the Politburo and the Central Committee to control all proceedings at the Congress and to ensure delegates were obedient to the "Party line." They also promoted a metamorphosis of the Party congress from an arena of policy-discussion into a showcase projecting Party unity for the wider public. Firstly, the Party invited non-party members and journalists to the Thirteenth Congress on an unprecedented scale. The Party leaders were now assured that the Thirteenth Congress would display Party solidarity in a conspicuous way and therefore a larger number of Soviet citizens could thus directly experience Party unity. They also anticipated publicizing the unity of the Party through journalists' reports.

400 seats were reserved for guests including regional Party representatives, leading officials of the Soviet organs and Soviet republics as well as the Comintern, and a large number of Moscow Party members, including those from Sverdlov University and the *Rabkrin* (Worker-Peasant Inspection) of the Moscow Party Committee.[37] Forty seats were reserved for correspondents at first, but the Congress also invited an additional twenty five correspondents from the provinces.[38]

In addition to the delegates and guests invited to the plenary session, there were 130 people officially working for the Thirteenth Congress. They were divided into two categories. The first category comprising sixty people

34 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 75, ll. 1–7; *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, pp. 711–712.

35 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 1, l. 17.

36 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 20–21 and l. 28.

37 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 45, l. 9; and d. 50, l. 20.

38 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 46, l. 210; and d. 50, l. 23 and l. 96.

included the apparatus of the Central Committee, stenographers, typists, GPU guards, photographers, doctors attached to the Central Committee, members of the press and some others. The second group (seventy people) was made up of technical personnel, officials of the Congress commandant (*Komendatura s"ezda*), shop-assistants selling literature from kiosks and so forth. The former were allowed to visit all places at the Congress venue including the session hall, whereas the latter were not given the right to enter the hall where the plenary sessions took place.[39]

Furthermore, a special session of the Organizational Commission on May 20 discussed arrangements for shooting a film of the Thirteenth Congress. Avel Enukidze organized the film-makers and arranged for *Goskino* (State Cinema) and *Sevzapkino* (North-western Cinema) to shoot footage.[40] The Organizational Commission decided to film several scenes, including the arrival of delegates at train stations in Moscow, the backstage of the Congress, delegates in the canteen and the hall of the Congress, and the mass parades in Red Square.[41] Although available documents do not tell us where and to whom the film was to be shown, this investment explicitly represents an innovation. The Party congress sought to be recorded so as to be experienced not only by those who were present but also by the wider public. The film enabled the Party to reproduce the Party congress, which was no longer an exclusive affair.

Propaganda and the Extra-curricular Activities

The Thirteenth Congress demonstrated new departures in its attempts to organize "leisure" and other kinds of activities accompanied by the Party congress. The Party invested massive human and financial resources in special propaganda programs and exhibitions for the delegates. These extra-curricular activities were by no means simply "add ons." Propaganda was closely intertwined with the central issues discussed at the Thirteenth Congress. The propagandistic events aimed to imbue the delegates with a sense of Party unity and to demonstrate the achievements of the Party and the state. At the same time, a notable improvement took place in terms of hospitality for the participants. The delegates had access to a variety of services during their stay in Moscow so that they felt much less physical discomfort.[42] The Party enhanced the quality

39 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 46, l. 210; and d. 50, l. 23 and l. 96.

40 On the history of cinema productions and studios in the 1920s, see Denise J. Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses: Popular Cinema and Soviet Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge, 1992).

41 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 44, ll. 14–15.

42 Until the early 1920s, participation in the Party congress involved a great deal of hardship including painful travel to and from Moscow, a poor diet, and harsh living conditions in Moscow. See memoir accounts by participants of the congress, such as S. V. Shapurin, "Na s"ezde stroitelei budushchego," in I. I. Nikitin, ed., *Nezabyvaemye gody: sbornik vospominanii starykh chlenov Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza* (Iaroslavl', 1963), pp. 114–129 (the Ninth Congress, 1920); RGASPI, f. 71, op. 15, d. 468, ll. 179–182 (the Tenth Congress, 1921).

of treatment of the delegates, or "the techniques of hospitality" in the words of Paul Hollander. Although Hollander's study focuses on the treatment of foreign intellectuals who visited socialist states as guests, his perspective invites us to attend to the importance and function of hospitality which make visitors feel special and appreciated. For delegates to the Party congress, the techniques of hospitality constituted an indispensable element of the travel as it made it "psychologically difficult [...] to develop and express negative sentiments or critical thoughts toward his hosts and toward the society they represent."[43]

Delegates arrived in Moscow by rail. Upon their arrival, they enthusiastically organized a tour of the capital on their own initiative: some visited the Kremlin while others went to the Tret'iakov Gallery.[44] Most delegates from the provinces stayed at the Third House of the Soviets, located at the edge of a lane off Sadovo-Karetnaia Street. Since the early years after 1917, groups of delegates who arrived for political gatherings in Moscow often used this building as their accommodation in Moscow.[45] The lane upon which the House was located was thus renamed Delegate Street (*delegatskaia ulitsa*) in 1940.[46] The Mandate Commission of the Congress was also set up in this building.[47] *Rabochaia Moskva* reported that the House of the Soviets was "overcrowded" with more than 1,000 delegates on the eve of the opening.[48]

At their accommodation, all delegates received central Party and government literature for free.[49] Delegates with a deciding vote received a free copy of "the report of the Information Section on the Central Committee's work," written by Stalin, as well as the writings of Lenin. The central newspapers – *Pravda*, *Izvestiia* and *Ekonomicheskaia Zhizn'* – were delivered daily to them.[50] The delegates also enjoyed various services such as baths, tea, clothes, and hairdressing. A female delegate from Siberia even brought her infant child. When she was asked "for what purpose" by an annoyed colleague, she replied with a smile – "future orator."[51]

43 Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China and Cuba 1928–1978* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 16–17.

44 *Pravda*, May 20, 1924, p. 3.

45 For example, Alexandra Kollontai's reminiscences show that the delegates for the First All-Russia Congress of Working and Peasant Women in which 1,147 people participated on November 16–21 in 1918 had also stayed at Third House. A. M. Kollontai, "Priezd Lenina v petrograd," in *O Vladimire Il'iche Lenine: vospominaniia 1900–1922 gody* (Moscow, 1963), pp. 215–223 (pp. 221–223).

46 A. M. Pegova, ed., *Imena moskovskikh ulits* (Moscow, 1972), p. 65.

47 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 44, l. 5. The Third House also had rooms for Congress apparatuses such as the secretariat of the Congress, typists' and stenographers' section, editorial commission, film-shooters and so forth. RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 44, l. 9.

48 *Rabochaia Moskva*, May 23, 1924, p. 2.

49 This service was in operation at least since the Eleventh Congress in 1922. RGASPI, f. 48, op. 1, d. 31, l. 35.

50 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 44, ll. 1–7.

51 *Pravda*, May 20, 1924, p. 3.

The supply of these services was instrumental in making each delegate feel "important, appreciated and well liked."[52] The hospitality in the capital promoted positive inclinations towards the architects of the Congress and implanted a sense of privilege in the delegates. The Thirteenth Congress is a milestone in the development of hospitality for the delegates as the Party came to offer a wider array of services and assistance in the subsequent Party congresses, such as free medical care and free entry to several entertainments for delegates at the Fifteenth Congress in 1927.[53]

As far as the cultural aspect of the Thirteenth Congress is concerned, the most notable departure included several special propaganda exhibitions and mass spectacles that were arranged exclusively for the delegates. First, the Institute of V. I. Lenin arranged an exhibition displaying a copy of Lenin's office.[54] The exhibition was not a complete replica of Lenin's actual office in which Lenin had conducted his duties. His office was coordinated in an "American businesslike manner" with "Russian revolutionary scope," and the Congress delegates who wanted to learn "Lenin's style of work" were strongly recommended to visit and study it.[55] This exhibition was clearly meant to demonstrate that Lenin was "awesome and yet accessible" even after he died, which was the message emphasized in making the cult of Lenin.[56] It also reflected the appreciation Party leaders had for the American style of work and efficiency.[57] The Institute also screened films of Lenin in his lifetime and of his January funeral in its museum. Lenin's collected works, copies of his manuscripts, and a photo-collection were also distributed by prior registration.[58]

Other special exhibitions included one arranged by *Krasnaia Nov'*, a "thick" journal in publication since 1921, and another by the Russian Section of the Workers' International Relief, *Mezhrabpom*. Both presented panels with charts, revolutionary posters and photographs displaying each organ's achievements and contributions to Bolshevik state-building within and outside the Soviet Union, such as photographs of *Mezhrabpom* meetings abroad.[59]

Along with these exhibitions, the Thirteenth Congress arranged mass spectacles in Red Square. While mass spectacles had been frequently laid on for

52 Hollander, *Political Pilgrims*, p. 17.

53 Takiguchi, "The Bolshevik Party Congress, 1903–1927," pp. 200–208.

54 In 1931, the Institute of V. I. Lenin was merged into *Istpart*.

55 *Pravda*, May 28, 1924, p. 2.

56 Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives!: The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge; MA, 1983), p. 196.

57 Stalin wrote in 1924 that "the combination of Russian revolutionary sweep and American efficacy is the essence of Leninism in Party and state work." J. V. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 6 (Moscow, 1953), p. 196. See also Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton, 2000), pp. 36–37.

58 *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, pp. 34–35.

59 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 50, ll. 103–107. On *Krasnaia Nov',* see Robert A. Maguire, *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920s* (Princeton, 1968).

the delegates attending the Comintern Congress since the early 1920s, this was the first such occasion in the history of the Party congress.[60] The mass spectacles included a parade of Young Pioneers on the first day (May 23) and an aviation demonstration by the *Obshchestvo druzei vozdushnogo flota* (ODVF) on the day after the Congress closed (June 1), both in Red Square.[61] These spectacles were designed to reinforce a sense of unity by infusing the Congress delegates with the boundless ambition of the Party and Lenin's wisdom, and displaying the "progress and modernity" that the Communist regime claimed to achieve.[62]

On May 19, a joint session of the Organizational and the Mandate Commissions of the Congress tabled the original scheme for a parade of the Young Pioneer organization. It appointed Enukidze and some others as organizers and scheduled the parade to start at three p.m. on the first day of the Congress, immediately after the opening session.[63] In the following days, the Party extensively mobilized the members of the Young Pioneer organizations in Moscow and adjoining regions. The Moscow Party organs recruited children in schools and orphanages for this parade.[64]

The Young Pioneer organization as well as the Komsomol symbolized the future of the Bolsheviks; as a Party agitation journal proclaimed, "the struggle for youth – this is a struggle for the future."[65] Following the Lenin Levy, a great number of young people joined the Party.[66] All the same, these young recruits were seen, on the one hand, as one of the dangerous causes of degeneration of the Party. By 1924 three years after the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP), the decline in youth behavior occupied the center of attention in the "cultural front" of Bolshevism. The way of life of Soviet youth was thought to be in danger of succumbing to "bourgeoisification" under NEP culture.[67] The

60 The delegates of the Second Congress of the Comintern, held in Moscow in July 1920, left for Petrograd to view the open-air stage, *Towards the Worldwide Commune* presented by around 4,000 Soviet performers. Alfred Rosmer, *Lenin's Moscow* (London, 1971), pp. 65–68; James von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals, 1917–1920* (London, 1993), pp. 201–207.

61 The Young Pioneer organisation was established at the Fifth Congress of Komsomol in 1922. On the history of the ODVF in the 1920s, see Scott W. Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air: Aviation Culture and the Fate of Modern Russia* (Cambridge, 2006).

62 Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air*.

63 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 44, ll. 10–11.

64 *Rabochaia Moskva*, May 22, 1924, p. 7.

65 "XIII s"ezd R. K. P.," in *Pamiatka agitatora* 5 (1924), pp. 5–28 (p. 19). In lamenting the moral deterioration of the Komsomol, Bukharin stated in the Fourteenth Congress in 1925, "the only hopes now are the Pioneers, who must stand in the vanguard." *XIV s"ezd: Vsesoiuznoi kommunisticheskoi partii (b): stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1926), p. 824. Also quoted in Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921–1934* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 28.

66 On the impact of the Lenin Levy upon Soviet society, see V. S. Tiazhel'nikova, "Leninskii prizyv 1924–1925 godov: novye liudi, novye modeli politicheskogo povedeniia," in *Sotsial'naia istoriia: ezhegodnik 2008* (St. Petersburg, 2009), pp. 113–136.

67 Anne E. Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents* (Bloomington, 2000), pp. 22–26; Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, p. 92.

"youth issue" was regarded as one of the central problems at the Party's ideological front.[68] From an early stage of pre-Congress planning, "work among the youth" was therefore put on the agenda of the Thirteenth Congress.[69] At the same time, however, young Communists embodied the future of Communism. Soviet youth represented "a new type of person...with new relations, new habits, new aspirations, a new psychology and a new ideological system," as Bukharin asserted in his Congress speech.[70] In May 1924, it was also no less important to emphasize that young Bolsheviks could represent the wisdom and legacy of Lenin, now that Lenin himself was no longer alive. The Pioneers were seen as the "grandsons and granddaughters of Lenin." Rykov declared that "the Pioneer is true to the cause of the working class and to the covenants of Lenin."[71]

The Congress delegates walked from the Kremlin to Red Square. The Young Pioneers had already flooded the Square and stood as "the guards" of the delegates. Most delegates stood alongside the Lenin mausoleum, but the Presidium of the Congress walked round the Pioneers as the parade was on the move.[72] The members of the Presidium then came to the top of the mausoleum followed by celebratory speeches by Komsomol and Party leaders. First, the Komsomol representative, V. F. Vasiutin, announced that the Young Pioneer organization would bear the name of Lenin thereafter. During subsequent speeches by Party leaders including Kamenev, Bukharin, Rykov and Trotskii, the speakers and the Pioneers participated in a ritualistic call-and-response over and over again. – "Pioneers, be prepared! (*bud'te gotovy*)." Answer: "Always prepared! (*vsegda gotovy*)."[73] Bukharin extolled the Pioneers stating that they would become witnesses of a new epoch "when the red banners of Communism will flutter all over the world." Trotskii declared that the delegates to the Thirteenth Congress, Komsomol members and the Pioneers were all the great legacy of Lenin.[74] Finally, the Congress delegates were allowed to see the embalmed corpse of Lenin as the first visitors to the mausoleum.[75]

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68 *Bol'shevik*, 3–4 (1924), p. 11.

69 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 1, l. 23.

70 *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, p. 515; and Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia*, p. 15.

71 Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives!*, p. 144; *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, p. 708. Rykov's remark is quoted from Albert P. Pinkevitch, *The New Education in the Soviet Republic* (New York, 1929), p. 234. Pinkevitch was one of the education specialists in the Academic Council of Narkompros (People's Commissariat for Education) in the early 1920s. See Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, p. 19.

72 *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, pp. 33–34 and p. 834. See also the picture entitled "The RKP and the youth of Leninism," in *Ogonek*, 24, June 8, 1924, n/a.

73 "Always prepared!" in *Ogonek*, 23, June 1, 1924, front cover. On this ritual, see Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility,* p. 27.

74 *Pravda*, May 24, 1924, p. 4.

75 Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives!*, p. 194.

The other mass spectacle took place in the morning of June 1, the day after the Congress session closed. It was an air show by the ODVF. The ODVF was created in 1923 as a "voluntary" organization seeking to propagate aeronautics and the air force among the Soviet population.[76] The ODVF flew nineteen airplanes in cooperation with many Soviet institutions. The squadron on this day, as the Young Pioneer organization did, bore the name of Lenin.[77] Scott W. Palmer has shown that the airplane exemplified the "modernization, advancement, and political legitimacy that simultaneously promoted the party's urban interest," so that it was considered to be the symbol of *smychka* between workers and peasants by "drawing the village closer to the city."[78] As the Thirteenth Congress discussed with considerable attention, *smychka* between the workers and the peasants was one of the most important issues of the day. Zinoviev's statement at the Congress that "the party is still too much an urban party, we know the country too little" demonstrated the center's concern about establishing a steady foundation of the Party authority in the countryside.[79] In fact, as Palmer shows, the aeronautic festival by ODVF's agitational squadron had evoked a successful response in villages during 1923–1924. Technological progress exemplified in the development of aviation became a powerful propaganda tool in the struggle against backwardness and in legitimizing seven years of Soviet power. As Trotskii wrote in 1926, the technological and scientific development was believed to have the potential to obliterate popular belief and religious preoccupations.[80]

These mass spectacles in Red Square inculcated the achievement and the future of the Party and the state with the delegates, represented by the airplane and the Pioneers, respectively. The delegates were also privileged to enter the mausoleum and to see Lenin's body first-hand. Participation in the Congress thus provided many important privileges that made the delegates feel "special" and "important, appreciated and well liked."[81]

Ritualizing Party Debate

The delegates of the Thirteenth Congress experienced the plenary session in different ways from the preceding congresses. Among other things, the Thirteenth Congress deprived the plenary session of essential policy discussion. The fading of genuine debate from the plenary session was apparent for most participants. When Kalinin joked about the paucity of debates at the plenary session, only then did the laughter of the audience follow.[82]

76 *Pravda*, June 1, 1924, p. 2. See also Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air*, p. 86.
77 *Pravda*, June 1, 1924, p. 2.
78 Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air*, p. 126.
79 *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, p. 94.
80 Leon Trotskii, *Radio, Science, Technique and Society* (London, 1974).
81 Hollander, *Political Pilgrims*, p. 17.
82 *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, p. 434.

Besides the careful selection of the delegates at the local Party conferences, the central architects of the Thirteenth Congress established a rigid structural control lest any disagreement arose at the plenary session. The Presidium of the Congress was appointed beforehand by the Politburo and the Central Committee. A Central Committee commission led by Molotov drew up the candidate list of the Presidium on the eve of the opening of the Congress. The commission nominated thirty-five people including all members and candidates of the Politburo. The Central Committee approved the list while a core bureau of six people – Molotov, M. M. Lashevich, P. A. Zalutskii, Emanuel Kviring, I. A. Zelenskii and N. A. Uglanov – sought to increase the number of candidates to forty.[83] This bureau, led by Molotov, paid particular attention to the balance between the regions, and distributed additional posts of the Presidium to two delegates from Transcaucasus, including Sergei M. Kirov, one from Turkestan and Kyrgyzstan as well as some members of central institutions, which created a candidate list of forty-one. S. S. Zorin won the seat of the Presidium ultimately, by a motion of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk delegation with the support of the Moscow and Leningrad delegations at the opening session. The Presidium of the Thirteenth Congress thus consisted of forty-two people.[84]

The selection of the Presidium had hitherto been accompanied by a huge disagreement between a number of groups and that raised intense discussion. At the Tenth Congress, for example, the Workers' Opposition and the Democratic Centralists in particular were keen to win seats in the Presidium because securing a seat on the Presidium was vital to managing the proceedings of the Congress and being involved directly in its outcome.[85] As the delegates comprised predominantly favorites of the central leaders, the Thirteenth Congress witnessed almost no debate or objection to the candidate lists of the Presidium proposed by the central Party bodies.

The Presidium was at the helm of the proceedings of the plenary session. It timed speeches and breaks between the sessions when necessary. More importantly, the Presidium assumed the appointment of people to working sections and commissions. Such working bodies of the Thirteenth Congress included a section on the work in the countryside; the organizational commission; the committee on the Central Control Commission; the commission on the press; the sub-commission on *Zhenotdel*; the commission on trade and cooperation; the commission on *Agit-prop* (agitation and propaganda); and the commission on youth.[86] Behind the scenes, the working commissions and sec-

83 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 44, l. 13.

84 Em. Iaroslavskii was among the Presidium candidates at first. In the end, however, he took a post at the secretariat of the Congress in the end. *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, pp. 4–5. Personal details of each candidate are in *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, pp. 713–765. The Central Committee intended to include Zorin in the Congress secretariat. RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 49, l. 112.

85 *Desiatyi s"ezd: stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1963), pp. 3–5.

86 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 57, l. 153.

tions discussed drafted theses presented to the plenary session (which were in fact the product of the Politburo and the Central Committee supervision on the eve of the Congress), and refined them into draft resolutions. The Central Committee members were directly involved in these working sections and assumed leading roles in them. For example, Molotov was chair of the organizational commission in which nearly 150 delegates were involved. Molotov played a vital role in producing the draft thesis of the commission while he controlled the discussion at the meeting.[87] The working commissions subsequently presented their draft resolutions to the plenary session and the delegates approved them with few objections.[88]

A no less vital organ than the Presidium in supervising the plenary session was the *senioren-konvent* (council of elders), which represented one-tenth of the delegates with a deciding vote, and served as an assembly of regional Party delegates. The *senioren-konvent* was first established at the Twelfth Congress "in the interest of the regulation of the organizational work of the Congress and of securing the best conditions of information to the delegates."[89] The *senioren-konvent* echoed the practices of the Imperial Duma, which established it in 1907 (the Second Duma) as an assembly of regional representatives to manage inter-fractional conflicts. The Imperial Duma borrowed the term from the German Reichstag but it was interchangeably called *sovet-streishin*.[90]

The first meeting of the Bolshevik *senioren-konvent* at the Twelfth Congress discussed part of Lenin's dictated letter – the question of nationalities or "autonomization" – two days after it opened (April 18).[91] Although a detailed picture of this *senioren-konvent* meeting remains unclear from available sources, Trotskii hinted in his letter to the Central Committee (on October 23, 1923) that some of the participants at the *senioren-konvent* meeting had suggested making Lenin's letters public while keeping silent about his criticism of particular Party leaders.[92]

The Thirteenth Congress reformed the *senioren-konvent* and granted it greater authority.[93] Behind the scenes the *senioren-konvent* meeting played a crucial role in linking the Congress to regional Party organizations and in preventing any potential disquiet at the Congress. The composition of the *senioren-konvent* therefore took regional proportion into consideration. Regional

87 RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 12, ll. 104–117.

88 Molotov's motion regulating the holding of a regional conference twice a year was approved with unusually many voting against it (322 against 246). *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, pp. 581–583.

89 *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd*, p. 768, and Gill, *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System*, p. 143.

90 V. A. Demin, *Gosudarstvennaia duma Rossii (1906–1917): mekhanizm funktsionirovaniia* (Moscow, 1996), pp. 96–97.

91 *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd*, p. 821.

92 *RKP(b)*, p. 229.

93 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 44, ll. 12–13.

and district Party organs were divided into socio-geographical groups, that is, central-industrial; Volga; central-agricultural; the western; and the northern region. The chief Party committees, such as Moscow, Leningrad and Ukraine, were granted the right to nominate their candidates to the *senioren-konvent* individually.[94]

The exact roles and functions of the *senioren-konvent* appeared to remain vague to many delegates. Before the opening of the Thirteenth Congress, one worker-delegate suggested renaming it "the expanded presidium (*rasshirennii presidium*)" mainly because the tasks of the *senioren-konvent* were duplicated with the Presidium, and also "it is difficult to pronounce."[95] In spite of such forewarning from one of the participants, however, the *senioren-konvent* evolved into an important caucus and exercised special tasks at the Thirteenth Congress. The members of the *senioren-konvent* discussed important issues before being presented to the plenary session, and top secret information was delivered exclusively to them in closed meetings. On the eve of the elections to the central Party institutions such as the Central Committee, the Central Control Commission, and the Revision Commission, the *senioren-konvent* took the initiative in preparing each candidate list on these central bodies.[96] During the early 1920s, Lenin chiefly involved himself in the election of the central institutions.[97] This was now in the hands of the *senioren-konvent* but only in accordance with the Politburo and the Central Committee's preference. Not surprisingly, all nominees to those executive bodies won a majority of votes at the election at the plenary session.[98]

By these means, the plenary session had little political confrontation and produced an image of Party unanimity. Participants in the Congress already felt this at the opening session, as there was a notable lack of dispute over the Presidium of the Congress. The correspondent of *Rabochaia Moskva*, S. Uritskii, wrote that the opening sessions of the Thirteenth Congress showed that the Party was more united than ever before. This article also underscored that the Party could complete enormous tasks.[99] Zinoviev's political report on the second day repeatedly stressed that it was imperative for the Party to achieve unity based on Leninism.[100]

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94 *Pravda*, May 23, 1924, p. 5. Already by 1924, some local Party organs had set up the *senioren-konvent* for their local conferences as an administrative body in order to improve organisational management of political gatherings. Anastas Mikoian, *Tak bylo* (Moscow, 1999), pp. 183–184.

95 *Rabochaia Moskva*, May 21, 1924, p. 3.

96 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 57, l. 122.

97 Takiguchi, "The Bolshevik Party Congress, 1903–1927," pp. 87–131.

98 The *senioren-konvent* played an important role at the congresses in the early 1930s as a key organisational and administrative body. See RGASPI, f. 58, op. 2, d. 40, l. 60 (the Sixteenth Congress in 1930).

99 *Rabochaia Moskva*, May 24, 1924, p. 1.

100 *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, p. 108.

Yet, this unity based on Leninism meant more than a unity of Party members. The Congress now also sought to display unity and *smychka* of the entire Soviet state, especially between the Party and non-party people. For the first time, non-party people were invited to the Thirteenth Congress and even permitted to speak to the delegates. In Boris Bazhanov's cynical words, this arrangement showed "the country that the workers were grateful to the Party for its wise direction" and this became a formal "fraudulent spectacle" of the Party congress thereafter.[101] Some non-party delegates addressed the opening session, and the twelfth and the final sessions also included speeches by non-party delegates. All these were welcomed by the Party delegates with applause, and the speakers pledged to help the Communist Party for the future of the state, expressing their appreciation for the honor of being invited to the Party congress.[102] The fact that the non-party delegates could make an address from the rostrum proved a significant departure. Prior to this, the involvement of non-party members in Party discussions was almost unthinkable, not least because the matters discussed were so crucial to the Party and the state that the leadership hoped to keep everything confidential.[103]

These non-party delegates, many of whom were from factories, brought gifts to the Thirteenth Congress, such as a model of a motor engine and a portrait of Lenin. In comparison with the 1930s and 1940s, gift-giving to the Party leaders was a much less common practice in this period.[104] However, the workers brought their gifts to the Party congress as a symbol of the economic growth of the state and of their "labor," an act testifying to their commitment to the Bolshevik government.[105]

By the same token, the Central Committee reports became more a kind of performance than a means of stimulating discussion. The speakers representing the Central Committee were welcomed by applause. In particular, Stalin was hailed by an ovation as he walked towards the rostrum to give his report on the organizational issue of the Party.[106] Here he launched an attack, albeit

101 Boris Bazhanov, *Bazhanov and the Damnation of Stalin* (Athens, 1990), p. 96.

102 For example, see *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, pp. 586–587.

103 At the Tenth Congress, for example, Trotskii made a request to ban guests of the Congress from the session devoted to the Red Army discussion and to impose a ban on the disclosure of any information and documents of the Congress in order to "give the Congress a factual picture of what we possess in the way of an army." Jan M. Meijer, ed., *The Trotsky Papers 1917–1922*, Vol. II (The Hague, 1971), p. 397.

104 For the gifts by delegates to the congress in the early 1930s, see RGASPI, f. 58, op. 1 d. 44; *Pravda*, January 18, 1934, p. 6; RGASPI. f. 59, op. 2, d. 40, ll. 60–63.

105 Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!*, pp. 83–105; Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov, "On Heterochrony: Birthday Gifts to Stalin, 1949," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12 (2006), pp. 355–375 (p. 361). In the 1930s, gift-giving to Stalin became an act of "counter-gifts" by which people thanked Stalin for giving Socialism to the Soviet citizens. Ssorin-Chaikov, "On Heterochrony," p. 361.

106 *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, p. 110.

not very harsh, on the opposition. He said that the opposition was making mistakes by exaggerating the discord of the Party and they ought rightly to be described as "aliens (*chuzhestrantsy*) in the Party."[107]

While the troika put all their efforts into consolidating their positions at the plenary session, Trotskii was oddly silent and dormant except for a few occasions. He confined himself to a speech against the resolution at the Thirteenth Party Conference that labeled the opposition as "a blatant petty-bourgeois deviation."[108] R. M. Hodgson, a British commercial agent in Moscow from 1921, attended most parts of the Thirteenth Congress as a British representative. His report about the Congress described the oppositionists as "unrepentant, though submissive."[109]

Although Trotskii was still an influential figure in the Party, he was unable to dominate the Thirteenth Congress as successfully as the troika. The result of the Central Committee election testifies to this. As usual since the Tenth Congress, the election of a new Central Committee took place based upon the slate, which had the names of fifty three candidates. The Presidium and the *seniorenkonvent* had elaborated the slate in advance. Every delegate with a deciding vote had a right to recommend any Party member by crossing out the name on the slate and adding another's name. Trotskii's name was on the slate, but he only secured 661 votes out of 746, only slightly better than the last candidate, Georgii Piatakov, with 635 votes.[110] All the same, it made little difference to the election of the new Central Committee. Most delegates supported all proposals presented in the name of the Central Committee. The runner-up in the Central Committee election was Karl Radek with only fourteen votes.[111]

Some Party organs presented their own proposals on the composition of the new Central Committee, but the Presidium and the Central Committee declined most of these appeals. The Vladmirskii delegation's proposal to include N. M. Os'mov (Party member since 1907) from their organization was not taken into account.[112] Even prominent figures such as Smidovich and Nadezhda K. Krupskaia were ruled out of the new Central Committee in spite of an appeal by the Party's working committee on the workers and the peasants.[113] The

107 *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, p. 127.

108 *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, pp. 158–159.

109 A copy of the report was forwarded to the Indian government in June 1924, and is available in the British Library, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collection, India Office, L/PS/11/248/P. 3046.

110 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 53, ll. 1–2. Carr incorrectly notes that Trotskii was "51st on the list of fifty two successful candidates." *Interregnum, 1923–1924*, p. 372.

111 For the number of the votes to the Central Committee election, RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 53, ll. 1–2. The list of the new Central Committee members and the candidate members are in *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, pp. 681–682. This does not contain the number of votes, however.

112 Os'mov was elected to the Central Control Commission. *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, p. 683.

113 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 53, ll. 126–127.

result of the Central Committee election conformed to the design of the Party leadership.

If the plenary session did not present important information of the Party to the delegates, how and where could they receive it? Available sources show that the Party established an appropriate arena behind the scenes. The Party leaders provided the most contentious information at a closed session to which only the members of the *senioren-konvent* were invited. The session was assigned to hear Lenin's letter to the Congress including the statement known as his "Testament." The Testament strongly criticized Stalin's personality and suggested replacing him as the General Secretary.[114] It would critically damage Stalin's career if the Testament were made public at the Party congress.[115]

On May 21, the Central Committee plenum discussed how to deal with Lenin's Testament by a motion from Krupskaia who was adamant about the need to follow Lenin's will that the letter ought to be read aloud. The preliminary notice of the Central Committee plenum was distributed to all Central Committee members and its candidates. But it only mentioned that the plenum was arranged to discuss general issues; it did not refer to Lenin's Testament.[116] Before the plenum, the troika agreed to save Stalin in this instance by suppressing the Testament from open debate at the Congress. Kamenev and Zinoviev chaired the Central Committee plenum and it eventually authorized Stalin to remain as the General Secretary by a majority of votes – allegedly, thirty votes to ten.[117]

This Central Committee plenum also forbade any mention of Lenin's letter and the Testament at the plenary session, but it would be read only to members of the *senioren-konvent* at a secret meeting. In this secret meeting, no part of the documents was distributed in any written form, and the central officials even forbade participants from taking notes on the content of the Testament. For members of the *senioren-konvent,* it entailed delivering orally the purport of

114 V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 36 (Moscow, 1966), pp. 593–611.

115 The issues surrounding Lenin's Testament are beyond the scope of this article. Lars T. Lih provides an excellent analysis on the backgrounds of the Testament, on the way in which it was handled by the Party leaders, and on the subsequent "Eastman affair" in Lars T. Lih, "Introduction," in Lars T. Lih, Oleg V. Naumov and Oleg V. Khlevniuk, eds., *Stalin's Letters to Molotov, 1925–1936* (New Haven, 1995), pp. 18–27. The classic works on the Testament include Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed, Trotsky: 1921–1929* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 137–138; Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle* (London, 1968). V. A. Sakharov, *"Politicheskoe zaveshchanie" Lenina: real'nost' istorii i mify politiki* (Moscow, 2003) argues the Testament is a forgery.

116 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 1, l. 47.

117 Bazhanov, *Bazhanov and the Damnation of Stalin*, pp. 75–76; Max Eastman, *Since Lenin Died* (London, 1925), p. 28. See also, Leon Trotskii, "On Testament," in Russell Block, ed., *Lenin's Fight against Stalinism: V. I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky* (New York, 1975), pp. 30–60 (p. 34). Originally published in *New International*, July-August, 1934. Trotskii's account is not entirely reliable, though. For instance, he apparently confuses the Central Committee plenum with the *senioren-konvent* meeting held later.

the Testament to their representing Party bodies.[118] The Society of Old Bolsheviks criticized this practice and urged Stalin to send a copy of the Testament to all delegates in order to understand its content accurately.[119] However, a large part of the Testament was not published until 1926 and the postscript which criticized Stalin did not see the light of day until 1956.[120]

One of the delegates from Ukraine attested that Lenin's Testament was conveyed by a member of the *senioren-konvent* to the rest of the delegates. It provoked vehement discussion among many delegations. The Ukrainian delegation also had a "stormy discussion" on the Testament, and some central leaders such as Zinoviev and Kamenev turned up at that meeting in order to defend Stalin.[121] The Ukrainian delegate wrote that most delegates accepted Stalin's words promising "to correct his deficiency" which Lenin indicated in the Testament. Moreover, it was thought indispensable to keep Stalin as the General Secretary in the struggle with Trotskii and the opposition.[122]

The Thirteenth Congress was orchestrated in accordance with the design drawn up by the troika and many Central Committee members after Lenin's death. The Congress came to an end with a speech by Zinoviev in which he stressed again that the unity of the Party in line with Leninism was achieved. The delegates chorused L'Internationale once more. These final performances underscored the meaning of the Congress: the Party achieved unity by overcoming a difficult situation.[123]

Conclusion

In the history of the Bolshevik Party congress during the first decade of the Soviet regime, a notable shift in arranging the debate and organizing the extra-sessional activities arose at the Thirteenth Congress in May 1924. The Thirteenth Congress demonstrated few stirring debates on its floor, and the Politburo, in particular Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev, established administrational and organizational mechanisms of control by which potential disquiet was prevented from arising at the plenary session.

Archival materials show us, under the initiative of the troika, the nature of the Party congress was deliberately altered. Party discussion became of secondary importance and the troika extensively orchestrated the scenes of the

118 Bazhanov, *Bazhanov and the Damnation of Stalin*, pp. 76–77.

119 RGASPI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 57, l. 187.

120 Isaac Deutscher maintains that Max Eastman pushed Trotskii to launch an attack against Stalin by reading the Testament while he was speaking from the rostrum. Nevertheless, Trotskii did not follow Eastman's suggestion and kept his silence on the Testament until some years later. Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed, Trotsky*, p. 140.

121 *Pravda*, May 26, 1964, p. 2.

122 *Pravda*, May 26, 1964, p. 2.

123 *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd*, pp. 594–595.

Thirteenth Congress in order to display Party unity to the wider Soviet public. The formal appearance of the congress turned it into a site of Party propaganda and its practices and functions became very different from the congress when Lenin was alive.

The previous studies are silent on the extra-curricular activities of the Thirteenth Congress but these activities constituted an important part of it especially as it was held so soon after Lenin's death. The Thirteenth Congress, which staged mass parades in Red Square and arranged special extra-curricular activities for delegates, also marked a significant watershed in the development of the propagandistic aspects of the Bolshevik congress.[124] The Party congress no longer operated as a forum for Party debate but became a showcase of Party unity. As inner-Party struggle intensified in subsequent years, the Party congress exercised these practices in an ever more comprehensive manner.

124 Takiguchi, "The Bolshevik Party Congress," pp. 200–208.