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On Reauthorization of Members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the RCP (B)
during Transition from the Policy of "War Communism" to the New Economic Policy in the First
Half of the 1920s

Abstract

The article analyzes relationship that developed in the first half of the 1920s between two elected central party structures, the Central Control Commission and the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the RCP (B), during acute socio-political crisis in Soviet Russia. The country was engulfed by peasant uprisings and workers' strikes; struggle of groups within the ruling RCP (B) escalated. The leaders of the ruling party saw crisis recovery in rejection of the "war communism" policy and transition to the New Economic Policy. Special attention is paid to the fact that it was G. I. Zinoviev, who, in V. I. Lenin's absence at the Council of People's Commissars (due to illness), initiated a number of initiatives on division of functions and powers of the Politburo members of the Central Committee of the RCP (B) on May 18, 1923, which marked the beginning of gradual transfer of powers from the Council of People's Commissars (Soviet government) to the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the RCP (B). This is evidenced by the published document "On the future work of the Politburo and its cooperation with the Central Committee," which was prepared by G. E. Zinoviev and sent to General Secretary J. V. Stalin. Drawing on documents from the fonds of the Russian Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), the author explores causes of confrontation that emerged in that period in the highest party echelon, such as gradual departure from active political activity of the leader of the RCP (B) V. I. Lenin, his search for his successor; emerging struggle of members the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the RCP (B) for political legacy of the dying leader; attempts of G. E. Zinoviev, L. D. Trotsky, and J. V. Stalin to gain additional powers in solving most important state affairs. It follows from the documents that V. I. Lenin and his associates from the Politburo of the Central Committee of the RCP (B) attracted administrative resources of both the Central Control Commission of the RCP (B) and the organs of the Soviet special services (CHEKA—GPU—OGPU) to achieve their goals. The article suggests that G. E. Zinoviev's proposal (document no. 1) on reauthorization in the Politburo of the Central Committee of the RCP (B) came from the party leader V. I. Lenin in order to weaken positions of two most active rivals for supreme power in Soviet Russia: L. D. Trotsky and J. V. Stalin. According to the author, in result of this "multimove game" G. E. Zinoviev, most personally loyal to Lenin, if "youngest" in terms of experience in the Politburo of the Central Committee, became eligible to claim the role of his legitimate successor. From a formal point of view, this goal was achieved by G. E. Zinoviev, because it was he who, during the redistribution of powers between the members of the Politburo of the Central Committee, was entrusted with issues of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs and representing Soviet Russia at the international arena (document no. 2).

Keywords

Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the RCP (B), V. I. Lenin, Central Control Commission of the RCP (B), G. E. Zinoviev, J. V. Stalin, L. D. Trotsky

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