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Report of Interrogation : No. 5860 of

13 November 1945
I/O : Capt. HALLE

P/W : HILGER, Gustav
Rank : Counsellor of Embassy
Unit : Foreign Office
Capt'd : 19 May 1945, Salzburg.

Veracity : Believed reliable.

Report : Answer to Periodic Intelligence Questionnaire; MIS Sep-Oct 1945

Question USSR # 1 : With the dissolution of the National Defense Committee, where is the focus of control in the Soviet executive ?

Answer # 1 : In order to answer question # 1, P/W has to describe the new Soviet Constitution of 1936 in brief.

I. The Constitution of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

The highest government authority in the USSR is the Supreme Council, which consists of two chambers : the Union Council ("Sojusny Sowjet") and the Council of Nationalities ("Sowjet Nationalnostei"). The members of the Union Council are elected by the population by general and direct ballot. One delegate represents a population of 300,000. All persons of both sexes who have passed their 18th birthday and are in possession of their civil rights can vote. The Council of Nationalities consists of national representatives of the 16 Union Republics as well as the autonomous republics and the autonomous territories. P/W believes that the 16 Union Republics are represented by 25 delegates each. They too are elected in similar fashion by the population of the respective republics and territories.

According to the principles of the constitution the elections for the delegates for both chambers of the Supreme Council are free and secret. Nevertheless, the Soviet system of elections is entirely different from the democratic one and this for two reasons:

1. Only the Communist Party is permitted in the USSR; it stands above the government; it is the guardian of the political system. Its directives are binding on governmental decisions and measures.
2. The local party organizations in conjunction with other local authorities put up the list of candidates who are to be elected by the population. No name can be included in these lists without the approval of the Party. This means that no one can be elected unless he is acceptable to the Party.

The above is sufficient proof that the so-called democratic system of elections in the USSR is entirely fictitious. What good is it for the population to be entitled to general, direct and secret voting privileges, if the delegates have to be elected from a limited number of candidates who are prescribed by the Party, that is, from above?

The consequence of this system is that the two chambers of the Supreme Council are the willing tools of the agency in which the power of the Party is concentrated. This agency is the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR. Stalin is the absolute dictator of the USSR.

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as P/W described in detail in his treatise of 30 Oct 1945 the Politburo.

P/W was a regular spectator at the sessions of the Supreme Council with the participation of both chambers, as well as at the separate sessions of the Union Council and the Council of Nationalities. These sessions took place in Moscow in the Kremlin in the former Great Palace of the Tsar. Two great stately halls were rebuilt and put together and a hall was thus created which could hold 2000 participants.

These sessions always took place according to a definite scheme. The various people's commissars made speeches which were simply reports of their activities in their respective fields and which were always received with hearty applause. After that, certain delegates who had been selected and instructed for that purpose had the floor. These men always supported 100% the statements of the people's commissars. In order to preserve the appearance of free discussion the speakers were permitted when discussing administrative, economic and financial questions, to make some insignificant suggestions and amendments. These proposals always were along the line of the attitude of the respective people's commissars. No discussion took place, let alone criticism of the measures of the government. The scheme always worked out perfectly and there was never a mishap.

After listening to the reports of the people's commissars and the speeches of the delegates, resolutions were passed approving the actions of the executive branch, accepting the proposed budget, etc. The sessions were concluded with the election of the Presidium of the Supreme Council by acclamation.

This presidium fulfilled the functions of government during the periods when the Supreme Council did not convene. This included such functions as ratification of treaties, the making of important nominations, particularly for the posts of people's commissars, the bestowing of decorations, etc.

The Soviet constitution does not establish any distinction between the legislative and executive branch of the government. Thus the Supreme Council is according to constitutional law a parliament as well as the highest government authority.

The Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council, Kalinin is therefore nominally the Chief of State of the USSR, but in practice he has no more to say than the Supreme Council itself which is merely a decorative forum simulating ability and not without success an alleged participation by the peoples of the Soviet Union in the government.

The Council of the People's Commissars is an executive organ which corresponds to the cabinet in other countries. At the same time it fulfills certain legislative functions.

The number of people's commissars corresponded until 1936 approximately to the usual number of ministers in other countries. But during recent years, the Council of the People's Commissars has grown to be a body of about 40 persons, because independent Commissariats for all branches of the national economy including fishing, milk production, meat production, etc. were created in addition to the existing important Commissariats such as foreign affairs, defense, foreign trade, treasury, interior affairs, etc.

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The post of Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, that is so to speak, Prime Minister or head of the government, was held by Molotov until 3 May 1942, at which time Stalin took over the post. He did not do this in order to strengthen his position of power - he did not have to - but rather in order to anchor his position with respect to the world according to constitutional law and also to show his own people that he was prepared to take full responsibility towards the outside world as well as towards Russia.

II. The defense Council was created after the German attack on the USSR in order to improve the coordination of the various agencies of the government and adjust them to the exigencies of war. P/W does not recall the wording of the proclamation on the foundation of the defense council. The outstanding features of this council were its being composed of the most important members of the Politburo who at the same time administered the various departments such as People's Commissars, and Stalin's presiding over it. The defense council was therefore an agency which during the war exercised absolute power de jure and de facto. But since the creation of the defense council was a war measure its dissolution is a logical consequence at the conclusion of the war.

Its functions, as far as they had legislative character, will revert automatically to the Council of the People's Commissars as a whole and to the various individual Commissars.