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### KUOMINTANG PARTY CONGRESS

The policies of the Kuomintang in China, as indicated at the Sixth Party Congress in May, apparently aim at meeting strong domestic and foreign demands for constitutional government in China without sacrificing power to other Chinese political parties through the formation of a coalition government. The election of a new Central Executive Committee (CEC), the scheduling of a Constitutional Assembly, and the adoption of resolutions for broad social reforms do not imply a change in party policy. Even a redistribution of factional control within the Kuomintang became unlikely when the "CC" clique and its right-wing allies won the CEC elections. The Chinese Communists and the Chinese Democratic League are protesting the decisions of the Kuomintang Congress. They claim that a truly representative assembly cannot be convoked until all China's parties are legalized and until free elections can be held throughout the country.

#### *Party Congress Organization and Elections for the CEC*

When in session the Kuomintang Congress is the supreme legal authority of the party, subject only to the veto of Chiang Kai-shek, who serves as the party's Director-General as well as President of the Chinese Republic. The organization of the Congress and the method of selecting delegates to it are fixed by the CEC, which is the highest party organ when the Congress itself is not in session. Subject to revision by the Congress, which normally meets about once every two years, the CEC is empowered to issue high policy directives and to elect the presidents and vice-presidents of the five branches—the Executive, Legislative, Judicial, Examination, and Control Yuans—of the Chinese Government.

In theory the 731 Congress members are delegates elected from various regional and functional divisions of the party. In practice, however, the delegates must be approved by the Party Ministry of Organization, and they are frequently appointed as a result of political agreements between factions within the Kuomintang. While as a large unwieldy group the Congress scarcely can do more than ratify policies already formulated by party leaders, its decisions influence the limits within which the future course of party action will take place.

Since it was impossible to hold regular party elections in more than a few areas of China, the CEC elected in 1938 was able to appoint an unusual number of delegates to the May Congress, including many representing Japanese-occupied provinces. Alignments within the Sixth Congress were already determined in part by the pre-convention struggle for power. Reports indicated that the "CC" clique tried to gain control

15

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of the Kuomintang Preparatory Committee, which was set up to make plans for the Congress. In any case the "CC" clique played a dominant role in determining representation through one of its leaders, Party Minister of Organization Chen Li-fu.

Many of the elected delegates were said to be opposed to the "CC" clique, but they were outnumbered by appointees. Besides geographical representation, which included some overseas Chinese, the Congress received delegates from party organizations in various occupational and institutional categories such as universities, labor unions, factories-and-mines, and the Army. The university delegation consisted largely of chancellors controlled by Minister of Education Chu Chia-hua. The Army delegation was almost evenly divided between supporters of the more moderate Minister of War General Chen Cheng and reactionary Chief of Staff General Ho Ying-chin.

Elections for the CEC, one of the chief functions of a party Congress, were held for the first time since the Congress last met in 1938. The new CEC, as the ruling body of the Kuomintang in the critical years ahead, will determine Chungking policies on such vital issues as internal political unity and reform, and relations with the USSR and the United States. However, little new blood was admitted to the ranks of party power in the recent "elections." Sun Fo and Madame Sun Yat-sen were retained, probably for the sake of the appearance of loyalty to the party's founder. The Chen brothers, leaders of the "CC" clique, by their use of patronage and strong political organization assured themselves a continuing control of the Kuomintang which may be sustained even after the new constitution is adopted.

The most serious opposition to "CC" domination of the Kuomintang came from a coalition headed by War Minister General Chen Cheng and Education Minister Chu Chia-hua, which was able to muster a strong minority among the Congress delegates. This collaboration between the more liberal elements in the Chinese Army and those civil government officials who are bitterly opposed to the Chen brothers may remain as a significant force in China's political life.

#### *Proceedings at the Party Congress*

The convening of the Congress on 5 May for the first time in seven years suggested that the Kuomintang was aware of a need to reconsider the party's position in respect to China's unresolved political problems. Besides declaring that China's most urgent task is the strengthening of her armed forces for the speedy destruction of the Japanese enemy, the Congress emphasized the need for continuing amicable relations with the United States, Great Britain, and the USSR in reconstructing the post-war world. Sino-Soviet cooperation was particularly stressed "because of the long common frontier and many contacts between the two nations." Although claiming no territorial ambitions for China, the Congress reiterated China's stand in the Cairo Declaration calling

for restoration of Chinese territories lost to the Japanese and for the independence of Korea. Resolutions favoring the conclusion of commercial treaties based on equality and reciprocity and the realization of local autonomy for Mongolia and Tibet were passed.

The most important act of the May Congress, recommended by President Chiang, was to schedule for 12 November 1945 the convention of a National Assembly to ratify China's draft constitution. The representative character of the Assembly will be strongly qualified by the CEC's authority to determine its exact powers and membership, and in turn by the "CC" clique's domination of the CEC. Much discussion has already been focussed on whether or not new elections should be held. Since the Assembly was originally scheduled to take place in 1937, many of the delegates elected at that time have died or gone over to the puppet government in Japanese-held areas. If no new elections are held the delegates will have been elected eight years prior to the Assembly's convocation, and political groups which may have arisen since 1937 will go unrepresented in November. Apparently the CEC favors recognizing the validity of the old delegates and vacancies will probably be filled either by supplementary elections or simply by CEC appointments. Any elections would of course be restricted to Kuomintang territory.

Furthermore, the National Assembly will not be a constituent assembly in the Western tradition with powers to frame the Chinese constitution itself. Even the Assembly's power to amend the draft constitution, already unilaterally drawn up by Kuomintang leaders, will be limited by CEC directives. The draft constitution as it stands has been assailed by Chinese liberals for the excessive appointive powers it vests in the President, who would not be chosen by popular vote but by an elected National Assembly, meeting only one month in every three years. Actually, the constitution, when ratified, probably will serve only to legitimize present one-party, Kuomintang rule.

Without relaxing their demands for a popular coalition government to be formed immediately, Chinese Communist leaders have clearly stated that they do not subscribe to a constitutional government created during the war, which they believe would only consolidate and protect Chungking's present degree of power. They have even gone so far as to hint that if the Assembly is held in November, the Kuomintang will thereby be preparing an excuse for civil war. The qualified Congress resolution which promised that Chungking would seek a "political solution" to the Kuomintang-Communist impasse included no concrete proposals. The resolution stated that a settlement would be possible only "as long as the discussions do not adversely affect the progress of our war against aggression or endanger the state."

Whether the Chinese Democratic League will be won over by the Kuomintang to support the November Assembly will perhaps depend on whether the member parties of the League are given legal status in time to affect the composition of the Assembly. Meanwhile, the League has

joined the Communists in opposing the November Assembly and in demanding the immediate establishment of a coalition government formed by a conference of all parties in China. Only a National Assembly chosen in free elections, they declare, can have the authority to draft and ratify a constitution.

Another phase of the May Congress work consisted of passing resolutions for broad social reforms in accordance with Sun Yat-sen's third principle concerning the "people's livelihood." The Congress went on record as favoring a very advanced social program which included a minimum wage scale, a 48-hour working week, tax reforms, and annual vacations with pay for Chinese farmers and laborers. The widespread publicity given the resolutions have led many to believe that the Kuomintang was about to launch an advanced social program. Many times in the past twenty years, however, the Kuomintang has passed similarly enlightened legislation without ever putting it into execution. The resolutions passed this time may again be no more than a gesture advancing an alternative program to the one offered by the Communists or the Democratic League parties.

Certain resolutions passed by the May Congress would seem to constitute relinquishment by the Kuomintang of much of its traditional power. They call for the abolition of party branches in the Chinese Army and in schools, the election of municipal, county, and provincial councils to serve as "full-fledged representative organs," enactment of a law to give legal status to political parties other than the Kuomintang, and the ~~transfer to the government of party administrative departments such as the Ministry of Information.~~ Chiang and the other Party leaders apparently want to make a show of terminating the period of political tutelage which Sun Yat-sen prescribed to prepare China for constitutional democracy.

The May Congress suggests an example of how Kuomintang leadership expects to operate under a constitution. Though parliamentary in form, the Congress was organized and run from the top. All acts of the body stemmed from the executive planners. While this did not prevent interpellations by delegates not controlled by the "CC" clique, reform agitation was effectively ignored by the "CC" group. To retain its power the party leadership aims to strengthen the Kuomintang organization through substantial recruitment of able political workers. The Kuomintang probably will not have much success in enlisting strong agrarian support in the absence of a concrete program for revising the land tenure and taxation systems. The present ruling group in the Kuomintang appears to have no intention of promulgating thoroughgoing administrative reforms within the government, nor substantial economic and political reforms that might give the party a firm popular base. Instead it seems fixed upon pursuing a course of utilizing conventional administrative and political controls to maintain power, supplemented by an attempt to increase and extend party organization on the lower echelons.

Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek exerted a dominating influence over the Congress proceedings and is said virtually to have dictated the committee elections and passage of resolutions. Some protest was raised against these tactics by a number of the more liberal delegates, particularly followers of Sun Fo. The "CC" management of the Congress, however, prevented these criticisms from leaving any real mark on its proceedings. During the sessions as many as 450 interpellations are said to have been made by delegates assailing the Kuomintang regime's policies.

*Press Reaction*

Newspapers in Free China gave considerable editorial attention to the Congress both before and during its convention. The Kuomintang-controlled press uttered laudatory conventional statements on the party, but hinted at its deteriorating position and urged that self-criticism was necessary for its revitalization. The *Central Daily News* declared that measures should be taken to maintain the Kuomintang as China's leading party even under constitutional rule, and that the party must carry on "the duty of national reconstruction" even after political power is restored to the people. The absolute prohibition of any "actions that cause a breach in the diplomatic, military, financial, communications, and currency unity of the country" was also demanded.

Independent newspapers spoke directly and without evident restraint on the chief political and economic issues confronting the government and the party. Demands were made for new elections to the National Assembly in November, for modification of the nine-year-old draft constitution, and for relegation of the Kuomintang to the status of a political party equal among others. The *Ta Kung Pao* openly declared that seventeen years of unchecked Kuomintang rule in China was too long and that the Kuomintang had failed to practice Sun Yat-sen's principles concerning the people's power and the people's livelihood, confining itself to the third principle of nationalism.