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The Communist University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV): Its Establishment under the Comintern in 1920s-30s

Abstract

The article reviews major milestones in the history of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV) and its role in formation of the Soviet-centric political avant-garde in some countries of the East. The creation of this educational institution was connected with the resolution of the Central Committee of the RCP(b) of January 21, 1921 On Organization of the Eastern Courses under the People's Commissariat of Nationalities (Narkomnats), later enshrined in the decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (April 21, 1921). The university firmly established itself within the vast network of international institutions of the Comintern. Although it had never been quantitatively dominant in the institute, the Sector 'A' (or the Special Sector, or the Inosektor, as this department for international students was known in different periods) was crucial for the development of its complex system, as the policy of the 3rd International formed the core of its activities. The modest historiography on the history of the university in the Soviet period describes its development as overcoming difficulties in on-going forward movement. A more comprehensive picture emerges in the documents from the KUTV archival fond stored in the RGASPI (fond 532). 12,000 files of the fond include about 10,000 personal files of students and teachers. They show the sinuosities of the KUTV history from its organization to high noon of its activities and to its end in consequence of the restructuring of the party education system in the USSR in 1938. The university accumulated unique experience of training almost illiterate people to become middle-ranking executives in a very short time. A considerable part of the future leaders of colonial countries passed through the university. This Comintern coordinated process secured Soviet national interests. The university also laid the basis for Soviet Oriental studies. All this does not allow to call the university a purely propagandistic institution for 'export' of the world revolution and prompts to look behind utilitarian ideological clichés. The article studies its unique experience in forming the national elites of the Oriental countries, which were to become communist champions of world revolution, and thus provides a professional-level picture of the university organization and management that recognized special nature of the multiethnic student body. It introduces statistical and personal data on the graduates that prove the efficiency of the university. The study may be of interest to political technologists, who determine mode of modern universities' interaction with the Oriental countries.

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Keywords

Communist University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV), Comintern, the party school, national interests, teaching methodology, Department 'A' (Inosector).

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