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## COMMUNIST AREA

0616

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USSR: Party

12 June 1970

### THE 16TH CONGRESS OF THE KOMSOMOL OF THE USSR

Summary: On 26 May, the 16th Congress of the Komsomol of the USSR opened in the Kremlin. In spite of good pre-Congress "organization" and the usual amount of manipulation, critical voices were to be heard, especially during discussions of working conditions and the treatment of youth in Soviet industry.

The spirit and life apparent at the Congresses of various Soviet organizations depends as a rule on the political leadership prevailing in the Soviet Union at any given time, rather than on the organization itself. The 16th Congress of the Soviet Komsomol was thus just as different from its forerunners as Khrushchev was from Brezhnev and his bureaucratic associates. During Khrushchev's years, all such meetings were held under a catchy slogan such as "Corn!" or "Compete with the USA!" Brezhnev's Komsomol functionaries came up with the following slogan for this year's Congress: "The Alliance of Science, Technology and Production -- The Guarantee for our Success." Most of the discussion participants referred back to this slogan in the course of their quotations from and praises of the Party leader as a "guide" into a better future. Each of the speakers was obviously filled with a sense of moral responsibility to refer back to Brezhnev's great wisdom. As a result, a number of the sort of problems which are normally treated at Komsomol Congresses was not dealt with at all or mentioned only briefly. It appears that even the Party leadership was taken aback by this development, as very little was

said about military-patriotic education, a focal point for Komsomol propaganda under most circumstances. Brezhnev's "discovery" was from beginning to end the central theme of the Congress. In his speech, he referred to the Komsomol's task to "expand and strengthen" this alliance and "to find ever newer ways in which to attract all boys and girls to cooperation in this work." (1) Even the necessity of an offensive battle against bourgeois ideology" took a back seat to the problems of "Brezhnev's alliance."

The main speech of the Congress was delivered by the First Secretary of the CC of the Komsomol of the USSR, Ye.M. Tyazhelnikov. He paid special attention to the Party's and Komsomol leadership's desires concerning students: as they would be tomorrow's leaders in society, they must have a perfect command of Marxist-Leninist scientific theory. While the students' interest in social sciences has increased in recent times, Tyazhelnikov was still not satisfied. The level of political education among the Komsomol members in general was criticized at the Congress, where it was said that many of them had not undergone any political schooling at all.

Tyazhelnikov then spoke of the "diversionary activities" of bourgeois ideologists among the youth of the Soviet Union and other socialist states. He noted: "Our youth is ideologically firm, politically steeled, an active, conscious force in Soviet society and unconditionally faithful to the teachings of the great Lenin and the maternal communist party." Continuing with his warnings, he said:

The Komsomol cannot resolve itself to individual expressions of scepticism, apolitical behaviour, a contemptuous attitude toward work, learning and the responsibilities of being a citizen, and to a veneration of bourgeois customs and habits. We are responsible for every young person. All Komsomol organizations are bound to improve considerably their ideological work, to conduct an offensive battle against bourgeois ideology and to perfect the class and revolutionary education of the up-coming generation. (2)

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(1) Komsomolskaya Pravda, 27 May 1970.

(2) Ibid.

He described the contributions of the youth to an increase in production efficiency, while stating that deficiencies in this sector were still apparent. For example, he noted that "a portion of the young workers is not fulfilling norms, violating work and production discipline, not improving its general educational as well as cultural-technical level, not [improving] its professional ability, and is not being thrifty with the peoples' property. In spite of this, however, many Komsomol committees have taken no measures against this."

According to Tyazhelnikov's information, about 3 million youths leave middle school every year, and most of them are forced to go into industry. He expressed the hope that they are being taken in hospitably by the Komsomol organizations in the plants, construction sites, sovkhoses and kolkhoses, as well as in the higher schools. Thus, he avoided treating a delicate problem, one which is presently under discussion in the Soviet Union: while nearly all of the middle school graduates want to study further, only about one-fourth of them find room in the higher schools. Most of them are set against going into industry immediately, and are especially against the menial jobs, which are still of ultimate importance to the Soviet economy. (3)

#### The Truth Will Out

Before going into the discussion at the Congress, it is necessary to stress that the delegates to the meeting were by no means representative of the Komsomol as a whole. The chairman of the mandates commission of the Congress, B. N. Pastuchov, said in his report that 70.9% of the delegates were either candidates or members of the Communist Party. (4) According to the statutes, however, the Party and the Komsomol are separate organizations, even if the number of Party members in the Komsomol has been increasing considerably in recent years. This very fact had a great influence on the atmosphere at the Congress. The wishes of the Party and its functionaries were expressed often, while the problems of the 27-million member Komsomol often had to take a backseat.

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(3) See, e.g., an analysis by the Candidate of Economic Sciences, V. Perevedencev, in Literaturnaya Gazeta of 27 May 1970.

(4) Komsomolskaya Pravda, 28 May 1970.

Critical tones were, however, to be heard, although not from Komsomol functionaries but from the working youth. For example, the tractor driver V.T. Slepova was one of the few speakers who attempted to inject a note of humor into the otherwise stone-faced assembly. She noted that it was not very difficult to come by a wedding dress nowadays, but to find working clothes for a female worker was quite a problem. A Rostov fashion house had decided to jump in and fill this gap. It wanted to design overalls for women tractor drivers. They appeared on 8 May, Women's Day;

But Comrades! I cannot tell you what would happen here in this room where I to have come to the podium in this work suit. Four people my size would have fit in it. We were relieved when they told us - send it to the steam laundry once and it will fit! I wash it specially every day, but it's only wearing out! (5)

Sarcastically, she pleaded for a review of the traditional division of labor, which results in the men having closer contact to the technological achievements and improvements. If the tractor drivers complain that tractor driving is too difficult for women, she said, then perhaps they should consider if perhaps pick and shovel work isn't also too difficult for the "weaker sex." She asked that women be considered in the development of agricultural technology, reporting on a rumor going around among women tractor drivers that in a Dnepropetrovsk factory, special tractors for women were being developed. She appealed to the Ukrainians, should they have trouble finding enough people to test drive the new models: "We'll test the new models down to the last bolt!"

A loom operator, L.N. Shevchenko, also dealt with the problems of working women and discrimination against them in day-to-day industrial life:

Our people have always valued the attempts of women to create beautiful things. But apparently those who should be paying attention to the beauty of women's work and making it easier feel differently about us. Were the spindles really created with a love of women in mind, [spindles] which are so uncomfortable to operate? In

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(5) Ibid.



the course of one shift, one has to bend over about two thousand times to knot strands which have broken, so that it is hard to stand up straight at the end of a shift. The weavers don't have it much better. We have to cover several kilometers without looms each day and work under constant pressure. (6)

She too points the finger at the designers of these marvelous inventions and at the Ministry for Light Industry, saying that they should allow science and technology's achievements to filter down into industry and get rid of the out-dated machines.

In Tyumen, the center of the enormous Siberian natural deposits, many Komsomol members were ordered to work in the fields; thus the speech of the First Secretary of the Territorial Committee of the Komsomol in Tyumen, G.I. Shmal, deserves mention. He said, for example, that no consideration is given to Tyumen's extreme weather in the ordering of work clothes, that the construction of dormitories, sporting fields and cultural centers is progressing at a snail's pace, and that the mechanical equipment and technology is not geared to Tyumen's climate. "It is difficult," he said, mentioning problems of a more personal nature, "to find a good book at our place. One cannot always get a well-tailored suit or a modern haircut." He also complained that one could seldom hear a good lecture or a concert by well-known artists. (7)

The First Secretary of the Kray Committee of the Komsomol in Krasnodar, V.G. Syrvatko, reported on deficiencies in livestock production. He remarked that young people are not in the slightest interested in this sector:

That is also understandable. Even today we have no uniform system of machines and mechanical equipment for farms, [and] in the projection of livestock buildings, large mistakes are made. (8)

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(6) Ibid., 31 May 1970.

(7) Ibid., 29 May 1970.

(8) Ibid., 31 May 1970.

Two years ago, the Ministerial Council of the RSFSR decided to introduce the rank of "agricultural master," a move which the youth applauded. The technical schools in the provinces were to confer this title. However, neither the Agricultural Ministry of the RSFSR nor of the USSR, nor the State Committee for Technical Education bothered any further about the plan; no educational steps were taken to prepare for it. Syrvatko said that education for livestock workers was extremely primitive and generally consisted of a short practical introduction to the chores involved. His conclusion: "I think we should finally put an end to this!"

#### Educational Matters - Practically Ignored

If one reads the notably dull reports and documents from the Congress, one is struck especially by the discrepancy between Brezhnev's "Alliance of Science, Technology and Production" and the lack of objective discussion on the realization of such an alliance. The Party leadership was obviously more interested in the propaganda effect of the Congress' slogan than in concrete discussions of the problem. This is especially curious as there were several quite competent personalities in the pedagogical field present at the Congress. The Minister for Peoples' Education in the USSR, M.A. Prokofev, listed several positive and negative factors and complained, for example, of the sinking number of pupils in the evening and correspondence schools. However, the real problems were touched upon neither in his speech nor in that by the Chairman of the State Committee of the Ministerial Council of the USSR for Technical Education, A.A. Bulgakov. The Minister for Higher and Middle Technical Education in the USSR and Academy member, V.P. Yelutin, dealt with the deficiencies in the teaching of Marxism-Leninism to the students: he noted that a considerable number of student Komsomol members had poor grades in social sciences. No mention was made, however, of the most important and pressing problems which in fact have a great deal to do with Brezhnev's "Alliance" program.

The tendency to ignore such questions possibly has to do with a fear that critical remarks could be voiced in the course of such a discussion, something which is not exactly to the Party's liking. This year, problems have arisen especially in connection with the introduction of compulsory 10th grade education, with which the Soviet Union is not prepared to cope. All sociological reports note that the attitudes of middle school graduates have changed enormously in the last few years; even those from the provinces are not interested in studying further and are generally unfavorably disposed

towards industrial activities. This problem will have to be overcome by the Soviet leadership and by the Komsomol, but it was not even touched upon at the Congress.

### Personnel Changes in the Komsomol Leadership

The number of members in the newly-elected Bureau of the CC of the Komsomol of the USSR was increased from 16 to 19, and 10 of the former members were re-elected. The number of candidates to the Bureau remained the same. Of the former Bureau members, four were advanced to Party work and one to "other" tasks.

The following is a list of the newly-elected members and candidates to the Bureau:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Former Position</u>
Arutyunyan, S.G.	First Secretary of the Armenian Komsomol CC
Ivanov, V.T.	Chairman of the Review Board of the Komsomol of the USSR
Pugo, B.K.	First Secretary of the Latvian Komsomol CC
Kolesov, A.I.	Unknown
Kupreev, S.A.	Unknown
Matveev, L.I.	Unknown
Masharakin, P.V.	Unknown
Sheshtakauskene, S.M.	Unknown
Yaroshovets, V.S.	Unknown

### Candidates

Patiashvili, D.I.	First Secretary of the Georgian Komsomol CC
Podrez, V.I.	First Secretary of the Belorussian Komsomol CC
Kolmogorov, V.P.	Unknown
Roganov, A.M.	Unknown

Three of the nine secretaries in the Secretariat were relieved of their duties due to transfer to Party duties. The newly-elected Bureau members, Arutyunyan, Matveev, Pugo and Yaroshovets were also elected to the Secretariat.