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COMMUNIST AREA

USSR/35

● USSR: Internal affairs
27 February 1969

THE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

SUMMARY: In several republics, conferences took place in January during the course of which the most important activities of the MVD were discussed; to wit: the battles against the illegal possession of weapons and, above all, against traffic violations

The newly created Ministry of Internal Affairs has shown great activity on the internal as well as the external level. Concerning the former, meetings of the leading functionaries of the MVD have recently taken place at which the new tasks of and the new demands on the militia organ were discussed. A report on such a meeting in the CC of the Belorussian CP reveals the seriousness with which local authorities and the CC of the CPSU view the activities of the newly organized MVD. (1) At this meeting, the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Belorussian SSR, A.A. Klimovskiy, delivered a speech "On the Further Strengthening of the Soviet Militia" and the regional directors of the internal affairs offices reported on the state of public order in their spheres of responsibility.

Such meetings also took place in other republics in January. While they were primarily designed to improve the activities of the militia, the attempt was also made to win over the support of public opinion and the social organizations for the militia.

Few Automobiles, But Many Problems

The Soviet Union appears nearly at the end of the list of the ratio of automobiles to citizens in Europe, while bus and truck traffic is somewhat greater. Because of the different

(1) Sovietskaya Rossiya, 9 January 1969.

structure of the traffic in the Soviet Union, the problems of traffic there are also different than in the other European countries.

In January the question of traffic was discussed in detail in the daily press and in the meetings referred to above. In several republics, resolutions had already been passed in the last few years to increase legal pressure on traffic violators. Drunken drivers were being more closely watched, although -- as is claimed in one article (2) -- Soviet law is still quite liberal in this matter. Drunken drivers of automobiles, buses, motor-cycles, scooters, trolley cars and, strangely enough, also of street cars, lose their licenses for one to two years. If, in the two years after the return of the driving license, the driver is again discovered to be driving while intoxicated, the license is again suspended for a period of two to three years. In exceptional cases, the automobile which he is driving, if it is personal property, can be confiscated and sold, the driver being allowed to buy it back himself. The last procedure is also taken against persons who own a motorized means of transportation but no driver's license. If a driver commits within a period of one year more than two major offenses against the vehicle code, his license can be suspended for a year, or he must pay a penalty of 30 rubels. Those who are responsible for accidents in which death is involved are treated even more harshly. Not only the driver himself, but also the office or organization responsible for him, are called to order.

The MVD is trying to push through a stricter control of traffic, in order to punish traffic violators more severely, especially in the case of drunken drivers, and also in order to acquaint the population better with the vehicle code.

Hunting Down Illegal Weapons

At the moment, a campaign is under way in the Soviet Union against the illegal possession of fire arms. According to the laws presently on the books, only members of the Society of Hunters and Fishermen may possess weapons. The organizations which sell weapons may only sell them to persons who can present a membership card in this organization; the type of weapon and the quantity of ammunition sold is registered on this card. During the season, a hunter may buy 700 grams of powder, and if organizations own the weapons, 250 grams are allowed. Although the sale of weapons is strictly controlled, and the resale to third parties strictly forbidden, illegal possession of weapons is a wide-spread phenomenon in the Soviet Union. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has decided to register all owners of weapons by the middle of this year. All of those owners who have committed even the most minor offenses against safety regulations or the legal use of weapons will lose their hunting licenses and their weapons will be confiscated. (3)

(2) Zarya Vostoka, 15 January 1969.

(3) Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 15 January 1969.

The militia organization is permitted to confiscate hunters' weapons if the hunter in question has committed an "alcoholic offense," even when not in possession of a weapon. If the weapon is confiscated, it must be sold to the organizations which sell weapons, and the former owner must pay to have it returned. (4)

The activities of the MVD confirm that the reformation of this ministry was connected with the ineptitude of the former Ministry for the Protection of Public Order. It has now come to light that many questions of organization have not been solved in the new organization. For example, at the regional level there exist territorial and transportation organs of the militia between which there does not exist sufficient official contact. During the meeting in Minsk mentioned above, the militia leaders reported on this. At the same time, there are more serious problems with which the militia must cope, for example the poor housing conditions of militiamen and their irrational distribution in cities and rayons.

(4) Zarya Vostoka, 15 January 1969.