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USSR: Party

● 5 April 1971

BREZHNEV CENSORED IN "PRAVDA"

Summary: Two important passages from Brezhnev's 24th Congress speech, as delivered on radio and TV, were cut from the Pravda version, presumably by Politburo decision. One showed that 74% of industrial output now comes from Group A, while the other was Brezhnev's remark that Lenin's definitive instruction to the Party laid down the duty of Group A to work for Group B, not for its own sake. Both deletions appear to have been at the behest of the heavy industry lobby.

The editors of Pravda, presumably on orders from the Politburo, have censored out of Brezhnev's speech, as delivered live on radio and TV, two of its most important passages. (1)

Both these passages were a part, and evidently an important part, of the General Secretary's attack on the "metal-eaters," which was, in terms of domestic politics, the highlight of his speech.

The first passage censored out by Pravda reads in the monitored text:

At the 23rd Congress, as you recall, it was noted that there has arisen in the USSR a certain disproportion in the development of branches producing the means of production (Group A) and consumer goods (Group B), which has complicated the solution of the task of increasing national prosperity. Therefore in the 8th Five-Year Plan it was laid down that a considerable rapprochement of the rates of growth of both subdivisions should take place. In this connection, of course, the absolute volume of production of Group A greatly exceeds, even today, that of Group B. The share of producer goods in total industrial output in 1970 was 74%, while the share of consumer goods was 26%.

The omission of this passage by Pravda might either be due to strong objections being raised by the "metal-eating" faction in the Politburo (and Central Committee?) or it might possibly have been caused by the feeling of the majority that it was unwise publicly to disclose the extent to which Soviet industry at present is slanted in favor of Group A. In either case the censoring of the General Secretary's speech to the Congress is an unprecedented event, which may well be of great political significance.

The second censored passage is only one sentence in length, but it is at least equally striking. Brezhnev had just reminded the heavy industry lobby that, in terms of Leninism, it was in the wrong. Here is his radio text:

Permit me in this connection to recall the words of Lenin, who said:

"In the last analysis the manufacture of producer goods is necessarily connected with the manufacture of consumer goods, because producer goods are not made for their own sake, but only because ever more and more producer goods are required in the branches of industry making consumer goods (vol. 4, pp. 160-161).

"This, comrades, is the definitive instruction for our party of our leader."

[Emphasis supplied].

The latter sentence has been emphasized here, not only because it clearly reveals where Brezhnev stands, but also because it was dropped by Pravda. Evidently other members of the Politburo (and C.C.?) either do not agree that this was Lenin's definitive instruction, or at the very least, they think it most unwise to say so publicly at this moment in political history.

None of this can be taken to mean that Brezhnev has been defeated by his steel-eating lobby, but it does indicate the strength and vigor of the opposition, and its tenacity in trying to limit Brezhnev's pro-consumer orientation. Those who believe in the dogma of priority for heavy industry in growth rates played a major part in bringing Khrushchev down. There is now substantial evidence that they would wish to repeat their achievement against Brezhnev, if only it were possible in terms of their support within the Politburo. At present a victory for them is improbable, but after these two deletions it can no longer be regarded as impossible.

R.F.G.

(1) See Pravda, 2 April 1971, and Radio Moscow, 30 March 1971.