

COMMUNIST AREA

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1660

USSR: Trade Unions

29 December 1972

ANOTHER ASPECT OF THE 50-YEAR JUBILEE: MORE WORK, MORE DISCIPLINE

Summary: The November plenum of the Central Council of Trade Unions of the USSR discussed how to improve the education of the workers. The following paper reviews the major points raised on this occasion.

The second plenum of the Central Council of Trade Unions of the USSR (TsSP) was held on 22 and 23 November this year in the Moscow Workers' Palace of the Soviet Trade Unions. The agenda included: further improvement of the popular educational and cultural work of the trade-union organizations in light of the decisions of the 24th CPSU congress (reporter: TsSP Secretary Mrs. L.A. Zemlyannikova); the 1973 budgets for the trade unions and for the state social security (reporter TsSP Secretary S.A. Shalayev). The Chairman of the TsSP, A.N. Shelepin, also took part in the discussion.

The documentation on this plenum (1) contains no surprises. It merely confirms that the trade unions intend to continue in their roles as "workers' watchdogs" in the future. The political education that the Soviet leadership now wants to enforce at all costs with trade-union help highlights: more work, more discipline!

Mrs. Zemlyannikova complained repeatedly in her report about difficulties among the rank and file of the trade-union organizations. She criticized the state of the competition now being held in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Soviet state under the slogan "15 Union Republics - 15 Work Sentries."

According to Mrs. Zemlyannikova, this socialist competition should make an important contribution to the tightening of work discipline. But, in practice, much is left to be desired:

Many trade-union organizations are, however, still taking no measures to further socialist competition. Often, valuable experiences and initiatives in enterprise branches are completely unknown; not always are the increased demands that life, the economy and practice make on socialist competition considered in socialist competition. All this lessens the educational role of the competition. (2)

In her report, Mrs. Zemlyannikova called for the creation of a healthy "moral atmosphere" in the enterprises, departments, etc. By this, she meant that the public should be informed about "idlers," "evidence of waste," and "thieves." But, at the same time, she confirmed that the workers' morals were not in very good shape:

Unfortunately, we must also mention the fact that the struggle for strict observance of communist morals and for consolidation of labor and production discipline has not become an object of daily concern by any of those trade-union organizations or any of the worker collectives. The majority of cases of work negligence is in enterprises of the wood, coal, food and gas industries, construction and building materials industries, chemical machine construction, metallurgy and other industrial branches. (3)

Mrs. Zemlyannikova was mainly upset that the struggle against the violators of discipline was waged only "formally," without the participation of the work collectives.

Still another evil was mentioned: alcoholism. A joint decision was taken by the CPSU CC, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the Ministerial Council of the USSR on combatting this. Many trade-union organizations have taken various concrete measures to this end, but there are also trade-union organizations which, as Mrs. Zemlyannikova says, are waging the struggle against drunkenness only "formally," and which "confine themselves merely to putting their decisions on paper, but, in practice nothing really happens."

During the plenum, the state of propaganda and cultural activity was given special treatment. The latter was linked closely with the organization of leisure time. Both Mrs. Zemlyannikova's report and several remarks during the discussion reveal that there are very great deficiencies here. Several participants in the discussion reported that the workers' interest in various cultural events has dropped sharply in recent times. The plenum decision also referred to this negative phenomenon:

In the "red corners" of the enterprises or sections, the number of circles and participants in artistic lay groups has recently dropped. The state clubs' cultural sponsorship of the rural ones often has a merely formal character and does not have the necessary influence on improving popular cultural work among the workers in the countryside. (5)

A short example should help to explain better the workers' cultural interests. The party wants all cultural activity within the trade union to serve a single goal, the education of the workers, meeting the demands of the "contemporary phase in the construction of communism." This means that in literary works, plays, etc., a new type of worker should be held up for emulation. But, as it has turned out, there are currently two extreme leanings in this field which are giving the party and the trade unions a headache. One is connected with the cult of the past. The repertoire of many artistic collectives, according to Mrs. Zemlyannikova, "is limited to the distant past." The second leaning is to the West "in the selection of plays and in sports." But the most important thing is missing: the glorification of work.

This development of the workers' cultural interests is also connected with the artistic collectives' aversion to Soviet authors and composers. Mrs. Zemlyannikova illustrated this interesting situation in the cultural sector with one concrete example:

In this connection, the entire program of the vocal and choral collective of the Murmansk area in preparation for the jubilee foundation of the USSR is characteristic. There, 18 out of 28 collectives have included not one single work by composers of the Union Republics and no songs of the people of the USSR in their repertoire. (6)

This problem was also treated in great detail in the plenum decision.

Attempts to beef up ideological-educational work have recently been apparent in various social areas, and are directed quite pointedly toward the intelligentsia. The trade unions must deal with an extremely difficult problem, because they include a numerically very strong group. The number of trade-union members in 1971 was over 93 million. During the plenum, the causes of the various negative phenomena among the workers were not discussed at all. That is perhaps the most interesting thing about the meeting. The trade-union officials ran through their paces, which meant maintaining silence about the real reasons for the deficiencies, because, in most cases, the underlying causes have little to do with the "bad character" of the workers or other subjective factors.

(1) Trud, 23 and 24 November 1972.

(2) Ibid. 23 November 1972.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Ibid.

(5) Ibid., 24 November 1972.

(6) Ibid., 23 November 1972.