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CFW Report No. 31 -- USSR

(April 8-21, 1952)

SUMMARY

The Georgian SSR gets a verbal trouncing from its Party boss Mgeladze who charges the Republic's Central Party Committee with the major responsibility for the recently-exposed corruption, speculation, and a variety of other anti-State practices.

Much of the output on Party activities from other sources deals with the unsatisfactory political education of the Communists and the continued reluctance of officials to regard criticism and self-criticism as a sine qua non. Communist and natural science propaganda is said to be backward in Estonia and Latvia.

In agriculture, recurrent statute violations and the poor performance of machine-tractor stations still claim official attention. Much pressure is exerted to speed up the reclamation of arid land. There is some emphasis on better living and working conditions for the field workers as an added incentive to better production.

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PARTY ACTIVITIES

Party Corruption in Georgia Criticized: In his speech before the Tbilisi Party conference (in Russian, 18 April), Secretary of the Georgian Party's Central Committee Mgeladze minces no words in his attack on Communist officials from the Central Committee down. The Republic's Capital Tbilisi, he says, is a glaring example of how not to run a city. Twenty-six of the largest city enterprises are said to have failed to complete last year's plan and are still lagging behind. Among them are the locomotive repair depot, the oil plant, and a number of others. The work of the entire city industry is characterized by substandard quality and high production costs. Lack of "production culture" (kultura proizvodstva, meaning cleanliness and orderliness in the plant) is still something to be hoped for:

Some of our enterprises are dirty and littered with rubbish. In the metal construction enterprise of the Ministry of the Local Industry, for example, ...finished goods are scattered about with by-products and scrap metal all over the premises, and the yard is piled with all sorts of rubbish.

Russian version:

Na nekotorykh nashikh predpriyatiakh gryazno, ploshchadi zakhlamleni. Naprimer na zavode metalicheskikh konstruktivnykh ministerstva mestnoy promyshlennosti...produktsia razbrosana vmeste s otkhodami i metalicheskimi lomom po vsej territorii, dvor zavalen vsiakim khlamom.

Embezzlement of State funds, says the Secretary, is a far worse crime than any production failure, and will definitely not be tolerated any longer. All the industrial establishments are cautioned against emulating the practice of the Tbilisi Construction Trust (Tbilistroy) which "embezzled and overspent" (razbazaril i pereraskhodoval) more than 10,000,000 rubles in 1950. These embezzlements, still

observable in the various building trusts, are implicitly linked with the fact that many of the recently-built houses "lack even the most elementary comforts." They have no drainage system, "all doors are crooked," and there were cases of houses collapsing shortly after their completion: "there is not a morning that plaster does not fall on the heads of the occupants." The same is said to apply to the water and electricity services which frequently do not function at all.

Georgian Party activities, though only recently criticized by the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party, have not shown any tangible improvement, particularly in the matter of vigilance over economic activities:

There has been no determined struggle against bribery or for the preservation of Socialist property and the strengthening of Soviet law.

Russian version:

Reshitelnoy borby so vzyatochnichestvom, za okhranu sotsialisticheskoy sobstvennosti, za ukreplenie sovetkikh zakonov ne velos.

Referring to the perennial Soviet problem of criticism and self-criticism, Mgeladze intimates that fear of criticism (boyzn kritiki) comes from above, not from below. It is, in fact, the just complaint of the rank-and-file Communist that is usually hushed up. Responsibility for that is laid to the leadership of the Georgian Central Committee which is "violating the principle of rigid observance of intraparty democracy" (narushayet printsip strogago sobludeniya vnutripartiyonoy demokratii) as well as criticism. Fear of criticism is also said to be gripping many a would-be critic from the Party ranks, but for a different reason--retaliation by senior Party officials:

Criticism from below, from rank-and-file Party members, was particularly poorly organized. Furthermore, instances of persecution of people exposing shortcomings have been noted... Criticism has been feared here for many years, and serious errors in the work of city and rayon Party Committees have been whitewashed. Those who tried to criticize shortcomings have been punished.

Russian version:

Osobenno plokho byla razvernuta kritika snizu, so storony ryadovykh chlenov partii. Bolshe togo, imeli mesto fakty goneniya na ludey vskryvavshikh nedostatki v rabote... Zdes dolgie gody boyalis kritiki, zamazyvali seryoznie oshibki v rabote gorodskogo i rayonnikh komitetov, a tekh kto pytalsya kritikovat nedostatki nakazyvali.

This un-Bolshevist practice, Mgeladze continues, must be nipped in the bud, and the "silencers of criticism" (zazhimshchiki kritiki) and violators of intraparty democracy must be severely punished. Corruption and anti-State activities, the Secretary continues, have no place anywhere in the Soviet Union, and this is particularly true of the Georgian SSR, Stalin's birthplace. What the Georgian Communist Party needs is people with "backbone" and determination to get things done without fear of criticism:

The history of the development of our Bolshevik Party shows that 'spineless people' have been no less harmful than outright enemies of the Party.

Russian version:

Istoria stroitelstva nashey bolshevistskoy partii govorit o tom, chto bezkhrebetnie lyudi nanosili partii ne menshe vreda chem vragi partii.

Disparaging reference to the previous Party leadership and a hint of a possible reorganization of the present one are contained in the concluding part of the Mgeladze speech:

We must put an end to the corrupt methods of the old leadership of the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party, and reconstruct the whole work so as to conform to Stalin's teaching: to work and lead in a new style.

Russian version:

Nado pokonchit s porochnim stilem raboty starogo rukovodstva tsentralnogo komiteta kommunisticheskoy partii bolshevikov Gruzii, perestroit vsyu rabotu tak kak uchit tov. Stalin: rabotat i rukovodit po novomu.

More criticism from below is the subject of a PRAVDA article by Lukovets and Zinkovich of Apr. 17 (not broadcast). Party critics in Grodno Oblast, Byelorussia, the authors declare, are not faring so well--they are, in fact, persecuted and punished wherever possible. The case is cited of two Communists of a Grodno building materials trust who were expelled from the Party and dismissed from their jobs for daring to expose the mismanagement of the trust in a letter to PRAVDA. Even the Central Committee of the Byelorussian Communist Party, to whom the case was appealed, say the authors, displayed a none-too-friendly attitude toward the critics by referring the case for reinvestigation to the very trust management that had fired them:

How did it happen that the Communists who raised their voices to protect the interests of their enterprise have fallen into disgrace while the hushers-up of criticism are still enjoying their privileges?

Russian version:

Kak moglo sluchitsya, chto kommunisty, podnyavshie golos v zashchitu interesov svoego predpriatia, popali v nemilost, a zazhimshchiki kritiki zhivut volgotno?

The answer to the above question, as provided by the authors themselves, is that although there is much talk throughout the oblast about the necessity of encouraging more criticism from below, the latter is actually "crudely suppressed" (grubo popirayetsya).

The lack of criticism and self-criticism is bemoaned by ZARYA POLTAVSHCHINY (Apr. 8). It says that in a number of the oblast Party organizations this practice "has not been developed at all." The Poltava "Progress" artel alone is said to have lost over 100,000 rubles through what, the paper intimates, must have been fear to reveal shortcomings. ZARYA VOSTOKA (Apr. 10) speaks in disparaging terms of many Party leaders who, while "discouraging copiously upon the benefits" of criticism and self-criticism, actually encourage its suppression by their "inaccurate methods of work."

Bourgeois-Nationalist Survivals in Estonia: A report from Tallin carried by PRAVDA on Apr. 9 (not broadcast) tells of the recent Republican Party Plenum called to discuss the Communist education of the working population. It is revealed that one of the weakest points in Estonia's Party activities is the inadequate struggle against the "survivals of bourgeois-nationalist ideology." The Central Committee Propaganda and Agitation Department is criticized for its poor job of indoctrinating the population, particularly the workers of the Slate Basin (slantsevyy basseyn).

A Nikolayev article carried by PRAVDA on Apr. 19 insists that the Estonian "mufflers of criticism" (glushiteli kritiki) be called to account. A number of high Communist officials of the Republic's Main Oil-Marketing Administration (Glavneftesbyt), he reveals, have been made to resign "at their own request" (po lichnoy prosbe) for

criticizing the high-handed methods of the administration chief. The dismissed officials, says Nikolayev, were found to be "objectionable" because they objected to the boss's order hiking production costs, and his attempt to include the cost of his summer cottage (dachnaya kvartira) in the administration expenditures. When the local Party organization failed to prevail upon the administration chief to mend his ways, the case was appealed to the Tallin City Party. The latter, strangely enough, was reluctant to do any more than administer a mild rebuke to the autocrat, and hastened to close the case with the inscription "personal affair" (personalnoye delo). A similar case of flagrant suppression of criticism is cited in the Tsentralniy Rayon ceramics plant where the director has been dismissing his critics under the pretext of "staff reduction" (sokrashchenie shtata).

Latvian Science Propaganda Unsatisfactory: A Kalnin article in PRAVDA (Apr. 10) takes the Latvian Communist organizations to task for their indifferent attitude toward more and better lectures on natural science and political themes. Both the Republican Society for the Propagation of Political and Scientific Knowledge and the Propaganda and Agitation Section of the Central Party Committee are said to have lost interest in the "most important" (vazhneishaya) aspect of their work, mass-political education. Kalnin is particularly sarcastic in his reference to the lecturers who prefer to punctuate their talks with

instances of the remote past or from the life of other states, and for unknown reasons avoid any reference to local facts. This is a reflection on the cogency and originality of such lectures.

Russian version:

lektory privodyat primery ili iz dalekogo proshlago, ili iz zhizni drugikh gosudarstv, no po neponiatnim prichinam izbegayut privodit mestnie fakty. Eto otrazhayetsia na ubeditelnosti i dokhodchivosti takikh lektsiy.

The rural intelligentsia plays an important part in the collective farm system, and its political education must therefore be in the center of the Party's attention, according to a RADYANSKA UKRAINA editorial of Apr. 16. This problem, however, requires a careful and "discreet approach" (differentsirovanny podkhod) since no common criterion can be applied to the education of any group of professionals. Certain Party organizations, says the paper, are tactless in their handling of the intelligentsia, and that is precisely why many of them, as is the case in Novoselitsky Rayon, Chernigov Oblast, for example, prefer to "stand away from cultural education and mass-political work."

Elements of "uncritical reasoning" (nachetnichstvo) and Talmudism are still discernible among the Party students of Marxism-Leninism of Odessa Oblast, declares BOLSHEVITSKOYE ZNAMYA on Apr. 18. The standard of political studies in the Party school network is threatened with "further deterioration" if the leadership does not take immediate steps toward an all-round improvement of the educational system. The successful outcome of the academic year is said to be in jeopardy in many rayons including Krivoozerskiy, Razdelnyanskiy, Kaganovichskiy, and Voroshilovskiy.

Supervision over the political self-education of Communists should be "an object of special concern" (predmet osoboy zaboty) of all Party organizations, says PRAVDA (Apr. 18). Such concern is said to be lacking in Krasnoyarsk Krai where nothing is being done about "eliminating the serious shortcomings" (k ustraneniu seryoznikh nedostatkov) in the system of political self-education. The propagandists in charge of seminars and study circles are left to their own political resources which are not always "adequate to the job at hand" while the independent students are frequently neglected altogether. The paper frowns upon the tendency on the part of numerous Party organizations to neglect political education during most of the school term, attempting to make up for lost time at the very end of the year. This practice (referred to in industry as "shturmovshchina" - storming the job), the paper claims, vitiates the system of political education and self-education and should be avoided

at all costs:

Such haste may be seriously detrimental to the political studies of the Communists, may lower the ideological level of propaganda work.

Russian version:

Podobnaya pospeshnost mozhet nanesti seryozniy ushcherb politicheskoy uchebe kommunistov, snizit ideiniy uroven propagandistskoy raboty.

Party encroachment upon the immediate prerogatives of the executive branch of government and trade unions, an old official complaint, is again discussed by PRAVDA on Apr. 8. The paper does not name any particular localities or organizations but the general editorial tenor suggests a widespread practice of Party organizations "taking over" the affairs of local Soviets, trade unions and other organizations. Party committees everywhere are reminded that their business is over-all supervision over government, industrial and trade union activities but that they are to refrain from taking any direct part in them:

One cannot overlook the fact, however, that certain local Party organizations have not yet given up the practice of replacing Soviet, economic, trade union and other organs, degrading their role and responsibility for the tasks at hand...

Russian version:

Nelzya, odnako, ne videt togo, chto nekotorie mestnie partiynie organizatsii eshche ne otreshilis ot podmeny sovetskikh, khozaistvennikh, profsoyuznikh i drugikh organov, prinizhayut ikh rol i otvetstvennost za vypolnenie postavlennikh pered nimi zadach...

What the proper Party organization should do, the paper concludes, is to achieve the desired ends in matters of government and economic administration "not outside the Soviet and economic organs but through them" (ne pomimo sovetskikh i khozaistvennikh organov, a cherez nikh).

AGRICULTURE

Kolkhoz Statute Violations Still Widespread: Tampering with kolkhoz non-distributed funds (nedelimie fondy), a "crude violation" of the agricultural artel statute has not yet been eliminated in a number of oblasts, according to RADYANSKA UKRAINA (Apr. 10). It has been noted also, the paper charges, that even collective farms with "growing incomes" are not depositing the required sums to the funds. Poor management and lack of labor discipline are said to be only partially responsible for the mentioned misdemeanor. The law governing the non-distributed funds is sacrosanct, and violators are strongly advised to abide by it or prepare to take the consequences. Since the non-distribution fund is designed for reinvestment and purchases of farm equipment and stock, any attempt to keep it below the prescribed level, the paper claims, may spell economic bankruptcy in the long run. This, it is stated, is precisely the case with many collective farms in Zhitomir, Odessa, Stanislav, Volhyn, Drogobych, and Lvov Oblast where the situation is "especially unsatisfactory." Implicitly cautioning the collective farm officials against a repetition of last year's mistakes, the editorial reminds them of their past failures which were brought about, among other things, by neglecting the non-distributed funds:

As a result, those kolkhozes gathered low yields, failed to fulfill the plans for increasing the number of livestock... They received low incomes and paid little for the kolkhozniks' labor days in grain and cash.

Another complaint voiced by the same editorial is the lackadaisical attitude displayed by the "directors, agronomists and engineers" of many machine-tractor stations toward a better utilization of tractors and other farm equipment. The machine-tractor station, it is reiterated, is the mainstay of the agricultural economy, and its success or failure is immediately reflected on the activities of the collective farms. And what a well-run collective farm should be like is indicated in the case of some Izmail Oblast farms which have become "millionaires", paying 18 rubles for each labor day "apart from the payments in kind."

Cases of "grave" violation of the kolkhoz statute have been exposed recently in the collective farms of Dnepropetrovsk Oblast, reports ZARYA editorially on Apr. 16. Lack of proper Party supervision is said to account for the embezzlement (roskradaniye) of kolkhoz money and property and squandering (rozbazaryvaniye) of communal livestock. Noted also, according to the paper, is the illegal disposal of kolkhoz land, but no further details on that point are offered. Among the rayons mostly affected by the mentioned irregularities are Likhovskiy, Dnepropetrovskiy, Shirokovskiy, Pokrovskiy, Sinelnikovskiy and Kotovskiy.

Danger signals pointing to "crude violations of the kolkhoz statute", says PRAVDA editorially on Apr. 19, are heard from Bashkirian ASSR, Tambov, Kirov and some other (unnamed) oblasts where "unworthy people" (nedostoinie lyudi) as well as squanderers (raskhititeli) are frequently kept as collective farm chairmen. A recent checkup on Party activities revealed that things are still worse in Altai Krai where wholesale plundering of collective farm lands and other properties is allowed to go on unchecked by the appropriate Party and Soviet organizations. Widespread in the krai, says the paper, are

cases of criminal pilfering of collective farm produce, violation of kolkhoz land tenure laws by various enterprises, offices and individuals, stealing collective farm property, squandering fodder concentrates allocated by the Government for public stockbreeding, and illegal seizure and mowing of kolkhoz hay.

Russian version:

V kraye nablyudayutsia sluchai prestupnogo rastaskivania kolkhoznoj produktsii, narusheniya kolkhoznago zemlepolzovaniya otdelnymi predpriyatiami, uchrezhdeniyami i razlichnymi litsami, khishcheniya kolkhoznogo imushchestva, razbazarivaniya kontsentrirovannikh kormov, otpushchennogo pravitelstvom dlia obshchestvennogo zhivotnovodstva, nezakonnogo zakhvata i vykashivaniya kolkhoznikh senokosov.

Virulent criticism of kolkhoz statute violations is contained also in a long KRYMSKAYA PRAVDA editorial of Apr. 20. Here again the "conciliatory attitude" (primirencheskoye otnoshenie) of the various Party organizations towards statute violations in general is blamed for a variety of crimes. Some collective farm officials, says the paper, acting "under the guise of protectors of the interests of collective farm economy" (pod vidom zashchitnikov interesov obshchestvennogo khozaistva kolkhozov), abuse their official positions by forcing the collective farms to release without payment or at low prices produce, livestock, and other kolkhoz property. The oblast's high agricultural officials, far from fighting such malpractices, "have themselves taken the path of pilfering kolkhoz wealth" (sami stali na put razbazarivaniya kolkhoznago dobra).

Reclamation Work Too Slow: The reclamation of the 1,000-kilometer-long Barabin Depression is "most unsatisfactory" in the opinion of SOVETSKAYA SIBIR (Apr. 16). Last year's work was very inadequate, and there is no visible improvement this year. The 1951 plan for reconstructing the drainage canals was over 50% short of completion, and this year "many hydraulic installations" (mnogo gidroustanovok) are not functioning because of the "bad quality of work" performed by the officers of the construction trust. There is no dearth of discussions and discourses on the urgent

necessity of reclaiming the vast swamp and arid lands of the Barabin Depression, says the paper, but the actual solution of the problem has so far remained on paper. The reclamation of the swamps in Ubinsky Rayon alone, it is claimed, would yield 26,000 hectares of fertile land suitable for fodder crops. The following shortcomings, the paper concludes, are still very much in evidence and must be overcome before any further progress can be made:

Excavators remain idle for long periods of time because of bad maintenance and poor labor organization...

Nineteen out of 35 water wells are idle in Dovolenskiy Rayon, and 11 out of 27 in Kuybyshevskiy Rayon...

Nearly 50% of the excavators...have not yet been repaired, and new drivers have not been recruited...

The Barabin Hydraulic Structures Building Trust...has not yet distributed drilling equipment among the drilling organizations.

Better Conditions For Field Labor Urged: STALINGRADSKAYA PRAVDA (Apr. 11) suggests that better cultural and welfare services for the kolkhozniks on the field would boost their morale and improve their efficiency during the spring sowing campaign now underway. The importance of this aspect of work is often underestimated by the local Party and Soviet officials. Listed among the cultural services in need of improvement are mass-enlightenment work, rural clubs, mobile libraries, and movies. Characteristically, the welfare theme is treated inferentially but the appeal to the oblast consumers union (obl-potreb-soyuz) to reorganize its services "on a sound basis" implies the need for a better and more plentiful supply of food.

ORLOVSKAYA PRAVDA (Apr. 20) is more explicit in its demand for better living conditions for the "mechanizers" (tractor drivers and farm machine operators): the success of the agricultural year depends on that. The paper reveals that the oblast trade union of agricultural workers has remained indifferent to "the serious shortcomings in the living standard of the mechanizers", and suggests that the welfare services for them "be placed under the auspices" of the Party, Soviet, and agricultural organizations. Among the suggested remedies are "proper rest premises" for the mechanizers, and that the Consumers Cooperative Union should organize rural trade in such a way as to make goods "available to every consumer."

Following are excerpts from some of the other agricultural items broadcast by the regional transmitters, in chronological order:

Apr. 8--The plenary session...noted unsatisfactory work at a number of machine-tractor stations in the oblast. They delay the execution of agreements concluded with other oblasts and lower the quality of labor. (ZARYA editorial).

Apr. 8--Checks at individual kolkhozes and machine-tractor stations have revealed many shortcomings which must be removed at once so that the sowing of spring crops can be carried out. (D.M. Sylin from Vinnitsa).

Apr. 13--We must not forget that in a number of rayons attention to the quality of the sowing is still lacking. (MOLOT editorial, Rostov-on-Don).

Apr. 18--Unsatisfactory progress of cotton planting is noted in Ilyichevskiy, Pakhte-Aralskiy, Chimkent, Tyulkubasskiy, Georgievskiy, and Sayramskiy Rayons. One of the most important reasons for the lag...in these rayons is the poor use of sowing machines and bad labor organization. (KAZAKHSTANSKAYA PRAVDA, Alma-Ata).