

No. 14

From the Political Department of the Heat Engineering Laboratory of the USSR Academy of Sciences Information Note on the Closed Party Meeting of the Party Organization on the Outcomes of the XX Congress on March 23 and 26th, 1956

March 31, 1956

Secret

CC CPSU

The meeting took place over two days – March 23rd and 26th.

On the agenda: Outcomes of the XX Congress of the CPSU and the tasks of the party organization (speaker Cde. I. O. Shmelev).

First day of the meeting

One hundred and five CPSU members were present at the meeting and five candidate members of the CPSU.

In the span of 1 hour and 20 minutes, Comrade Shmelev reported on the work of the XX Congress of the CPSU, on the resolutions of the Congress and the challenges for the party organization to implement the resolutions of the XX Congress. The report noted that the Congress showed the unbreakable unity and integrity of the Party ranks, the solidarity of the Party around the Leninist Central Committee, the unbreakable bond with the masses. [The report talked about] the state of great unanimity and efficiency during the discussion of the results of the Congress that our Party came to under the leadership of the Central Committee.

[The report talked about] the monumental challenges set by Comrade N.S. Khrushchev in the Central Committee summary report, and in the reports of Comrades N.A. Bulganin on the Directives of the XX Congress on the sixth Five-Year Plan.

[The report discussed] the fact that the XX Congress of the Party demonstrated the triumph of the inviolable principles of Marxism-Leninism, the principles of collective leadership.

[The report noted] that Comrade N.S. Khrushchev's summary report on the work of the Central Committee is an example of a creative approach to the development of Marxist-Leninist theory in the modern context.

The report talked about the resolutions on industry and agriculture, the rise of material well-being and cultural level of the Soviet people, and ideological work.

Next, the report included an analysis of the work of our party organization and set up tasks related to the resolutions of the XX Congress of the CPSU.

At the conclusion of the report, a brief summary of Comrade Khrushchev's report "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences" was given. (All communists were acquainted with the full text of Comrade N.S. Khrushchev's report "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences" before the meeting.)

After the report, 11 questions were raised on the inner-Party life of our party organization and 2 questions, as follows: Comrade Ignat'ev asked whether Comrade N.S. Khrushchev's report "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences" was discussed at the Congress; Comrade Burgov asked what kind of resolution the Congress made on the cult of personality.

After the speaker answered the questions the meeting proceeded to statements by communists.

[...]

Comrade Yu.F. Orlov – junior researcher, CPSU member since 1948, in the party organization of scientific sectors.

In his speech, Comrade Orlov declared:

The XX Congress of the party passed many good economic resolutions, but it is the political resolutions that warrant special attention. In reality we had terror for the last 20 years, while the press said the complete opposite; the press praised the existing regime.

Our country is socialist but not democratic. We should not be comparing socialism to capitalism, or we might as well compare it to a system based on slavery. Instead of comparing ourselves to capitalism, we should be talking about the shortcomings of our socialist society. We are in a situation where property belongs to the people but power belongs to a group of scoundrels. Our Party is permeated by a slave mentality. The majority of the members conform, as happened at the XX Congress of the Party. Only three people spoke up to criticize the work of the CC – Cde. Kovrigina and two others.

The Supreme Soviet sessions were pathetic. It is ludicrous that Comrade N.S. Khrushchev's report on the cult of personality was not discussed at the Congress.

On the whole, everything is going to remain the same in our party – with the old bootlicking ways. Our state and party apparatus is swamped with that type of people. The press consists of toadies and timeservers.

The Ministry of State Security did badly; it is a shame for our Party. In the name of state security we raised the kind of child that slugs you in the jaw.

We need complete democratization of our life. When we can be completely sure that we can live without glancing over our shoulder, that's when we will have socialism. At no cost can we allow the same thing to happen again. Comrade Platonov, as the head of the 1st department, could you tell us whether people can be repressed for making speeches nowadays?

[...]

Conclusions

At a time when communists are inspired by the majestic resolutions of the XX Congress of our Party – discussing these resolutions, which contain the collective wisdom of the Congress delegates and the Central Committee, and burning with the sole desire of implementing these resolutions – the party organization of the scientific sectors of the Heat Engineering Laboratory of the USSR Academy of Sciences (totaling 44 party members and 3 candidate members) presented communists – Orlov, Shchedrin, Avalov, Nesterov, Petrov, Tretyakov – who at the general laboratory meeting of communists to discuss the outcomes of the Congress made completely unacceptable, anti-Party, defamatory, demagogic statements aimed at undermining the unity of the Party and minimizing the significance of the XX Congress.

In their speeches, they distorted the reality of the situation in the country and Party. They were impudent in their speeches, allowing undue familiarity and taking liberties. They denied the democracy of our system, and claimed that property belongs to the people but power is in the hands of an unworthy group of people. They said that the Party is permeated with a spirit of servitude and subservience. They called for unimpeded propagation of bourgeois ideology in our country; they demanded to arm the people.

These speeches were the result of preparatory work by the leader of the choir of this group, Cde. Orlov, together with Avalov. He consolidated the communists' opinion before the party meeting. When I talked with Cde. Orlov, I asked him why didn't he stop by the political department and share his thoughts before the meeting, if he is really worried for the Party? He replied that he discussed his speech with other communists. In the course of our conversation it was revealed that Cde. Orlov made a deal with his conscience when he joined the Party in 1948, because he had major disagreements with what was happening in the country and the Party. Similarly, when he was studying at Moscow State University, Cde. Orlov consolidated unhealthy concerns, talked about the falsity of our propaganda and statistics, about the uselessness of lowering prices when there were not enough goods in the country. Cde. Avalov went to school with Cde. Orlov and currently they are working in the same sector.

Cde. Shchedrin's speech is also not accidental. As I just found out, during the entirety of his Party membership he has been making unhealthy and harmful statements. I found out that during his service in the Soviet Army, Cde. Shchedrin led disorganizational work among the officers, aimed at disobeying orders and undermining discipline. The attestation commission did not think he was worthy of the officer rank.

[Line illegible] these unhealthy attitudes, plus it could not expose it because of the developed nepotism and unprincipled mutual responsibility. Moreover, Cde. Orlov is a member of the party

bureau, Cde. Shchedrin is a member of the party bureau, Cde. Petrov is a member of the party bureau and deputy secretary of the party bureau. The secretary of the party bureau, Cde. Sudakov, is a young communist and is on very friendly terms with Cdes. Orlov and Avalov. I suggested that Cde. Sudakov make a speech at the March 26th meeting with a rebuttal of the statements unbecoming to communists. He said he would, but ended up not doing it.

The political department overlooked the fact that the party organization of the scientific sectors has a group of communists with such rotten, anti-party sentiments.

Nineteen communists from the party organization of the scientific sectors spoke at the meeting, 11 of them actively defended Cdes. Orlov, Avalov, Nesterov, and Shchedrin. Only one communist, Cde. Kukavadze, scolded them slightly. Seven people did not share their opinions at all. Only the communists from the industrial and economic sectors spoke up with the right criticism and a party-minded evaluation of Cdes. Orlov's, Avalov's, and Nesterov's statements.

The decision of the assembly, even going by a mild evaluation of the non-partisan statements, was mostly passed by the votes of industrial and economic sectors. The communists from the scientific sector actively tried to get the decision overturned. Comrade Goldin took an especially unprincipled position in this regard. He attempted to change the assembly's decisions with brazen shouting and various evasions.

Suggestions

1. Communists Cdes. Orlov, Shchedrin, Nesterov, and Avalov should be expelled from the Party with mandatory dismissal from the Laboratory (they cannot remain at the Laboratory because they will feel like "heroes" and keep demoralizing the collective). They do not value their party membership.
2. Comrades Petrov, Tretyakov, and Grishchuk should be reprimanded by the Party.
3. A new party committee needs to be elected, because it is unlikely that the current committee will be able to take the correct principled position.
4. Dissolve the primary party organization of the scientific sectors. Register the communists in the industrial sector. Leave only three party organizations:
 - a. Industrial and scientific sectors
 - b. Economic sector
 - c. The fire brigade
5. The political department needs to conduct an in-depth explanation of the anti-party mistakes made by the communists of the scientific sectors.

My feelings about the anti-party, arrogant, and demagogic speeches of Cdes. Orlov, Nesterov, Avalov, and Shchedrin are evident from the information note.

[Line illegible] the XX Congress of the CPSU and the life of our party and country. Impudent and unruly demagogic conversations about members of the CC CPSU, who have earned the trust of the entire Party, alienates party members instead of uniting them around the CC. Their statements call for demobilization of communists in the struggle to fulfill the historic resolutions of the Congress.

I consider it my mistake that on the first day of the meeting I assumed these statements were politically harmful for the Party, but that the comrades made them because they were deeply mistaken, because they could not properly understand the materials set forth by Comrade N.S. Khrushchev in the report on the cult of personality and its consequences.

I thought that in my speech on the first day of the meeting I could go over the political mistakes and explain everything to my comrades, so they would retract their statements in second speeches. But after a deeper analysis of their speeches I came to a different conclusion. During my explanation I should have, as a mature communist, given a sharper, more principled rebuttal to these anti-party, slanderous, unbridled speeches, like Cde. L.G. Mezentsev did on the second day of the meeting.

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I. Shmelev

[Translated by Anna Melyakova for the National Security Archive]