

The Komsomol Faces Competition

ALBERT PARRY

THE KREMLIN's decision not to repeat its World Youth Festival in 1952, at least on the grand scale of last August's production in east Berlin, raises some questions about Moscow's vaunted success as Pied Piper. Most of the Russian papers, particularly *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (the central daily of the U.S.S.R.'s Communist Youth League), are currently adopting tones of anger and dismay over the generally poor results achieved by thirty-four years of rigid youth indoctrination. The program is going astray not only in the satellite states, where its failure could have been anticipated, but also in the Soviet Union itself.

'Sinister Advice'

The biggest shock for Soviet theoreticians in recent months has been the rise of youth organizations other than the Komsomol. The fact that these groups are non-Communist may have something to do both with their emergence and with their success. The first news of these groups appeared in the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* last September 20. Under the headline SINISTER ADVICE, the Komsomol paper took to task the Soviet Ukrainian pedagogues of a regional office of labor-reserve schools (schools of compulsory manual training). Their sin was in publishing a brochure outlining a system of self-governing student councils which made no mention whatever of the Komsomol.

Citing, from the brochure, the work of the student council in School No. 11 at Dnepropetrovsk, the Moscow daily inquired:

"But where is the Komsomol organization? Not a word about this in the brochure. The Council takes care of everything. . . . It seems that the Komsomol organization in that school

is just a helpless appendix to the Student Council."

About a month later, on October 25, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* revealed that the Dnepropetrovsk case was not an isolated one. "Against the demands of life," the newspaper declared indignantly, "new forms of students' collective organizations" were becoming epidemic throughout the Ukraine. The very names of these organizations showed a surprising variety, a lack of desirable uniformity. Here were student councils, councils of elders, elderates, brigades, links, and detachments led by commanders. The nomenclature was vaguely Soviet but the intention was clearly non-Communist. The functions of student self-government were being taken over by the new groups.

How can one keep silent in the face of such a terrible problem? the Komsomol paper wanted to know. It admitted that School No. 11, the main culprit of the case, was still one of the nation's best. But so "demoralized" had

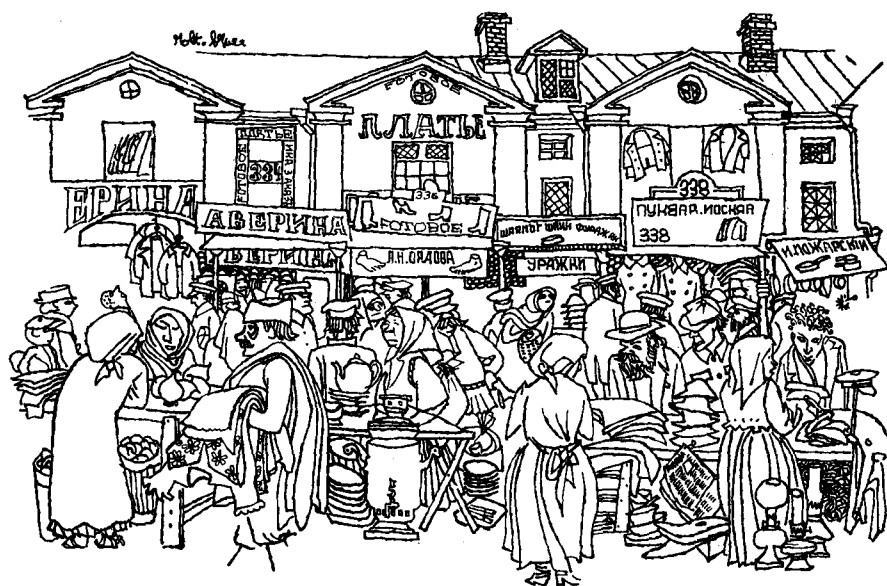
even the Communist officials of that school become that "its Komsomol secretary is devoting more attention to the Elderate than to Komsomol work."

Komsomolskaya Pravda for October 16 offered this description of a Komsomol conference of the Kharkov Institute of Railroad Engineers:

"Front rows are empty. But in the rear of the hall you won't find a vacant seat. Young people sit there with books, outlines, and lecture notes open. The moment the chairman introduces the main speaker, all these young people begin to read."

Different Speaker, Same Speech

The Komsomol doldrums in the Ukraine are not confined to schools. The Komsomol secretary of a Kharkov candy factory has complained that "our Communist Youth members are inactive. They keep silent at our meetings. They don't carry out assignments." Out of one hundred eligible youths, only one had joined the Kom-



somol there in the previous four months.

The general apathy seems to have extended right to the top level of youth bureaucracy. On October 9 the Komsomol newspaper chastised the Komsomols of the Orel and Novgorod regions, where "lectures for the young are planned haphazardly," where no praise to "the labors of the Soviet youth in the building projects of Communism" is sung, and where lecturers to the Komsomol groups "insufficiently acquaint the youth with the remarkable successes of the Soviet people." At a camp on the Volga-Don Canal project, the young ditchdiggers were hearing the same Komsomol lecture over and over again, according to the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* of September 20. It appeared that Moscow had sent a number of lecturers, but that they all were speaking from the same outline on the same topic: "Communist Upbringing of Youth." The lecture had, understandably, begun to pall, but the local movie house, according to the account, was always full, thanks to a regional distributing office which sent "well-worn foreign films" to the camp.

Soviet-Style Sin

The new nonpolitical clubs are attracting an enthusiastic following. The Komsomol daily on October 10 wrathfully depicted a sinful scene in a Leningrad youth club: "The band diligently plays a foxtrot. Several couples go through intricate steps to this music. . . . Wishing to cater to backward tastes and to make as much money as possible, the management includes jazz music." On November 23 *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* condemned the flutter of Moscow "bobby-soxers" sighing after the handsome young tenor of the Bolshoi Theater for autographs. On October 9 it had spoken regretfully of "the empty verses, ornamented with hearts and arrows" in the albums and diaries of the girls in Tula. And on September 28, in an article entitled "On Daydreaming," it had summed up its feelings over the general lack of true Communistic "self-sacrificial" spirit among Soviet youth:

"At times we find in our midst youths and girls with complacent ideas on the aims of one's life. Infected with vestiges of the old and passing world, they daydream of material comfort and a happy existence. . ."

The Russians And the Olympics

J. ALVIN KUGELMASS

IT'S A SAFE BET that the Russians' decision to enter the 1952 Olympics was not made lightly. They must be sure of winning: "Face" and prowess are as necessary to the Communist régime as they were to Hitler's and Mussolini's. The body stalwart is a kind of trade-mark in Russia even as it was in Nazi Germany.

But this Russian cocksureness is perplexing. For if the Russians abide by the rules of the International Olympic Committee, then most of their known stars will be disqualified under the code governing amateur standing. That is, unless the Russians have eligibles under cover who are unknown to the West, who are playing leapfrog with records, and who bear amateur standing. But this appears doubtful.

In 1947, after several months of bickering with the International Committee, the Russians withdrew their application for entry at the 1948 Olympics. With professional and seasoned huff, they denied that their entrants did not possess amateur standing, and they took a walk, muttering things about "enemies of the people and counter-revolutionaries."

The International Committee, at the time, had charged that Russian athletes who were to be entered were subsidized by the Soviet government with honors and medals that bore emoluments running to ten thousand dollars a year, that included villas on the Black Sea, tax exemptions, and the right to use Moscow streetcars free of charge.

Last spring the Russian application for participation in the 1952 games was accepted by the International Committee after K. A. Adrianov, president of the newly formed Soviet Olympic Committee, guaranteed that entrants selected by his group would bear no taint of professionalism.

The sports world enjoys a more informal gallantry than obtains at a session of the U.N. General Assembly, and there were polite murmurs of approval at the Vienna session of the International Committee which voted unanimously, except for three abstentions, to accept the Soviet application. Off the record, however, a profound gloom was observed on the faces of the high officials from western countries. Paul Méricamp, president of the French Olympic Committee, shrugged and said enigmatically: "There will be great trouble. The Russians behave like lawyers at the track meets. Also, how will we know their entrants are amateurs?"

The Brannigan at Brussels

M. Méricamp recalled the embarrassing fuss put up by the Russians at the 1950 "Little Olympics" in Heysel Stadium, Brussels, following the running of the 400-meter relay. A Britisher had broken the tape, but the Russian team claimed that the British had run in the wrong lane. The Russians said that the points should be awarded to them and that the British should be disqualified. All the Soviet participants rushed onto the field, shook fists, and shouted in a manner most unbecoming in a sporting event of international consequence.

Within a few minutes, three officials from the Soviet Embassy in Brussels appeared and assumed the leadership in the shouting. There was a suspension of other field events scheduled for the day while everyone adjourned to hash the matter over. The officials suggested mildly that the race be run again. The Russians refused vehemently and quoted rules, precedents, and authorities. Again the officials suggested a compromise rerun. The Russian Embassy officials went into a huddle, and their