

Soviet Youth Indifferent Towards Cause

The Soviet party machine is concerned over trends that Russian youth are becoming indifferent to the Communist cause. Although the young people aren't staging sit-ins or rioting, they express a lack of enthusiasm for the ideology of the party.

The machine works so well, it has such a highly organized system of controls on the Soviet people, that Soviet youth are unlikely to express themselves in the forms that have spread havoc from Berlin through Paris to Columbia University and beyond.

But those rebellions against the Establishment could in the long run prove less significant than apathy.

THE WHOLE Soviet system demands participation of the people in programs of the Communist party. Apathy could be a corrosive factor endangering the party's programs and therefore its rule.

Communist party bosses have purged the leadership of their youth league, the Komsomol, in an apparent attempt to inspire new enthusiasm in the next generation.

But the new Komsomol boss is a man 40 years old—on the wrong side of "the generation gap" from the skeptical youths 14 to 27 years old whom he is supposed to understand and inspire. An obscure Communist party official, he had not been connected with Komsomol work for some years.

The new man, Yevgeny M. Tyazhelnikov, replaced Sergei Pavlov, who had become Komsomol first secretary nine years ago at age 30.

Pavlov is a baby-faced but tough Communist in whom some could see a strain of Stalinism. He has tried hard to inculcate in Soviet youth those ideas which Kremlin leaders wanted. He was particularly noted for his slashing attacks on any literature or art that deviated from the conformist lines of "socialist realism."

IN THE FIRST seven years of his Komsomol leadership, Pavlov could proudly report that a million young people had answered the organization's call to construction projects in the bleak, frigid parts of the Soviet Union.

But he could also complain in December 1965 that Soviet youth "are far from having a clearcut or accurate idea of just what Communist ideology is, of what it means to be a conscientious and consistent Communist."

"Since when," Pavlov asked, "have debasement of our way of life, indiscriminate running down of the achievements of our system, acid skepticism and peevish grumbling come to be regarded as civic courage?"

The Komsomol instituted in 1965 a program to arouse patriotism as a way of tying youth closer to the regime.

"Comrades," party general secretary Leonid I. Brezhnev told the Komsomol last year, "we must raise a new generation of real patriots who are ready to perform feats of labor and arms."

The patriotism program emphasizes the sacrifices of World War II by the young peoples' parents. There was a 1965 march by three million youths to wartime battlefields.

THIS CONTINUING program and others appear not to have been enough. Within the last two years, there have been many public complaints about Soviet youth by their party elders.

"Among youth we still find spongers, undisciplined people, people with no feeling of civic duty," the party said. "Some Komsomol organizations, however, still suffer from formalism, showiness, ballyhoo and pay inadequate attention to sensibly organized leisure, physical culture and sport."

Brezhnev complained that

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Fred Mulhauser, Wayne State University's tennis coach, formerly was an assistant basketball coach at WSU, his alma mater.

some youths, "through lack of experience and theoretical knowledge, display political flabbiness and apathy."

This growing problem has in the last six months been focused more acutely by two developments.

One was the growth of dissent by adult intellectuals. It was

partly a response to secret-police repression of dissident youths like those who sought freedom of speech and were put on trial and sentenced to prison last January.

The other was Czechoslovakia's break with Stalinist controls, the whole liberalizing trend in Prague. That trend was

largely sparked by Czechoslovak students whose own version of the Komsomol was weakly ineffective in keeping young people under control of the old Communist party leaders.

THE SOVIET Communist party's main forum, the central committee, held a secret meet-

ing in April on ideological questions. It planned a counterattack on dangers to the system from dissent at home and reform in Prague.

Since then, the Soviet press has spoken against "ideological subversion" and called for more dedicated support for the party. There have been warn-

ings of "nihilism and faithlessness" among young people. With criticism leveled against Soviet youth, and therefore against the Komsomol which is held responsible for youth's conduct and attitudes, the demotion of Pavlov to a less-important sports organization job came as no surprise.

At a Komsomol meeting this month four of Pavlov's deputies were also dismissed. This looked like a general purge in an attempt to revitalize the Komsomol and earn it new respect among youths who now often scorn it.

Whether Tyazhelnikov can do this is the question.

A former teacher and principal, he had been a Communist party regional secretary in the Ural Mountains industrial city of Chelyabinsk for four years. His whole career had been in Chelyabinsk, where his party superior for the last three years was an apparent protégé of Brezhnev's.



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