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WHAT DOES THE MONEY-GRUBBER FEAR?

WHAT DOES THE MONEY-GRUBBER FEAR? – I. A. Bonda-renko, First Secretary of the Rostov Province Party Committee, Comments on Pravda's Mail. (By Special Correspondents L. Krainov and L. Kurin. Pravda, Feb. 12, 1972, p. 3. 1,700 words. Condensed text:) Rostov-on-Don – . . . How can the conditions that favor those who are fond of enriching themselves at others' expense be eliminated? How can we close the loopholes through which the money-grubber can slip?

These were the questions that troubled us when we read the letter received from Rostov Province. No less than 17 alarming warning signals about theft were received by Pravda last year. If this number is compared to the total volume of letters – almost 5, 000 – it is clear that incidents of this kind are comparatively rare in the province. Moreover, the number of letters about theft is gradually diminishing from year to year. Our conversation with I. A. Bondarenko, First Secretary of the Rostov Province Party Committee, touched primarily on this trend. . . .

Question. – Our readers' letters often end in this way. "What do you regard as the most important factor in the struggle against the theft of socialist property?" How would you answer this question?

Answer. – I would say preventive work, of course. I can say with the utmost conviction that the center of gravity in the struggle against theft should rest with the production collective, with the public organizations – the Party organizations first of all – with the management and the workers themselves.

On assignment from the province Party committee, we conducted a sociological study of factors conducive to the theft of socialist property. What did the study show? Here are the concrete data: A large percentage of the thefts consists of pilferage at enterprises; three-fourths of those convicted committed thefts at their places of work; the main contingent of the thieves were people who had worked at their respective enterprises for less than a year. . . .

What is required is a uniform, detailed and scientifically substantiated program of preventive measures on a province, city and district scale. It should embrace many aspects of social life and should be designed to cover a long period.

The province Party committee, in conjunction with the Soviet and administrative agencies, has worked out an integrated plan of measures to prevent crime and lawbreaking in Rostov Province. This plan envisages a systematic analysis of lawbreaking and of the organization of preventive work in the cities and rural districts.

The integrated plan is based on the recommendations of a scientific and practical conference on the subject "The Problems of Instilling a Communist Attitude Toward State and Public Property." This conference was held last year by the province Party committee, in conjunction with scholars of Rostov State University.

Q. – Could you describe the circumstances that create a favorable environment for thieves and money-grubbers?

A. – Careless record-keeping of materials and poor organization of the protection of state property. Also, the unsatisfactory selection of personnel, especially of materially responsible persons. And, I must add, freedom from punishment or insufficiently severe penalties and the absence of mutual responsibility.

As you see, there are a good many such conditions. But all of them boil down to one thing- negligence. . . .

Here is an example. In broad daylight, a large sum of money was stolen from the cashbox of the Bataisk Assembled Billets Plant. The thief acted alone, but he was not without indirect helpers. He was helped first of all by the plant's management, which had resigned itself to the fact that the enterprise had become an open arena for outsiders, and by the cashier, who left money on the table when he went out of his office.

We severely punish those who abet a thief, wittingly or unwittingly.

Q. – Our letter writers sometimes quote the well-known saying: "Don't wash your dirty linen in public."

A. – That saying is not only old but harmful too. . . . At sessions of the province Party committee's bureau, we have more than once examined the question of serious shortcomings in ensuring the safety of socialist property and eradicating embezzlement and theft at enterprises and construction projects, in trade and on collective farms and state farms. I must say that the bureau members have made serious demands on the economic managers. . . .

Recently we examined the state of affairs with respect to the protection of public property in the construction organizations. We drew serious conclusions there too.

Here is another example. At the Aksai Brickyard, negligence in record-keeping and mismanagement resulted in a situation conducive to the theft of public property. This was taken advantage of by Stroikov, the plant's former director, and Kremensky, the chief engineer; they not only failed to put an end to the thefts but themselves squandered building materials and illegally wrote off equipment that they later stole and sold. The province court, which heard this criminal case recently, punished these thieves severely. . . .

We try to see to it that instances of this kind are not only discussed and condemned in the Party organizations but also that they become widely known; i. e., we give such cases broad publicity through the newspapers, radio and television and through circuit court trials with extensive public participation. Three-fourths of all the criminal cases involving theft are handled in this way. . . .

Q. – In this connection, would you please tell our readers what is being done in the province organizations to make respect for the law the personal conviction of every individual?

A. – . . . I should say that some comrades confuse such concepts as legal education and legal upbringing. These are different things. To know the law, even to understand it, is not enough. It is far more important to have a thorough comprehension of its necessity and its justice, to develop the conviction of the necessity of fulfilling the law not only in oneself but in those around oneself. Of course, this is a difficult task, but it is an honorable one and, frankly, it is a very urgent matter today. . . .

The personnel of the prosecutor's office, the province court and the internal affairs administration are well aware of this primary duty of the Soviet jurist. Among other things, they have helped to set up so-called preventive councils at many enterprises. The main task of these new public organizations is the prevention of all law violations by various means of influence, first of all educational means. These councils first appeared in Kamensk. The province Party committee has studied their work experience and is disseminating it in all the districts and cities.

A total of 52 people's universities of legal knowledge are now operating in the province. I should like to emphasize that the reasons and conditions giving rise to theft are analyzed in these universities' classes. We are giving special attention to the propaganda of legal knowledge among young people. Elective classes in Soviet law are being offered in 494 [secondary] schools and 78 vocational-technical schools. ...

We are providing guidelines for the Party organizations so that their propaganda of legal knowledge will have less superficiality and general precepts and more emotional content, animation and intelligibility. ...

We realize that by no means everything has been done to shut all channels for the theft of public property. A number of Party organizations are devoting unjustifiably little attention to this. The serious shortcomings in the struggle against petty theft are being eliminated slowly, and this struggle is not being given a sharp political appraisal everywhere. ...