

ARTIKLID

The Exposition of St. Petersburg Zoological museum in the years of the Soviet regime

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Introduction

The study of the history of the development of the science in the Soviet times requires some courage from a researcher. He can completely renounce neither the emotional nor the ethical estimations of the events. Biology in Russia of the 20th century experienced such substantial influence from the state, that to a considerable degree its history cannot be isolated and comprehended as the history of biological ideas only. One

constantly encounters not with the free scientific thought, but with the reaction product of this thought and the directives of the government, sometimes sensible, sometimes – completely destructive for biology. The history of the exposition of the Zoological Museum in St. Petersburg gives many possibilities to show to what extent it was possible to place the science on the service of socialist and communist propaganda.

The history of the exposition of the Zoological Museum of the Academy of Sciences in the Soviet period is weakly studied; there are no special publications about this period. The first archive materials were selected by the author for the exhibition, timed to the 170th anniversary of the Zoological Institute (2002).¹ In the present investigation the materials from the Archives of the Zoological Institute (Archives ZIN RAS) and of St. Petersburg branch of the Archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences – “Peterburgskii filial archiva Rossiisoi Akademii nauk” (PFA RAS) were used.²

The first years after the revolution

The exposition of the Museum as it was in the first years of the Soviet regime has been created in 1901. Some information about it is contained in the works of Slepko³. The exposition consisted of the large systematic collection. Furthermore, there were the divisions of

¹ Н. В. Слепкова. Васильевский остров у Дворцового моста: академия, таможня, ЗИН. Летопись трех столетий. (По материалам двух выставок в Зоологическом институте РАН). — Материалы XXIV годичной конференции Санкт-Петербургского отделения Российского национального комитета по истории и философии науки и техники “Санкт-Петербург и мировая наука” (23–27 июня 2003 г.). СПб: СПбФ ИИЕТ, 2003. С. 215–218.

² These archive materials are cited as follows: Archives. The number of fund – the number of description of the fund (the date) – the number of the file. P. (the number of the page).

³ Nadezhda Slepko³. To the history of the Zoological Museum. The history of the site. Exhibition at the beginning of the 20th century. — Trudy Zoologicheskogo Instituta Rossijskoj Akademii Nauk. V. 286. 2000. P. 147–154; Nadezhda Slepko³. Second 50 years in the history of the Zoological Museum (1883–1932). Part I. The museum on the eve of removal. 1883–1896. — Proceedings of the Zoological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences. V. 300. 2004. P. 151–164; Н. В. Слепкова. На Васильевском острове у Дворцового моста. СПб: ЗИН РАН, 2001. 84 с.; Н. В. Слепкова. Материалы к биографии Ф. Д. Плеске (1858–1932). — Энтомологическое обозрение. Т. 86. Вып. 1. 2007. С. 218–233; Н. В. Слепкова. Становление Зоологического института Академии наук как ведущего центра исследований по систематике. Конец XIX в. — Труды объединенного совета по гуманитарным проблемам и историко-культурному наследию. 2006. СПб: Наука, 2007. С. 101–117.

“the general biology and the particular biology”.⁴ Materials on general biology mainly demonstrated the examples of the adaptation of animals to the environment. Materials on particular biology (biological groups) were included in the systematic collection.

The exposition of the beginning of the 20th century corresponded to the official doctrine of the Board of Education of that time, and, in spite of propagation of the Darwin’s views among the biologists, did not illustrate evolutionary ideas in the explicit form. It is possible to note the influence of evolutionary ideas only in the presence of materials in the embryology and the comparative anatomy, which was included into the basic systematic collection.⁵

Reform of the Academy of Sciences at the end of 1920s – at the beginning of 1930s

Essential changes began with the reorganization of the Academy of Sciences in end of the 1920s. In the course of reorganization in 1931, the Museum was renamed as the Institute. The Museum became “the Exhibition part of the Institute”. These changes, which also affected the exposition, were incited by the Soviet authorities. Some considerations, which relate to the exhibition, were included in the report of the Commission of Yu. P. Figatner,⁶ which worked in the Zoological Museum according to S. A. Zernov “in October – November 1929”.⁷ It was mentioned among the shortages that “the direction and the general nature of work of the Zoological Museum remained approximately the same as before, prior to the revolution”. Nobody “attempted in planned order or by means of reorganization to modify the activity of the museum in the direction of the tasks of the socialist building”, “at the revolution time nothing was made for the adaptation of exhibition, of the hall № 1 in particular, to the tasks of the political education”. Furthermore, it was indicated that “at the revo-

⁴ А. Ф. Котг. Настоящее и прошлое зоологических музеев с точки зрения общеобразовательной их ценности. Москва, 1913. 100 с.

⁵ Н. В. Слепкива. На Васильевском острове у Дворцового моста. СПб: ЗИН РАН, 2001. 84 с.

⁶ PFA RAS. 2–1(1930)–17. P. 97–100 (Заключение комиссии Ю. П. Фигатнера, принятое ЛБСНР по докладу о зоологических учреждениях АН СССР).

⁷ PFA RAS. 55–1(up to 1937)–28. P. 43.

lution time, as well as earlier, judging from the scientific production, no one demonstrated any interest in Marxism. Nobody conducted active propaganda of materialist views on nature and propagandas of atheism.”⁸ The Commission of Figatner in 1929 discharged the Director A. A. Bialynitskiy-Birulya and the head of the department of herpetology S. F. Tsarevskiy, who was a deacon.⁹ Birulya, furthermore, was arrested in 1930 in connection with an “Academic case”.¹⁰

The Beginning of the reorganization of the museum in 1930

The conversion of the exposition of the Museum began, apparently, under the pressure of the resolutions of the above-mentioned Commission. On September 22, 1930, P. Yu. Shmidt,¹¹ who temporarily acted as a director instead of displaced Birulya, made a report about the reorganization of the exhibition. Soon (on November 5, 1930¹²) the first meeting on the reorganization took place, in which the heads of departments and sections participated. It was intended, that reorganization should be conducted in the following directions: “1) ideological one, in the sense of the development of phylogenetic and evolutionary ideas, 2) applied-scientific, in the sense of acquaintance with harm and benefit of animals, and in 3) popularizing, in the sense of the larger accessibility of exposition of ZM¹³ for the common people”.¹⁴

It was decided¹⁵ to dedicate the first hall exclusively to general zoology (the concept about the system, evolution, Darwinism, Mendelism, parasitism, etc.) and leave there from the systematic collection only Cetacea. It was assumed to reduce the collections of the second and the third halls to such an extent to obtain some place in the part of the second hall for

⁸ PFA RAS. 2–1(1930)–17. P. 97–100.

⁹ Ф. Ф. Перченко. Академия наук на «Великом переломе». — Звенья. Исторический альманах Вып. 1. Москва: Прогресс, Феникс Atheneum, 1991. С. 202.

¹⁰ Ф. Ф. Перченко. «Дело Академии наук» и «великий перелом» в советской науке. — Трагические судьбы: Репрессированные ученые АН СССР. Москва: Наука, 1995. С. 223 (201–235).

¹¹ PFA RAS. 55–1(up to 1937)– 458 (Документы о реорганизации и реконструкции выставочного отдела ЗИН). P. 3.

¹² PFA RAS. 55–1(up to 1937)– 458. P. 1.

¹³ Zoological Museum.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

the accommodation of the systematic collections of invertebrates from the first hall. It was decided to include the exhibits of the evolution of man to the Paleolithic and on the races (subtypes) of contemporary people among primates (the third hall). It was proposed to place the collection of wreckers and methods of fight with them on the choruses.

Checking by the Commission of the Leningrad Soviet of Workers' Deputies (Lensovet) in 1931

Reorganization was conducted not only on the initiative, but also under the control of authorities. The first checking was on November 24 – December 14, 1931.¹⁶ It was indicated that the arrangement of showcases “was caused not by a strict scientific principles..., but to a considerable extent “by the aesthetical” considerations (for example, the alternation of large and small showcases)”.¹⁷ This principle of arrangement was described as “anarchical-unplanned arrangement of material, the contemplatively apolitical demonstration of the most important biological questions”.¹⁸

The Commission recognized that “the state of affairs in the Zoological Museum is not normal”,¹⁹ and indicated that the Museum according to the resolution of the First Museum Congress must: first of all, “propagandize among the widest strata of society the policy of the Party and the Soviet regime”.²⁰ Secondly, natural-science museums – “combat points of cultural revolution” – must be subordinated to the goal of the development of the socialist economy of the USSR”. Thirdly, they had to “serve as an instrument in the fight for the production of materialistic world view”.²¹ In order to teach the Marxist-Leninist methodology to research workers, “who did not manifest any interest in Marxism”, they were proposed to listen to the special cycle of the lectures of professor Ja. M. Uranovskii.²² However, not all of them attended these lectures.²³

¹⁶ PFA RAS. 55-1 (up to 1937)-23.

¹⁷ PFA RAS. 55-1 (up to 1937)-23. P. 18.

¹⁸ PFA RAS. 55-1 (up to 1937)-23. P. 26.

¹⁹ PFA RAS. 55-1 (up to 1937)-23. P. 18 ob.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² PFA RAS. 55-1 (up to 1937)-23. P. 26.

²³ PFA RAS. 55-1 (up to 1937)-23. P. 28.

The task of preparing the plan of renovation of the exposition was confirmed again. On December 16, 1931, the proposals on the renovation of the exposition were discussed at the meeting of the activists of Trade Union. Among others, the propagandistic aspects were touched upon: “When an issue about conducting anti-Christmas campaign was discussed, the brigade made the proposal, supported unanimously by the meeting, about the appropriate use in the period of the campaign, of a showcase in the exhibition part of the museum, dedicated to the origin of man”.²⁴ At the next session of Profbyuro (Trade Union Committee) on December 29, 1931, they decreed “to start urgently with the reconstruction of the showcase on “The origin of man” and to finish it not later than on January 7, 1932.”²⁵

After the work of this commission, which required “to accelerate the reconstruction of the museum so that it would be finished by October 7, 1933”²⁶ the substantial changes began in the exposition.

Composition of the five-year plan for 1933–1937

Thus, the development of the plan and the concept of reorganization, begun in 1930, were continued in 1931–1932. By March 7, 1932 the document, titled “Exhibition division. Zoological Museum of the Zoological Institute of the Academy of Sciences, its task and reconstruction”²⁷ was compiled. This document included: 1. Zoological museum has a task of wide popularization of the scientific achievements based on the Marxist-Leninist methodology in the field of taxonomy in connection with the national-economic plans of socialist construction. 2. For the realization of the above-mentioned purpose the Zoological Museum a) must be so flexible that in proper time should reflect all the achievements and discoveries in the field of the Marxist-Leninist theory of biology generally, faunistic in particular, including ZIN²⁸ itself; b) the entire museum must be reconstructed according to the methods of Marxist-

²⁴ PFA RAS. 55–1(up to 1937)–23. P. 20 ob.

²⁵ PFA RAS. 55–1(up to 1937)–458. P. 14.

²⁶ PFA RAS. 55–1(up to 1937)–23. P. 24. 7. October was celebrated every year as the anniversary of the October revolution of 1917.

²⁷ PFA RAS. 55–1(up to 1937)–458. P. 38.

²⁸ Zoological Institute. Zoological Museum was renamed into the Zoological Institute in 1931 in the course of the reorganization of the Academy of sciences.

Leninist exposition; e) all the dynamic moments must be especially emphasized; d) the exposition must be mostly thematic e) natural objects demonstration must dominate, but not tables and figures; f) the museum must be the kind of VUZ (Institute of Higher Education - *SNV*), which has to contribute to the production of Marxist-Leninist world view and in all the suitable cases to reveal antireligious moments, taking into account the needs of wide masses of workers and schools; g) in all the basic divisions introductory departments must be opened; h) passages from the theory to the practice and from the practice to the theory must be explained everywhere. Examples: the results of genetic works, malaria-anopheles, plague and its carriers, parasites as the destroyers of harmful insects, the biological purification of drinkable and wastewater, questions of acclimatization, pollinators, etc.²⁹

The Museum was subdivided according to this plan into six sectors: of general biology, of evolutionary systematic, the sector of ecology and zoogeography, of the methods of collection and study, of works on the assistance of the development of the natural resources of the USSR (protection of nature), the sector of seasonal and periodic exhibitions.³⁰ On November 17, 1932, the session of the Departments of Mathematical and Natural sciences (OMEN)³¹ affirmed this five-year plan, and on December 1932, the special museum conference at the Academy of Sciences approved it.³²

The realization of the plan. The Commission of Lensovet of 1933

The realization of the plan of reorganization started rapidly. In the production plan of the Exhibition Division of ZIN in 1934 it is said that in 1933 attention was concentrated on the transposition of materials, on bringing in a proper order of the evolutionary-systematic part and creating of the zoogeography division. This part of the work, outlined for two years, was executed in 1933.³³ The Exhibition Division had to

²⁹ PFA RAS. 55-1(up to 1937)-458. P. 38.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ PFA RAS. 55-1(up to 1937)-458. P. 52.

³² PFA RAS. 55-1(up to 1937)-458. P. 49.

³³ PFA RAS. 55-1(up to 1937)-458. P. 49.

consist of two leading sectors, placed as follows. The sector of general biology and zoogeography had to occupy the first hall, choruses, and right half of the second and the third hall.³⁴ The evolutionary-systematic sector was intended to be placed on the choruses of the first hall and the left half of the second and the third halls. It was planned to build the fourth hall in order to move all the whales there.³⁵

In June 1933, the Commission of Lensovet again checked the Museum.³⁶ In the Museum by this time “reflecting of general questions of the development of animal species on the bases of Darwinism, illustration of the phenomena of variability, heredity, artificial selection, attitude of the classics of Marxism toward the theory of selection, the history of views for the development of organic world and so forth (First hall)” were represented. The second task, which was fulfilled, was “the radical reorganization of the division of evolutionary systematic” (in the second and the third hall). Exponential introductions to each class of vertebrates were created; material was located in the evolutionary order for which it was necessary to move anew huge amount of material – tens of thousands of objects – without the expenditure of special sums, it was done by the intensive work of the staff of ZIN only. Further the “the creation of new zoogeographical division” (organization of the new showcases, which depicted the life of the North of the country, forest zone, deserts and of steppes, the mountains and the rest) has been completed. They had to move or to reconstruct completely the unsystematically standing biological groups. The economic value of some animals was shown.

It was not so simple to carry out the immense plans of 1932, however. The skeptical estimation of the possibility of this is contained in the materials, dedicated to the project of the reorganization of a network of the Natural History Museums of Leningrad (April 1934), since this needed “the expenditure of the large sums, which, however, the Museum did not have”.³⁷ The description of the exposition in this project showed what has been done by 1934. The introductory division differed “only by two showcases – economic prerequisites of

³⁴ PFA RAS. 55–1(up to 1937)–458. P. 52.

³⁵ PFA RAS. 55–1(up to 1937)–458. P. 53.

³⁶ PFA RAS. 55–1(up to 1937)–23. P. 26–31.

³⁷ PFA RAS. 55–1(up to 1937)–24. P. 51.

Darwinism, the theory of gene and by some citations from Marx-Engels – from the exposition, which could be made in the 1890s”. The exposition, which reflected a question of the origin of man, “was completely not illuminated from the point of view of Marxism”.³⁸

In 1937, the detailed plan for the reorganization of the first hall, composed by I. D. Strelnikov, was discussed.

Postwar reorganization

The building of the Museum survived during the war, although some direct hits occurred. However, the collection needed some restoration and on the edict of E. N. Pavlovskiy dated November 19, 1947,³⁹ the large-scale work on the reorganization of museum was undertaken. Twenty-eight moderators were assigned for the daily control and concern about the collections. On the resolution of the Museum Council the division on “The Zoogeography of Animals of Palearctic” was created.

From 1947 until 1954, the director of the Museum was prof. V. B. Dubinin. At that time, the exposition was subjected to the substantial changes.⁴⁰ A number of new biological groups were made, the systematic collection was renewed, the map of Great discoveries was created, etc. Under the management of V. B. Dubinin all the exhibits were re-identified, which required the intensive work of the whole staff of the institute for several years.

Exposition of museum and the session of All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences of 1948

On August 28, 1948 after the sadly famous session of the All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences, the Zoological Institute obtained the directive of the Department of the Biological Sciences (OBN) of Academy with a strong requirement to vacate the staff of the Institute from the supporters of anti-Michurin direction.⁴¹ The junior scien-

³⁸ PFA RAS. 55–1(up to 1937)–24. P. 50, 51.

³⁹ Archives ZIN RAS.

⁴⁰ Д. В. Наумов. Музей. // Зоологический институт. 150 лет. Ленинград: Издательство «Наука», 1982. С. 46.

⁴¹ PFA RAS. 55–1(1949)–16. P. 3.



Fig. 1. Department of the Foundations of Michurin's biology. Postcard. 1954



Fig. 2. Monument to Karl Ernst von Baer (1901, left), and to I. V. Stalin (the end of the 1940s, right). (Archives ZIN RAS)



tific worker guide Leonid Avgustovich Chudnovsky was fired from the museum, “as not corresponding to those requirements, which are at present presented to the Zoological Museum, as the center of the propaganda of Soviet creative Darwinism”.⁴²

On October 14, 1948 at the session of the bureau of OBN E. N. Pavlovskiy made “a report about the reconstruction of the work of the Zoological Institute”,⁴³ in which he mentioned the Museum. It was decided to create “the extensive department of the Foundations of Michurin’s biology”.⁴⁴ This department was organized in the first hall.⁴⁵

Monument to Karl Ernst von Baer in “Northern deportation”

At the end of the 1940s, another change took place. From the opening of the museum in 1901, the gypsum monument to Karl Ernst von Baer, presented to the Imperial Academy of Sciences by the nobility of Kurland, stood at the entrance of the museum (it served as a standard for casting of the bronze statue, erected in Tartu). During the Second World War, this monument was replaced to a right staircase, since the main entrance into the museum, which was facing the Palace Bridge, was converted into the military construction.

Vadim Evgenevich Garutt, an active participant of the events, told to the author of this paper in 1994 the history of the second displacements of this monument. At the end of the 1940s at the height of the cult of personality, the representatives of the Regional Committee of the Communist Party arrived in the Institute and proposed to place the statue of I. V. Stalin near the entrance. The director perceived this as an order. It was decided to move the monument to Karl Ernst von Baer into the niche on the border of the second and third

⁴² PFA RAS. 55–1(1949)–16. P. 20.

⁴³ PFA RAS. 55–1(1949)–16. P. 56, 57.

⁴⁴ PFA RAS. 55–1(1949)–16. P. 67.

⁴⁵ It should be noted here, that due to the tremendous authority, selflessness and diplomat talent of the director of the institute E. N. Pavlovskiy Institute as a whole comparatively little suffered from Lysenkovshchina. One of the most important disgraced evolutionists I. I. Shmalgauzen was accepted to work and a little bit later – the outstanding cytologists D. N. Nasonov and A. A. Strelkov.

halls. The workers wrapped Baer in slat, covered him with rope, then they placed planks on the staircase and began to pull the monument first to the right part of stairs, then they turned it round to the first hall. “It was sad to see – told V. E. Garutt – how Karl Maksimovich climbed the stairs as being doomed”. The northern deportation of the Baer-monument began, since precisely in this part of the Museum there was an exhibition of the inhabitants of the Arctic region.

The full-length sculpture of Stalin was set on the place of Baer. After a certain time the permission came to remove the statue. At that time Garutt substituted the director of the Museum. He secured by the support of E. N. Pavlovskiy the return of the monument to Baer in its place. When Baer was conveyed back, again rolled up by the slat, it seemed to Garutt, as he said, that Baer spitefully smiled.

Contemporary exposition

In 1954, Professor A. I. Ivanov became the Director of the Museum. He finished bringing in order the systematic part of the exposition. The work on the new biological groups and stuffed animals was continued. With the direct participation of A. I. Ivanov “the Phylogenetic tree of Animal Kingdom” and “the Zoogeographical map” were created.⁴⁶ It is interesting that D. V. Naumov, who described the work of its predecessors, did not mention the exposition “The Great building sites of Communism”, set on the spot of “the Zoogeographical map”, which was preserved in the archive photographs of the dismantled exhibition on Michurin’s biology.

In 1962, D. V. Naumov replaced A. I. Ivanov at the post of the Director of the Museum. Characterizing 20 years of his own work, he wrote⁴⁷ that the main achievement of this period was the creation of introductory expositions into each large systematic group of animals, and special expositions of the practical and economic value of the certain groups of animals. A large number of new ecological groups with the artistic backgrounds were created, including big dioramas. At the times of D. V. Naumov the exposition on zoogeography was supplemented with a number of the showcases, which reflected sea

⁴⁶ Д. В. Наумов. С. 46.

⁴⁷ Д. В. Наумов. С. 46.

biota. Ecological groups accompanied the systematic collection, and at the same time corresponded to natural zonality. The grandiose plan of the 1930s was actually realized exactly at this time.

In 1964, when the persecutions of genetics in Russia stopped, D. V. Naumov gradually began to dismantle the odious exposition on Michurin's biology. In 1969, S. Ya. Tsalolikhin⁴⁸ made a new expositional plan of the first room. It was realized in several subsequent years. Genetics, which was persecuted in the period of Lysenko, occupied an adequate place in the new exposition.

Conclusions

The history of the museum in 20th century shows, undoubtedly, that the Zoological Museum of the Zoological Institute of the Academy of Sciences experienced an essential influence from the authorities and was a conductor of this influence into the masses. It was actually placed on the service of Socialist and Communist propaganda. As soon as the pressure of this propaganda weakened, the Museum dismantled the expositions, which caused irritation.

The exposition even has traces of a certain cyclic recurrence in some relations. At the beginning of the century the blue whale was demonstrated as a sea mammal, in the middle – in the plan made by I. D. Strelnikov – it was interpreted as an element of exposition on Darwinism, now – this is again nothing more than a sea mammal. At the beginning of the century Baer stood at the entrance, in the middle – Stalin, at the end of the century – Baer again. At the beginning of the century in the evolutionary exposition they planned to reflect the achievements of genetics, in the middle – they forewent it, at the end – it was placed into the exposition again. With the anti-Christmas company the matter proceeds in the same way. Although this is not reflected in the exposition of the Museum, on January 7 (Christmas day in Russia) – the whole staff has a free day.

Appreciations: V. E. Garutt, S. Ya. Tsalolikhin, S. Ja. Reznik.

⁴⁸ Archives ZIN RAS. 1–2–301. P. 157.

Peterburi zooloogiamuuseumi ekspositsioon nõukogude võimu aastail

NADEŽDA SLEPKOVA

Venemaa TA zooloogia instituut

Väljapanek, mida sai TA zooloogiamuuseumis vaadata nõukogude võimu esimestel aastatel, oli koostatud 1901. aastal. Muutused hakkasid toimuma pärast teaduste akadeemia reformi 1920. aastate lõpul. Aastail 1931–1933 kontrollisid muuseumi kaks Leningradi tööraha saadikute nõukogu (*Lensovet*) komisjoni. Muuseumist pidi saama vahend võitluses materialistliku maailmavaate juurutamise eest. Kinnitati muuseumi reorganiseerimise viie aasta plaan (1932–1937), mille järgi tuli luua darvinismi tutvustav ekspositsioon, kuid oma koht oli ette nähtud ka geneetika saavutustele.

1948. aastal, pärast kurikuulsat üleliidulise põllumajandusteaduste akadeemia augustisessiooni, kus kilbile tõsteti T. Lõssenko ja I. Mitšurin, sai TA zooloogia instituut direktiivi, mille järgi tuli ekspositsioonist välja heita kogu materjal mitšuurinluse vastaste kohta. Muuseumi esimeses saalis rajati osakond, mis oli pühendatud „Mitšurini õpetuse alustele”. Karl Ernst v. Baeri mälestussammas, mille oli muuseumile kinkinud Kuramaa rüütelkond, saadeti „Põhja-pagendusse” – muuseumi kõrvalisemasse ossa, kus oli polaarloomade ekspositsioon. Tema kohale peaukse kõrvale asetati Stalini ausammas. Pealesunnitud mitšuurinliku bioloogia väljapanek võeti maha pärast 1964. aastat. 1969. aastal koostas S. J. Tsalolihhin esimese saali tarbeks uue ekspositsiooniplaani, mis taas kajastas ka geneetika saavutusi.

Zooloogiamuuseum tunnetas täiel määral võimu mõju ja oli üks kanal, mille kaudu võim püüdis rahvast mõjutada. Muuseum õnnestus täielikult rakendada sotsialistliku ja kommunistliku propaganda teenistusse.