



SPECIAL REPORT

NEW SOLIDARITY **International Press Service**

P. O. Box 1972, G.P.O.
New York, New York 10001
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Soviet 25th Party Congress: Economics the Keynote Issue

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The most significant feature of the recent 25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was the accompanying emphasis on a shift toward a policy of increased international economic cooperation. By itself, party leader Leonid Brezhnev's opening address might have appeared to merely reaffirm a policy first prominently enunciated during spring 1975. Before the close of the conference, Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin's address and other Comecon developments outside the conference proceedings removed any reasonable doubt that such a slight shift in policy was in process.

One of the significant corroborating developments was the publication of an article on the capitalist monetary crisis in *Trybuna Ludu* Feb. 3. The significance of that article is that it offered an analysis of the current capitalist depression approximately paralleling that of the Labor Committees. A March 3 public statement by a Polish official, Zabielski, speaking in Vienna, indicated that if the Comecon may not have adopted a policy along the lines of the International Development Bank, it is now moving more prominently in the direction of such forms of economic cooperation.

That feature of the 25th Congress deliberations was inevitably somewhat obscured from attention within the capitalist sector's press. The majority of the most influential capitalist sector journals and news services played down the issue of economic cooperation, in favor of both the "White Communism" topic and otherwise predominantly twisted reporting of the Congress to suit the purpose of the Atlanticists' arms build-up campaign.

Both of these latter issues are important as respectively prominent internal or contextual features of the Congress proceedings, but their significance is misdefined unless both are situated under the overriding topics of increased economic cooperation and discussion of the next period's economic planning within the Comecon sector as a whole.

The Growing War Danger

There is no reason to doubt that the growing danger of early general thermonuclear war was and is a major consideration in the thinking of Soviet and other Comecon party and state officials. The still-hegemonic Atlanticist faction of the capitalist sector has openly advertised its view that 1977 represents the estimated last opportunity for a successful NATO thermonuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union,

and has launched a campaign for exactly that type of short-term arms build-up which would be of no practical use except for a thermonuclear confrontation occurring no later than 1977. This arms campaign is accompanied by hysterical anti-detente propaganda campaigns in the leading capitalist-sector press, under circumstances in which the Atlanticists are visibly in a more desperate mood than at any time during the post-war period to date.

There was no notable coverage of discussions of such a war danger within the 25th Congress proceedings. That omission is of no great relevance in itself. The Warsaw Pact has recently issued repeated affirmations of its now long-standing strategic military posture, to the effect that on this question there is no policy question to be discussed. The threat of a thermonuclear war before the end of 1977 is now clear to every well informed source in both the Comecon and capitalist sector. On the Warsaw Pact side such knowledge dictates corresponding military preparations without need for public airing of the details of such precautions.

Even so, the awareness of that threat must have been prominently in the minds of at least the principal Soviet and other Comecon spokesmen at the Congress. If that danger was not featured in the discussions themselves, the existence of such a threat inevitably strongly colored decisions on a variety of other topics, including the topic of increased economic cooperation. As the Soviet "open call" of last spring, several addresses by Brezhnev, and so forth have already made abundantly clear, our judgment on this point is by no means speculative. For almost a year now, Comecon leaders have repeatedly defined the opportunities for economic cooperation as the sole direct alternative to a growing danger of general warfare.

Extreme provocations by the Italian and French Communist Parties' representatives at and outside the 25th Congress proceedings brought the Soviet Party's fragile "fraternal relations" with the "White Communists" right up to the brink of a declaration of an open break from the Soviet side. The almost inevitable break with Berlinguer and Company was evaded in favor of a special meeting among Soviet officials and the leadership of the Italian party's delegation. Despite that barely credible effort to maintain the formal appearance of fraternal relations, the joint press statement issued from that meeting contained only less coolness than a common protocol between a Soviet and a Chilean delegation's meeting.

The party delegates' opinion of Brezhnev's tactical softness toward the Italian "White Communists" was expressed in the form of open booing of the subsequent address of the pathetic British spokesman for "White Communism," McLennan. McLennan's address was no more intrinsically offensive than that of the French party's Plissonier or the Italian party's Berlinguer earlier, but at least a significant proportion of the delegates were past saturation of their tolerance for such abuses of hospitality.

The ICLC Assessment

To the extent that the leadership of the International Caucus of Labor Committees views the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) as a socialist party, we must be extremely dissatisfied with what the 25th Congress failed to discuss and resolve. The continued softness toward the "White Communist" scoundrels is the most quickly identified point in that connection. However, limiting our attention to the CPSU as the government party, we might rightly console ourselves with a somewhat more optimistic assessment of the net result.

Those of us heading the fight against a looming fascist threat within the capitalist sector must not base our efforts on presuming too much from the Comecon sector.

The mere fact that the Atlanticists' political intelligence agencies have succeeded in imposing top-down leadership and policy-making control over nearly every official communist party of the advanced capitalist sector ought to warn us that the CPSU leadership is not precisely a collection of peerless political geniuses in either understanding of the decisive political processes within the capitalist sector or knowledge of the essential methods for building viable political working-class organizations under modern capitalist-sector conditions. In fact, the rapid consolidation of "White Communist" hegemonies following the coup d'etat within the French Communist Party apparatus has considerably demoralized much of the CPSU leadership by such a profound and sudden wrecking of longstanding delusions concerning the "fraternal parties" of the capitalist sector.

We must be relatively content when the Comecon sector's policies and practices conform to that sector's specific strategic self-interest as a group of socialist states.

In addition to the shock effects of the recent "White Communist" developments, we must take into account the fact that the leadership of the Comecon knows that it is facing the high probability of general thermonuclear war before the end of 1977. Under such circumstances, the mere fact that they are able to rise above obsessive preoccupations with such imminent mass destruction within their own (as well as other) nations is a positive accomplishment of no minor or small importance.

The essential thing is that the Soviets are adhering to their long-standing policies toward the developing sector — however imperfect those policies may be — and have not only maintained but strengthened the policies enunciated in the "open call" of last spring, anything they accomplish above and beyond such minimal, essential contributions to the world situation we should receive as a pure bonus over and above anything we have the right to realistically expect.

Soviet Strategic Importance

Ironically, Soviet thermonuclear warfighting policy is currently an indispensable element in the defense of democratic institutions within the capitalist sector! This is indeed one of the more remarkable ironies of history to date.

Because of the nature of an actual general war in a thermonuclear context, the initial strategic strike, although not decisive in and of itself, substantially predetermines whether such a war can be won in any remotely meaningful sense of winning a general war involving thermonuclear and nuclear weaponry. Consequently, the Warsaw Pact is so stuck — with a necessary commitment to an initial full-scale strike against the principal concentrations of Atlanticists' strategic warfighting military and industrial potential.

The key problem of a strategy which includes initial "preventive" full strategic strike commitment is the danger of thus getting into a general war when war is not otherwise inevitable. The only approximate solution to that problem of judgement is a political "trip-wire" doctrine.

In short-hand terms, the "trip-wire" condition for launching a Soviet full-scale strategic strike against North America is the consolidation of police-state regimes in the USA and other key advanced capitalist sector nations. One condition that, somewhere between the present moment and late 1977, the Atlanticists prevent debt moratoria and impose Schachtian austerity regimes upon both the advanced capitalist nations and most of the developing nations, the consolidation of such Schachtian regimes and policies defines a point at which an Atlanticist commitment to general thermonuclear war against the Soviet Union is irreversible.

Key Atlanticist strategists have publicly emphasized that to be the fact, and the conditions under which the Warsaw Pact — in its own vital interests — must launch a preemptive full-scale thermonuclear strike against the USA.

To the extent that the Atlanticists retain a significant residue of their presently rapidly evaporating sanity, the fact that Schachtian consolidation in the capitalist sector is a "trip-wire" for the Warsaw Pact strategic preemptive action is the most important single deterrent in the way of immediate imposition of fascist political order on the capitalist sector and direct military action to crush opposition within the developing sector.

It is essential to recognize that such implicit Soviet protection of democratic institutions in the capitalist sector is by no means absolute. Today's Atlanticist are approaching (and in some instances have already reached) the state of insanity which the top Nazis developed only during the 1944-1945 period. They are approaching the point at which no deterrent will prevent them from launching a full commitment to immediate Schachtian regimes and crushing of all opponents, whatever risk this might incur.

If we in the capitalist sector do not institute debt moratoria and the beginnings of an IDB-type new world economic order during the first six months of 1976, the point will be reached at which no risk will deter the Atlanticists from fascist regimes, mass murder, and general war. The Warsaw Pact represents an ironical bastion of democratic institutions in the capitalist sector, but not a permanent protection. What we must do — dump the Atlanticist quickly at all costs — we must do ourselves.