

RADIO FREE EUROPE *Research*

COMMUNIST AREA

● USSR: Internal Affairs

8 November 1965

A ROUNDUP OF THE MOSCOW CELEBRATIONS

Summary: The 7 November Moscow celebrations on the 48th anniversary of the October Revolution turned out to be rather non-political in character. A communist summit conference failed to materialize, as evidenced by the apparent absence of any important foreign delegations. It would appear that the Soviet Union has found bilateral talks, of which a series have been recently held, a more suitable means for dealing with bloc problems. At the same time, Moscow has evidently failed to mount any real campaign for an international forum against Peking. On internal themes, the need for economic progress, particularly in agriculture, was stressed and the preeminence of civilian over defense objectives was noticeable. The military parade revealed an often-mentioned orbital rocket which may add to the Soviet image even though its military utility is open to question.

Contrary to certain expectations in the West, the recent celebrations in Moscow on the 48th anniversary of the October Revolution turned out to be just that, celebrations. The event was almost totally devoid of positive political content.

No Communist "Summit". The 7 November celebrations were manifestly not the scene of any international communist summit conference. The possibility of such a conference had been raised by some Western observers in the weeks preceeding the celebrations because of a feverish round of top-level meetings within the Warsaw Pact-Comecon sphere, as well as an apparent escalation of Soviet consultative activity within the international communist movement, suggested the need to solve in a broad, high level forum the basic problems relating to the bloc and the Sino-Soviet dispute.

Such a forum failed to gather in Moscow. The most prominent foreign communist representative present was Raul Castro, who had been in the Soviet Union and East Europe for about a month in connection with military and economic negotiations. Soviet sources reported the presence of delegations representing 31 communist parties but their names and ranks have thus far not been reported, indicating low-level, purely protocol representation. The party leaders of East Europe remained at home on 7 November:

Apparently, the Soviets themselves decided that now was not the time for any sort of summit conference on outstanding problems within the communist world. Had they desired a conclave they could surely have arranged the presence of a number of high-level delegations from such stalwart allies as Mongolia and Bulgaria. Neither of the two sets of intra-communist political problems seemed, in the final analysis, to warrant a summit. Within the bloc, the problems of Warsaw Pact reform and (Comecon) economic coordination were either not yet ripe for decision or had already been thoroughly discussed in recent bilateral meetings. Thus a bloc-wide conference was probably not seen by the Soviets as necessary.

On the international communist plane, it is apparent that the CPSU entertains the general goal of calling a broad conference of party representatives for the purpose of condemning Chinese factionalism and polemicizing in some form. Moscow established this general commitment at the March consultative conference of 19 parties and has not let it die a quiet and convenient death. But it appears that recent Soviet probes aimed at gauging the mood of the communist movement about such a meeting and, in the wake of Chinese political failures, the possibility of forging some sort of anti-Peking front ran up against the decisive opposition of the Rumanians and the Italians, for certain, and possibly the Cubans. No doubt the Soviets have found that covert opposition to a conference is quite widespread among the most important parties which have more to fear from the resurrection of some form of Muscovite discipline than from Chinese factionalism within their organizations. In the face of such opposition the present Soviet leadership will, while continuing to reconnoiter the situation, in all likelihood refrain from the dangerously specific public commitments which left Khrushchev out on a political limb.

Sino-Soviet Themes. The 7 November celebrations were notably devoid of anti-Chinese polemics from the Soviet side. Presidium member and First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Dmitry S. Polyansky, in a speech on 6 November, made two already familiar points relating to the Sino-Soviet rift. He stated that revolution could not be exported, a particularly pertinent point in view of current Chinese problems in Indonesia, and he underscored the adherence of the Soviet Union to two doctrinal postulates which the Chinese regard as anathema, the policy of peaceful coexistence and the priority of internal communist construction. More specifically on relations with China, Polyansky repeated the Soviet contention that Moscow has done all it could reasonably do to improve relations with China -- without a response from Peking -- and that now improvements depend upon the Chinese. Polyansky's statement exhibits somewhat more exasperation than have previous Soviet formulations along this line; but for the moment it would appear to be an exasperation without great political portent. There is no evidence that the Soviets plan to renounce their policy of refraining from polemics against the Chinese Communists although they may state their own ideological position with increasing clarity and frequency, as they did in a recent Pravda editorial, while insisting all the while that the road to communist unity lies in coordinated political action toward specific goals.

The Chinese, for their part, were not silent on the occasion of the October Revolution anniversary. They repeated their routine condemnations of "modern revisionism", i.e., Soviet policy, and insisted that all blame for the dispute lies on the Soviet side. They stressed, moreover, their confidence that the "eternal solidarity" of the Chinese and Soviet peoples, as opposed to governments and parties, remains as strong as ever, indicating their expectations, or at least hope, that at some future time a different leadership will return the Soviet Union to the straight and narrow path of orthodoxy. Peking continues, therefore, to call for a total capitulation by Moscow. The Soviets, for their part, indicate themselves to be even more adamantly opposed to substantive ideological concessions than they were a year ago.

It is significant that, among the many greetings received by Moscow from fraternal parties, the one from North Vietnam received quite prominent coverage. Hanoi hailed its solidarity with the Soviet people, party, and government and thanked Moscow for its economic and military aid. The Soviets are attempting to demonstrate that their cautious revolutionary policy goes hand in hand with the possibility of concrete, reliable assistance to beleaguered allies. So far Moscow has managed to keep these two policies in balance. But as American strikes against Soviet installed missile sites in North Vietnam increase, this tune will become more difficult to play.

Pro-forma Denunciations of the West. The speeches of Polyansky and Defense Minister Malinovsky contained the usual attacks on Western "imperialism", particularly as supposedly manifested by the United States. In view of the war in Vietnam, these pronouncements must be viewed as quite natural. But in spite of a vehemence of tone, they failed to convey any new political content.

It is worth noting that Polyansky did not bring any new clarity to Soviet policy statements regarding nuclear arrangements within NATO, which have been the target of vague Soviet denunciations. He merely repeated that should West Germany be given access to nuclear weapons "in one form or another", the Warsaw Pact countries would not remain "indifferent" and would take "appropriate" but still unspecified measures.

Economics and Defense. The anniversary of the October Revolution has traditionally been a largely military celebration for the Soviet Union, with military pronouncements and a military parade the most prominent items on the agenda. It is to be expected, therefore, that calls for strengthening Soviet defenses should stand out on these occasions. This November 7th, while defense themes received their usual stress, they were noticeably subordinated to civilian objectives. Polyansky devoted the major part of his address to internal economic themes, past achievements, and future perspectives. Reflecting his own function as well as the present preoccupation of the regime, he placed great emphasis on the need to speed the development of Soviet agriculture. His preview of the priorities of the up-coming Five-Year Plan may be significant. Its general objectives are indicated as raising the Soviet growth rate and the standard of living. More specifically, he stated,

In the five years it is planned to insure an even more substantial development of heavy industry and primarily its leading branches -- power engineering and metallurgy, chemicals and fuel, engineering, and instrument building; to overcome the lag in agricultural output; to speed up the development of branches producing consumer goods....

The apparent priority which Polyansky ascribed to investment tasks, particularly in certain branches of heavy industry, should probably not be interpreted as evidence of his own or the regime's conservatism in allocating resources. The regime remains committed to achieving substantial increases in the supply of consumer goods, which are in turn dependent upon expanding light industry and raising agricultural production.

But its long term objectives, including consumer welfare, are also seen as dependent upon raising the rate of industrial growth, which has lagged in recent years, and expanding certain progressive industrial sectors, such as chemistry and quality metallurgy, which have not received sufficient stress to keep the Soviet Union in the forefront of technical developments. The next Five-Year Plan may not, therefore, be an overwhelmingly "consumer plan", but should provide for promised improvements in consumption within a commitment to modernize and expand Soviet heavy industry. It is perhaps significant that, among the priorities sketched by Polyansky, defense stands in last place.

Weapons on Parade. As usual, the Soviet Union took the anniversary celebrations as an occasion to display its latest weaponry to the assembled observers on Red Square. While definitive comment must await the arrival of photographs and the testimony of witnesses, preliminary remarks on the display are warranted on the basis of Soviet reports. Radio Moscow provided a running commentary on the weapons review by Marshal of Tank Forces M. Katukov.

The most dramatic appearance was that of a rocket newly designated by the Soviets as an orbital rocket. The orbital rocket has been frequently mentioned by Soviet sources in the recent past. Last May the Soviets displayed a "global" rocket, which appears to be the same weapon. Marshal Katukov's remarks indicate that the new weapon is not merely a super-long distance ICBM which can deliver a warhead over the South Pole, thereby avoiding the major portion of American radar defense zones, but in fact an armed satellite which can strike home during any of its prescribed orbits. Apart from the fact that the Soviet Union has undertaken formal obligations not to place nuclear weapons in space, the utility of the new orbital rocket is open to some question. American research has indicated that the satellite missile is considerably inferior in reliability, accuracy, and invulnerability to the ICBM launched directly toward its target.¹ Given Soviet inferiority in deployed ICBM capability, Moscow clearly hopes that its orbital missile will have a propaganda if not a military impact.

Other interesting exhibits in the strategic category included:

- 1) See comments of Albert C. Hall, Deputy Director of Research, U.S. Department of Defense, Baltimore Sun, 30 July 1965.

A solid-fuel, underwater launched missile having a range of "several thousand kilometers", probably similar to Polaris. Deployment of this system is known to be only in its initial stages.

Medium-range ballistic missiles supposedly "modified" to strike at intercontinental distances.

Self-propelled, solid-fuel ICBMs.

A collection of anti-aircraft, anti-missile, and tactical-operational missiles was also displayed. It is not yet known what new weapons appeared in these categories.

The Collective Leadership. The information available does not indicate that the recent celebrations had any particular significance for the politics of Soviet leadership. The fact that Polyansky delivered the major address indicates anew that this recently appointed First Deputy Premier is a rising figure. Excepting those who had responsibilities in the provinces, all members of the Presidium were in their appointed places on the tribune above Lenin's tomb.² Two unusual absences among Central Committee secretaries are worthy of note in passing: Ustinov and Andropov.

First Secretary Brezhnev appears to have taken a back seat during the celebrations, in contrast to his prominence last year when they had a more obvious political character. His stature remains that of primus inter pares, however, as indicated by the fact that he received delegates and visitors at the great reception traditionally following the parade.

Fritz Ermarth

2) Radio Moscow, 7 November 1965.