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The Importance of the Congress

The importance of the 24th Congress of the C. P. S. U. emanated from the challenge with regard to domestic issues and with regard to the outside world that the Congress presents to the Soviet peoples as a Congress of the ruling party in one of the two super-powers in the world, the one that has performed the October Revolution, as well as from its possible repercussions on the situation in the other socialist countries, in the communist movement and in the movement of the anti-imperialistic forces in the world in general. Hence the great interest that the 24th Congress roused all over the world, in the west and the east alike.

The Soviet presence in Egypt in particular, and the acute problem of the denial of the right of those Soviet Jews who want to do so, to emigrate from the Soviet Union to the State of Israel or to another state, added to our eager listening to every word that came from the 24th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party.

What may be expected from this Congress is evaluated correctly by some people - in the bourgeois camp, in the international labour movement, as well as inside the Communist parties. Others were mistaken in all the above groups. The fundamental reason for their error is that the starting-point of the first group was the present state of affairs, while the starting-point of the others is what they would like it to be. Wrong proved to be also certain "Sovietologists", or those who want to present themselves as such, whose traditional, blind hatred of the Soviet Union is their daily bread.

The 9th Five-Year Plan

The first issue was the Ninth Five Year Plan that was discussed in all the Soviet Republics, Districts and Regions. The innovation is that this Plan observes the proportions required for the development of almost all branches of production; giving priority to the light industries, to consumers' commodities and services; allowing a wide scope for the revolution in science, technology and technical progress. The Plan emphasizes the need to expand the national output and above all the national income, which is to be achieved almost exclusively by increased productivity and a better exploitation of the means of production.

The London "Times" and the big American press, too, agree that the Plan does not disregard the increase of the Soviet military potential, but they are also of the opinion that this does not contradict the strong emphasis put on raising the living standard of the masses of workers. "United Press" termed it a "realistic, clever Plan". By the way, this is also the opinion of some serious Israeli economists.

This does not mean that the implementation of the Ninth Five Year Plan will rescind the differences between the living standards in the Soviet Union and in more advanced western countries. Were it not for the ruins of the Second World War, the conflict with China and other reasons, the Soviet Union could surely attain by the end of the 9th five Year Plan, in 1975, a much higher living standard. But we are convinced that the absence of

socialist democracy in practice, in important spheres of life is one of the most important causes of some setbacks, in some places, in the process of implementation of the Plans and of the principal challenges facing the Soviet Union, at home and abroad alike.

In our opinion, it will be impossible to adapt to our era the economic, social, political, scientific, cultural, internal and international challenges approved by the 24th Congress, unless the Soviet leadership finds the will-power and inner strength that are capable of destroying that neo-Stalinist herbs that feed Soviet bureaucratism and the estrangement of Soviet man in his society.

Political achievements

C. P. S. U. General-Secretary L. Brezhnev came to the 24th Congress with three clear political achievements: a) the treaty of non-aggression with West-Germany to guarantee peace in Europe; b) a strong presence in the Middle East, unprecedented in the past; c) a beginning normalization of the governmental relations with People's China. The peak crops in agriculture in the recent two years were also a gift to the Congress.

Brezhnev's comprehensive report on behalf of the C. P. S. U. Central Committee was evaluated by world public opinion as a moderate speech, or as a speech of "firm moderation". It shows no signs - neither in domestic nor in foreign policy - of any revolutionary changeover, of more stringency or more liberalisation, of a full de-Stalinisation or a full re-Stalinisation. In the contrary, it seems that in the process of the controversy inside the Soviet leadership, it has reached a compromise solution that forced the conservatives who were pressing in their direction, to withdraw.

Brezhnev's report emphasized this time strongly peaceful co-existence, not only with the United States, but also with China, accompanied by a political rivalry. In this connection, proposals were raised on disarmament, on the withdrawal of atomic weapons from certain-zones, on the ban of chemical and bacteriological warfare, on the disbanding of military alliances - NATO on the one hand and the Warsaw Pact on the other - as well as on cooperation in the fight against air pollution, in scientific and space research.

Words and Deeds

The emphasis on peaceful co-existence was also demonstrated by the proposal to convene a meeting of the five nuclear powers - the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain, France and China - to discuss nuclear disarmament. This proposal, too, shows, that in Moscow one is aware that the center of gravity of international policy has passed onto the big triangle - the Soviet Union, the United States and China - and that in this triangle none of its sides will lack an incessant manoeuvring space.

In his speech, L. Brezhnev raised the issue of the abolishment of colonialism and racism, the issue of the relations between the Communist parties and the duty of internationalist relations between them. This reminder did not prevent him from justifying the invasion of Czechoslovakia that was justified also by Husak in his address of greetings. This is one of the existing gaps between speeches and deeds that were once so harshly condemned by Lenin.

The striking, principled address by the Secretary-General of the Romanian Communist Party, Nicolae Ceaucescu was very transparent, though not explicit, in its opposition to the conquest of Czechoslovakia as well as to the Soviet hegemonistic practice. The statement by the leader of the Italian Communist Party delegation, E. Berlinguer, and other statements, prove that the times of imitation and surrender to a dictate, of "straightening the line" with the general policy of the Soviet leadership - are passing.

The Soviet Union - the Middle East - the State of Israel

If we take into account the Soviet political moves with regard to the Israel-Arab conflict since June 1967, the unrestrained anti-Israeli declarations and slanders of the Soviet press during that period, we find that what Brezhnev said about the Middle East crisis, about the State of Israel, while the Jarring talks are still deadlocked, is surprisingly "moderate". In this respect, the editor of "Davar", H. Zemer, was right in her article of April 2, when she compared Kosygin's speech at the U.N. Emergency Assembly in July 1967 with L. Brezhnev's speech at the 24th Congress in March 1971. Of course, this confirms the changes that have occurred in the region, in the global relation of forces as well as in the military balance of forces between Israel and the Arabs. But we would be mistaken and misleading if we were not seeing in it a certain credit for a certain time to enable the Israel government, as far as it depends on Israel, to improve the status of the State of Israel also in the political alignment. The lower tone in Moscow and also in apparently friendly Washington are not enough reason for political inaction and for the absence of an Israeli initiative to break the deadlock in the Jarring talks. We must not expect any miracle in our times and in our region.

We all are opposed to a peace settlement imposed from outside, to foreign police-forces on the Israel-Arab borders. We want a peace agreement, we want peace more than territorial profits, a mutual peace agreement on all issues - this is the only way to reach security and good neighbourhood. We reject the Egyptian dictate that accompanies Cairo's readiness for peace. But are the peace supporters entitled to ignore the recent statement made in New York even by the Foreign Minister that Israeli rule in Sharm e-Sheikh, on the Golan Heights and in Jerusalem is only a part of the Israeli demands. Can this be called a "national policy"? In such an approach compatible with "safe, recognised mutually agreed borders"? What would we gain if we complained about the "whole world" - except about the ruling circles in our country?!

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