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Prantner's Visit to World Council of Churches Headquarters in Geneva

On the invitation of the World Council of Churches (WCC), Dr. Jozsef Prantner, Secretary of State and President of the State Office for Church Affairs paid a three-day visit (June 16-18) to the Council's headquarters in Geneva. He was accompanied by two senior officials from his office who are in charge of Protestant affairs.

On his return to Hungary, Prantner made a statement which was published in the July 6 issue of the Hungarian Protestant papers Reformatusok Lapja and Evangelikus Elet, pointing out that his invitation by the World Council of Churches was in return for several important conferences organized in the past by the Council in Hungary, during which Council representatives had had a chance to experience the "readiness to help" shown them by the State Office of Church Affairs. Prantner said that he had conducted talks in a cordial atmosphere with the leaders and officials of the Protestant world organizations, who expressed their "appreciation" of Hungarian religious policy, and that he had pointed out to his hosts that the Protestant churches in Hungary were among the first to recognize that they could co-operate with the new social system in Hungary despite differences of world views. Consequently, Prantner went on to say, the Hungarian Catholic Church and other denominations had also succeeded in finding a modus vivendi with the Hungarian socialist system. Prantner took advantage of his visit to hand over to the World Council of Churches the Budapest Appeal of the Warsaw Pact states concerning the convocation of an all-European conference. He ended by saying that his successful talks with WCC representatives will probably extend the co-operation between the Council and Hungary.
While in Geneva, Prantner made a statement to the information bureau of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), in which he conformed points which were not incorporated in his statement to the two Hungarian Protestant weeklies (See RFE Special from Geneva, 4 July 1969). He touched on two problems which seem to have greatly interested and possibly even preoccupied his hosts. First, he emphasized that "the normalization of relations between the Hungarian state and the Roman Catholic Church would in no way affect the principle of equality for all churches in Hungary." Secondly, on the question of the "ecumenical situation" in Hungary, Prantner declared that "basic conditions for ecumenical dialogues and efforts are better today in Hungary than in the past." He pointed in this respect to "increasing Protestant-Roman Catholic co-operation."

Paying tribute to Hungarian Protestant Churches for having found very quickly a modus vivendi in a socialist society, and at the same time remaining true to their traditions, Prantner emphasized that it was in accordance with this attitude that these churches should have supported the struggle for national independence and for the general progress of society. Unfortunately Prantner did not elaborate on the rather nebulous notion that the Hungarian Protestant Churches had supported "national independence" by having come to terms with the regime in 1948, on the latter's terms. It was pointed out in "Hungarian Catholicism and the Kadar Regime: Do New Bishops Mean New Hope?" Hungarian Background-Report/21, Radio Free Europe Research, 5 May 1969, that the "national independence" of the Hungarian Protestant Churches and the Jewish Community (meaning that they were not integral parts of a world church like the Roman Catholic Church, and thus subjected to an outside, higher religious authority) amounted, in the case of the 1948 agreements with the Hungarian government, to a de facto isolation which made it easier for the Hungarian government to impose its terms on the non-Catholic Churches in that year.

First-Comments on Belgrade Conference of Nonaligned Nations

The Hungarian position on one of the key tenets of Yugoslavia's foreign policy, nonalignment, is one of unreserved disapproval. (For ample details, see William F. Robinson, "Hungarian-Yugoslav Relations: A New Turn for the Worse?" Hungarian Background Report/23, RFE/ER, 27 May 1969.) More recently the Hungarian view of this thorny issue was restated by Janos Kadar in the speech he delivered at the Moscow Conference of Communist and workers' Parties, where he said that: "We also reject views which, under the pretext of a struggle against bloc politics, want to place on a common denominator the aggressive military organization of international imperialism and the defensive grouping of the socialist countries." Kadar omitted to mention Yugoslavia explicitly in this context, but there is no doubt about the implication of his statement (cf. Magyar Hirlap, 11 June 1969).
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In view of this basic attitude of the Hungarian regime toward the practice of nonalignment by a socialist country, it is understandable that comment on the consultative meeting of nonaligned nations which began in Belgrade on July 3 is characterized by an effort to emphasize the negative aspects of this event, those which indicate the difficulties and the "questionable" validity of a nonaligned world policy line in the shaping of which a socialist country, Yugoslavia, is playing a role of paramount importance. Therefore, while the first reports of Hungarian communications media on the Belgrade conference studiously avoid hurting directly the sensibility of the Yugoslav hosts, they dwell with much sulking and gloating on the "ifs and buts" with which the road of a nonaligned world political line is undoubtedly strewn.

Side by side with the pessimistic and belittling tenor of the reports, and a certain amount of stress on the position of delegations whose "anti-imperialist" line in the framework of nonalignment is viewed with favor by the Hungarian regime, the press and radio reports also display a modicum of objectivity, probably derived from the endeavor not to antagonize the Yugoslavs excessively in the pursuance of one of their key goals.

The keynote of the reporting on the Belgrade Conference was struck by a piece by Tamas Kocsis, the correspondent of the Hungarian News Agency (MTI) in the Yugoslav capital, which was written on the eve of the conference (cf. Radio Budapest's Foreign Survey, July 7). He pointed out in the first place the fact that only 51 nonaligned nations are represented in Belgrade, against the 58 which participated in the Cairo Conference of 1964. Four countries turned down the invitation while two (Saudi Arabia and Togo) did not even deign to reply. Furthermore, Kocsis mentions that the great consultative conference is "one of the most heterogeneous gatherings of recent years." Its checked nature is shown not only by the geographical dissemination of the participating states but even more, by the political variations. Besides socialist Yugoslavia and countries engaged on the basis of nonalignment in an "anti-imperialist" struggle (and they constitute a majority), the Belgrade Conference is also attended by representatives of the Indonesian government and observers from Latin American countries which can hardly be considered "nonaligned" in the matter of their support of various United States interests. Kocsis goes on to say that it is a logical consequence of the composition of the Belgrade Conference that the participants interpret differently the two points of the agenda (the role of the policy of nonalignment under present world conditions and the intensification of co-operation among nonaligned countries). As a result, it is doubtful whether the Belgrade Conference will succeed in making a decision about the convocation of a "nonaligned summit," which has been under discussion since President Tito's visit to Cairo in February 1968.

Finally, Kocsis's report also mentioned that the participants in the Belgrade Conference could not reach an agreement before it began on whether the representatives of liberation movements should also be admitted. On July 9, however, regime media reported that the conference accepted unanimously the request of the "Liberation Movement of Palestine" to be admitted. Yugoslavia,
as host country, was asked by the conference to take all the necessary measures to ensure the attendance of a delegation from that movement in Belgrade.

On July 9, Nepszabadsag and Magyar Nemzet reported briefly on the opening address delivered to the conference by Yugoslav Premier Mirko Ribicic. He summarized in a "succinct" way the position of Yugoslavia regarding nonalignment and the objective of the conference, and was quoted as saying that the policy of nonalignment had overcome many a trial in the noisy years of the past and had proved its vitality. It was also mentioned that, in Ribicic's opinion the fact that the world situation had become "more favorable" has to be credited to the efforts of the non-aligned nations.

Nepszabadsag of July 9 says that, except for the opening ceremony, the conference is sitting behind closed doors, and forecasts that the substantive discussion will be very complicated. The Arab countries are said to be pressing on the one hand for a more concrete definition of nonalignment and, on the other, to be expecting a concrete decision on issues such as support for the struggle for the liberation of the Arab peoples and African freedom fighters, as well as the issue of Vietnam (cf. Nepszava and Magyar Nemzet, July 9). A report broadcast by Radio Budapest in the late evening of July 9, hints in a covert but nevertheless clearly understandable fashion about a certain divergence of views on the crucial question of the "anti-imperialist struggle" between Yugoslavia and others, notably some former colonial peoples. The report says that speakers at the conference generally condemned the formation of military blocs and all forms of colonization and imperialism, and expressed objections to the excessive role of the great powers in world affairs. But, Radio Budapest's report emphasizes, the delegate from Zambia who presided over the session pointed to the distinct differences of opinion in the interpretation of problems. "The Yugoslav Minister of Foreign Affairs (Mirko Tepavac) in a speech lasting half an hour listed among the reasons leading to international tension, imperialism, the armaments race and the existence of (military) blocs alike." At the same time, the report of Radio Budapest goes on, "in the opinion of the United Arab Republic's delegation, social progress is hindered primarily by the military actions of imperialism and colonialism."

As for the planned summit of the nonaligned nations, Hungarian communications media spell out the difficulties to be surmounted. Nepszabadsag of July 9 mentions that most of the Asian and Arab countries call for a "long and very thorough preparation" because the divergences of views among the nonaligned nations are more profound than they were either at the time of the Belgrade summit of 1961 or the Cairo summit of 1964. Inadequate preparation would be "apt only to deepen existing differences. According to a Radio Budapest report on July 9, there is also disunity among the participants in the Belgrade Conference regarding the number of countries who should be invited to the planned summit. The
majority of participants think it "wrong" to pass a decision on the question at the conference. For example, the Sudanese delegate put forward the view that one should first reinforce the "anti-imperialist" line of the nonaligned nations before extending the range of nations which should be invited.

All in all, the Hungarian people are left by these reports under the impression that the world of the nonaligned nations is in turmoil. And the Hungarian regime is quite content to see that the efforts to place a symbol of equation between military blocs in the East and the West (which is strongly supported by Yugoslavia) is offset by the endeavors of some nonaligned nations from Africa and Asia, which favor a stronger emphasis being placed on the "anti-imperialist" edge of the nonaligned camp's world political line—which would be quite consistent with the postulates of the recent Moscow Conference.

Visit of Hungarian Party and Government Delegation to Bulgaria

The term normally used by Communist officials and journalists to indicate that relations between two "socialist" countries are in excellent shape is to say that they are "cloudless." To no countries does this characterization apply better than to Hungary and Bulgaria. Thus, Janos Kadar's visit to Sofia at the head of a four-member Party and government delegation with the formal objective of renewing the friendship treaty between the two countries (cf. Bulgarian SR/50, RPER, 2 July 1969) is by all accounts, a perfectly routine matter. The "skies".over Hungaro-Bulgarian relations can only become "brighter" (at least, verbally) as a result of this visit. The position which the two countries will assume on international and Communist world movement affairs is a foregone conclusion. Although the native tongues of Bulgaria and Hungary are quite different, in foreign and intrabloc affairs, according to Nepszava of July 8, they speak a "common language," which is, of course, the "language" of Soviet foreign and intrabloc policy in almost every respect.

The really important topics of the Bulgaro-Hungarian talks lie in the domain of bilateral relations, and primarily in the economic sphere. Both partners advocate a broad expansion of relations, the opportunities for which are alleged to be "virtually unlimited" (as was said by Bulgarian Deputy Premier Tanchev to Hungarian journalists on the eve of the Hungarian visit—cf. Radio Budapest, July 4). A number of facts seem to augur well for the strengthening of bilateral economic relations. Magyar Nemzet pointed out on July 8 that in both countries the New Economic Model is now gaining ground. Common interests and elements call both for the expansion of the normal foreign trade exchange (its value has increased to 52 million rubles, compared with 21 million in 1960—cf. Magyar Hirlap, July 6), and the pursuance of economic co-operation on a higher, more up-to-date level—that is, through economic co-operation and integration. Nepszabadsag of July 8 stresses in this context that the two countries are implementing one of the most advanced forms of co-operation through the two joint enterprises,
Agromas and Intransmas, which were set up after the March 1964 visit to Hungary of a Bulgarian Party and government delegation led by Todor Zhivkov. A Radio Budapest report on July 9 from Sofia mentions that the results achieved by the two joint enterprises are "encouraging," hence there is every hope that they will achieve a "100 per cent performance in future" --- an indirect hint that there is still some room for improvement.

It is a measure of the very smooth progress of the Bulgarian-Hungarian talks that they were concluded in five hours on July 10. Nothing different could be expected, as was also indicated by the editorial published by the Budapest papers on July 8, whose headlines accurately expressed the gist of relations: "friendship and a common road." Thus there is every reason to foresee that relations between the two countries will remain as "exemplary" as they have always been. It is the main objective of the new friendship treaty to harmonize relations with the changes which have taken place during the past 20 years and to raise them to a "higher level."

Besides Janos Kadar, the Hungarian Party and government delegation includes Prime Minister Jenő Fock, Minister of Metallurgy and the Engineering Industry Gyula Horgos, First Secretary of the Veszprem County Party Committee Janos Pap (who between December 1963 and June 1965 held a post of a deputy premier), and Deputy Foreign Minister Karoly Erdelyi (who is in charge of intrabloc affairs in the Foreign Ministry and acted as secretary of the Hungarian delegation which attended the recent Moscow Conference of Communist and workers' Parties). The inclusion of Minister Gyula Horgos is a clear indication that the industrial co-operation and integration between the countries seems to be intended primarily in the field of machine industry (cf. Radio Budapest, 14 June and 8 July 1969).

Hungarian-Soviet Agreement on Payment of Fees for Technical Documentation

In his significant speech delivered at the Party Political Academy on 22 January 1969 on "Questions of Principle and Practice in Socialist Economic Integration," CC Secretary Rezső Nyers took an energetic stand for a "root and branch" reform of Comecon in the direction of a really pervasive and substantial economic and technical integration. He said that economic integration demands changes in scientific research and technological development. In order to promote this objective, he advocated the gradual assertion of the principle of "material interestedness" in every sphere of scientific and technical co-operation so that "the internationally recognized value of scientific achievements is paid for by those to whom they are passed on." Therefore free-of-charge exchange in this field should become "exceptional" in future. Nyers believes that if a price were to be placed on scientific achievement, the material interest in their exchange would receive a significant stimulus. "[The financial] interest in taking over [documents and plans related to scientific achievements] will be enhanced by
the [financial] interest in handing them over" (cf. Hungarian Press Survey No. 1962, RFER, 3 February 1969).

The suggestion spelled out by Nyers will find its first practical application in the future exchange of technical and scientific documents between Hungary and the Soviet Union. This was disclosed by Deputy Premier Antal Apro at the conclusion of the eighth session of the Hungaro-Soviet Intergovernmental Committee for Economic Co-operation which took place recently in Moscow (cf. Nepszabadság, 5 July 1969). He stated that the Committee approved the basic principles of the exchange of technical and scientific documents for a fee. After the previous (seventh) session of the Committee in Budapest, Soviet Deputy Premier Mihail Lessechko stressed that the exchange of such documents had been taking place completely free of charge (cf. Nepszabadság, 26 October 1968).

Apro did not reveal any further details regarding the fundamental principles of making such exchanges against a fee (e.g., the criteria of evaluation, the scale of fees, etc.), nor can it be expected that more information will be made available to the public in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, it is worth watching with keen interest to see how the exchange of scientific-technical documents proceeds under the new regulations. While the Soviet Union is a colossus in the technico-scientific field compared with tiny Hungary, it would be an error to see the pertinent relations between the two countries in a giant-versus-dwarf perspective.

In this respect, the rate of exchange of technico-scientific documents is highly revealing. In the year which preceded the seventh session of the Hungaro-Soviet Intergovernmental Committee in Budapest (held in October 1968) the Soviet Union provided Hungary with 2,500 technical documents, against the 1,300 which she received in exchange. Between the seventh and eighth sessions of the Committee, Hungary received 2,500 technical documents against the 3,500 which she made available to the Soviet Union. The relatively large number of Hungarian technical documents given to the Soviet Union compared with the number received hits one between the eyes. In fact, the ratio changed between the two sessions of the Intergovernmental Committee from 2:1 to the advantage of the Hungarian recipient to about 1.4:1 in favor of the Soviet recipient -- in other words, between these two sessions, Hungary gave relatively much more to the Soviet Union than she received in exchange. If this trend is to continue in the new situation, Hungary might be placed in a good bargaining situation, provided her state officials and businessmen know how to stand their ground. It is plain that the financial implication of the exchange of technical-scientific documents cannot be assessed in purely numerical terms, because one document containing the designs for a whole factory may cost much more than a good number of others related to smaller schemes. It is generally known that the scientifical-technical standard of the leading Hungarian planning and project organizations is very high compared with world standards, and that they export a large number of comprehensive industrial designs, principally to the
Soviet Union but also to both Communist and non-Communist countries. Hence their opportunity to ask a good fee for their work. How high the fee will actually turn out to be will greatly depend, as already mentioned above, on the steadfastness and skill in bargaining shown by the Hungarian side. In this respect, the new system of exchange of technical-scientific documents in Hungaro-Soviet relations opens up uncharted vistas.

To conclude, a further fascinating question may also be asked: namely, how much elbowroom will the Hungarian side have in selling its designs to other than Soviet customers -- notably either to the developed "capitalist" countries or to those of the "third world" -- if the price offered by the Soviet Union falls short of expectations? In other words, will the new system of document exchange against a fee introduce a salutary "competitive" element into the whole affair, as should logically follow from the basic principles of the New Economic Model?

Correction to: Hungarian SR/45, RFER, 7 July 1969

In the item entitled "Joint Enterprise Profit Transfers" (p. 4), paragraph 4, beginning "3. 'In the event..." should be struck out and the following substituted:

3. "In this event, Hungary would contribute 51 per cent of the capital. In such a case, the possibility would exist to transfer a portion of the enterprise profit to the partner country."