

COMMUNIST AREA

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THE BALANCE SHEET OF THE MOSCOW SUMMIT

In the light of Western press speculation as to its possible outcome, the Moscow summit meeting of communist potentates just adjourned was an abysmal failure. On none of many issues which a week of intermittent deliberations must have treated did the press communique released by TASS reveal that any explicit agreement was reached. Even the rumored space spectacular held for the visiting leaders turned out to be a routine performance out of which the Soviets seem to have gotten very little public relations mileage. The whole affair added up to just the opposite of the sort of propaganda success which the Soviets might have hoped to achieve even in the absence of major political agreements.

Yet the success or failure of the meeting to meet Soviet political objectives cannot be judged solely against a priori expectations of outside observers nor even by its meager propaganda value. From Moscow's political perspective, its attainments can be gauged only against Moscow's actual objectives, what the Soviet leaders thought they could realistically expect from it. In these terms the record is rather more ambiguous. It reveals to the close reader not so much a failure on the part of the Soviets to reach clearly articulated objectives, which so far they have not disclosed, as the extreme caution with which the Soviets appraise their influence and their freedom of action.

The Build-Up

While other issues, such as East-West relations, and European security, were evidently discussed, it is reasonable to assume that the meeting and preparations for it revolved predominantly around the axes of Vietnam and the Sino-Soviet dispute. It is evident that, in the Soviet view, the outbreak of an active power struggle in China accompanied by the cultural upheaval and increased anti-Soviet activity set a new stage upon

22 which the delicate consensus woven at the Bucharest summit in July could possibly be tightened or expanded. Departing from a previous policy of silent forbearance, Soviet propaganda sought from late August on to publicize the excesses of Chinese domestic policy and, by printing the condemnations of other parties, the mounting isolation of the CCP in the international communist movement. The attacks mounted to such intensity that it became increasingly reasonable to expect some new version of a Soviet-promoted organizational-political campaign against China.

But even as the list of parties willing to condemn China individually lengthened well beyond the "absolute majority" of which Moscow often speaks, the question of what to do and say about China jointly remained very controversial. Soviet propaganda side-stepped it with caution, going only so far as to claim that China had herself completely retreated from Marxism-Leninism and the 1957/60 declarations. In the past, the bright red flag signalling Moscow's organizational intentions within the movement had always been the call for an international conference of communist parties. During the most recent phase of maneuvering, this flag was waved in Pravda only twice by the relatively insignificant Sudanese and Ecuadorian parties. North Korea's Kim Il-song issued a call for a conference but nullified it in the same breath by excluding revisionist Yugoslavia from the pale, a condition which the Soviets could neither accept nor enforce. Moscow never called on its own for a new conference.

The leaders of the CPSU were confronted by a situation in which the Sino-Soviet dispute and its relations to the Vietnam struggle had fractured the international movement along multiple lines. Two important parties which surely abhorred a good deal of Chinese behavior in private remained absolutely unwilling to criticize her in public or to permit organizational sanctions; these are the North Vietnamese and Rumanian CPs. Several key parties on both the left and right showed increased willingness to criticize China in public but could not be counted on for support in organizational measures against her. On the left the North Korean and Japanese CPs exhibited their new independence through thinly veiled esoteric attacks on the CCP and explicit support for united action. But neither is likely to have anything to do with a front against China. On the right a rising wave of denunciations was to be heard from the Italian CP. Under the pressure of virulent pro-Chinese factionalism to the left of the PCI, Longo wondered aloud before his Central Committee whether Togliatti's policy of "unity in diversity" remained relevant to the present schism.¹ Yet other party spokesmen assured that the Togliatti line, including

¹) Radio Moscow, 12 October 1966.

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presumably opposition to organizational excommunication, would

Rumania and Polish Obstacles

Naturally, the Soviets did not propose to come to such a conference with a blank policy slate. They clearly desired, if not necessarily expected, further movement toward a joint policy of China than Rumania, for one, would be willing to countenance. When Soviet propaganda and the statements to the top leadership claim that "all honest people" should condemn Chinese policy, there is a strong implication of pressure on those who continue to keep silent. To judge from a Soviet broadcast on China, Moscow would like to get general agreement that "the events taking place within China go beyond the limits of the internal affairs of the Chinese people and the CCP."³ Such agreement would get around Rumania's objections to interference in internal affairs of other parties. Yet Ceausescu's vocal alarm at "the fact that the old practices of imposing points of view from the outside, of interfering in the internal affairs of other parties has not been renounced," signaled clearly that he was not about to agree.⁴ This stern warning to the Soviets may have been a response to real or anticipated pressure. It was issued, however, on the eve of the Moscow summit when Ceausescu probably knew that he would attend. In any case, he was then or shortly thereafter assured that he would not be called upon to violate this cherished principle by signing a joint condemnation of China in Moscow. Without such prior assurances it is hard to conceive of his attending.

Thus the Soviets probably had to foreclose the possibility of an anti-China declaration before the meeting, whether they wanted one or not. But at the same time they probably saw some value in confronting the Rumanians with a unified majority among the other parties. Here the position of Poland was crucial. Gomulka, while utterly unsympathetic toward Chinese policy, has long opposed organizational sanctions and tempered his criticism of China so as not to contribute to their imposition. Leading his delegation to Moscow for bilateral consultations just before the summit, both he and Cyrankiewicz showed notable restraint in their attacks on China in comparison with Brezhnev and Kosygin. The Polish-Soviet communique's language on China bore the mark of a careful compromise between the two positions, at least in tone. It may be that the Poles agreed to a bilateral condemnation of China in mild terms in the knowledge that the forthcoming summit deliberations would not witness

3) Roundtable Radio Moscow, 16 October 1966.

4) Agerpres, 15 October 1966.

a Soviet campaign for a joint stand. Whatever his need for close Polish-Soviet relations, Gomulka has no interest in ganging up with the Soviets against the Rumanians on an organizational issue.

Consultations

From these considerations it is readily apparent that the Soviets must have been intimately aware of the obstacles in the path of any joint condemnation of China issuing from their summit gathering. Moreover, the inconvenient inclusion of Cuban representatives--who would always rather work their influence by participating in than boycotting conferences--foreordained difficulties even in the seemingly non-controversial matter of solidarity with Vietnam. If Hart-Davalos' speech to the 23rd CPSU Congress remains a guide to the Cuban stand on Vietnam, the Cubans would presumably have been dissatisfied with even the most vigorous stand which the Soviets and their allies could muster. This the Soviets also knew well beforehand. It was, finally, the Cuban organ Granma which most forcefully scotched rumors that joint action against China would emerge from the talks. That this declaration came on 19 October, when the talks were only in mid-stride, indicates that it was not a result of the talks but more likely a foregone conclusion before they began.

Did the Soviets expect to bludgeon their allies into argument on China and other questions once they got the meeting together? If the Rumanians had the slightest suspicion that this would be attempted they surely would have stayed home. On balance one can only conclude that the Soviets promised to limit the proceedings to consultations and exchanges of opinion with no attempt at forcing agreement. The fact that the Soviets themselves meticulously adhered to the "friendly visit" formula in describing the meeting indicates that they were troubled by the unwelcome build-up which it received in the Western as well as what to them must have appeared uncontrolled East European media. They were most circumspect in their own coverage of the event, with domestic radio declaring that it would "serve...the great objectives" of peace and unity.⁵ The furthest Moscow comment seems to have gone was in a broadcast to Germany in which it was said that "the present visit in the Soviet Union of eight delegations from socialist countries will doubtless make a fresh, concrete contribution to the strengthening of peace and security."⁶ Neither formula necessarily anticipated substantive declarations from the meeting, although the latter left the possibility open.

5) Radio Moscow, 19 October 1966.

6) Radio Moscow, 20 October 1966.

While it cannot be excluded that substantive agreements on specific issues, such as aid to Vietnam, were reached and kept from the public, it appears on balance that the consultations themselves were as much as the Soviets could realistically count on. If they sought further agreements, especially of the sort which would have effect only if made public, then the Soviets clearly failed. But there is little solid evidence that they did so. Moscow has apparently come to the point where a frank, secret multilateral consultation with its allies is worth the price of the public-relations letdown incurred when sweeping declarations fail to appear. The past two years have shown that Moscow has neither the political power nor the sense of direction to conduct its foreign policy without such consultations. On a bilateral basis they have become almost routine. If the foregoing analysis of the latest Moscow summit is correct, Moscow might find the multilateral form of consultation increasingly useful in the future. It would represent the most realistic adjustment to the facts of polycentrism which Brezhnev and Kosygin have managed since their assumption of office.

As they review their experience over the past several months, including their latest summit consultations, the Soviet leaders must surely feel a renewed appreciation of the obstacles in the path of unified action toward China. They may realize that the issue of Vietnam cannot be exploited further as a disciplining device against parties which have firmly decided for an independent line; the more so because North Vietnam herself has no choice but neutralism. In any case, they accepted this fact at least temporarily for the sake of gathering their Warsaw Pact allies, Cuba and Mongolia, around a single table, something they probably regard as no mean achievement under present circumstances.

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